

**“DOWNCAST EYES” ON A “DOWNWARD PATH TO WISDOM”: READING
MILTON’S “DARKNESS VISIBLE” THROUGH A DERRIDEAN
PERSPECTIVE**

by

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Abstract

In this study, the visual metaphors of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* are analyzed and read through the poststructuralist perspective of Jacques Derrida on the issue of vision/blindness. To establish the contextualization for the dialogue on this issue, Martin Jay's book *Downcast Eyes* serves as a far-reaching guide from the early allusions on sight up to a poststructuralist/postmodern view. A careful reading of the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost* will prove that, in this epic poem of the seventeenth century, the dialectics of traditional philosophy on the issue of vision/blindness should be placed "under erasure" with the cancellation of the literal eye and the insertion of the figural "I". To attain such operation, I propose that the exercise of sight undergoes a process of interiorization that resembles the going inwardly through a "downward path to wisdom". I also propose that the abovementioned operation, the simultaneous cancellation of the eye and insertion of the "I", is accomplished in the epic through a "darkness visible" perspective in the establishment of an (in)stance in the matters of interpretation.

Table of Contents

It is ten years, I think, more or less, since I felt my sight getting weak and dull [...] I observed, some months before my sight was wholly gone, that objects I looked at without myself moving seemed all to swim, now to the right, now to the left [...] Yet the darkness which is perpetually before me, by night as well as by day, seems always nearer to a whitish than to a blackish, and such that, when the eye rolls itself, there is admitted, as through a small chink, a certain little trifle of light (Milton, 1973: 59).

1 – Introduction

Various analyses of the visual metaphors¹ of *Paradise Lost* have already been made in the exhaustive approaches to Milton's works. Milton's critical studies have been so thorough that, by close attention, a wide variety of texts might correspond to the expectations of research on this topic. Nevertheless, the encounter of the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost* with the thought of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida on the issue of vision/blindness is still unique and will demand a careful reading of the epic for the production of this text. Milton's view in *Paradise Lost*, suggested by his employment of visual words, demonstrates a type of poetic writing that cannot be simply enclosed within a period, genre, or literary frame. His different points of view highlight the poetical exercise of his lyric "I", which originates from his blind eye, and in a sense, grounds his lyric seer feature, making him a sightless visionary.

In *Memoirs of the Blind* (1993), Derrida attributes to the blind man the skills of a visionary. In the Derridean views, blindness brings forth the possibility of internal and

¹ There are many analyses of metaphor types. For this research, visual metaphors will be the ones based on words that present in their literal and/or interpretative meanings variants connected to the eyes, sight, vision, view, and other words that refer to the use of this sense organ.

external evidence to define a text in its various forms of interpretation. Derrida's poststructuralist stance, adapted to Milton's "darkness visible" perspective, helps compose a text that plays on the meanings of the visual field and the dialectical connections of vision/blindness in the scope of interpretation.

To attain this perspective, the following points will be made. First, there is the need to provide a broader view of the use of the visual metaphors in the literary and philosophical fields since the early allusions. Martin Jay's book *Downcast Eyes* (1993) will point up the mainstream of this approach to the contextualization of Derrida's views. Second, the dialectical aspects offered by Derrida's blindneses will work as the guide to bring Milton's "darkness visible" perspective to a poststructuralist stance. Third, the search for an ordering understanding of Milton's use of visual metaphors, with an overall analysis of Milton's writings, will bring light to the final consideration of this thesis, which is, a direct study of the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost*.

Thus, as an informed reader, I want to study the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost*, and prove that the dialectics of traditional philosophy on the issue of vision/blindness should be placed "under erasure"² in Milton's seventeenth-century epic. This operation will lead to the cancellation of the literal eye and the insertion of the

² The term "under erasure" is introduced by Derrida in his book *Of Grammatology* (1976). Derrida adopted from Heidegger the operation of writing "sous rature" (under erasure). In this operation, the printed word is crossed out, and this act is intended to indicate that although the word is inaccurate, it still needs to be used. However, in the reading of this thesis, the "under erasure" operation will work as an attempt to deconstruct the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost* and uncover the philosophical traces they contain. As Derrida puts it in *Of Grammatology*, "one must *accentuate* the 'naiveté' of a breakthrough which cannot attempt a step outside of metaphysics, which cannot *criticize* metaphysics radically without still using in a certain way, in a certain type or a certain style of *text*, propositions that, read within the philosophic corpus" (19).

figural “I”. This simultaneous process is accomplished in the epic by a “darkness visible” perspective, which results in the attainment of a “downward path to wisdom”.

1.1 – An overview of the visual metaphors in Martin Jay’s *Downcast Eyes*

The importance and the contribution of the visual metaphors in the perception of language and in the analysis of discourse have been discussed in the fields of literature and philosophy. The attitudes toward vision reflect cultural assumptions and can be considered a product of historical changes. It can thus be deduced that the visual experience inscribes the culture from which it originated. A link between language and sight has been an issue in a great amount of literary criticism.

The eye has long been recognized as more than just an organ for the perception of images, light, and colors. It registers not only physical, but also emotional sensations. The eye “can be tied to our psychological processes”³, mainly because of its more than sensorial characteristics, that is, its powerful ability in conveying internal and external

³ Jay, Martin, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, (California: UP, 1993). All the references to Jay’s book *Downcast Eyes* are to this edition and are cited parenthetically in the text. Jay’s book involves an overall view on the approaches towards vision, and in some parts, my research gives a type of full review of Jay’s ideas. Nevertheless, in the view of this thesis, this review is necessary for the contextualization of vision from its first allusions to a more contemporary time. Due to the great extension of the references to the periods’ and thinkers’ ideas and concepts, most of the citations will proceed with Jay’s book as the basis for the references (11).

experiences. This highly sensorial activity grants to vision a profound role in the modern era. The focus is on vision and how its connection to discourse characterizes cultural dominance.

A literary analysis of the visual metaphors of a work may reveal some intrinsic features that perhaps are not clearly traced. Thus, the reading should be made as an attempt to dissociate the closeness between the reader and the work itself. Provided that this attempt is successful, a distanced reading may help discover inner aspects that perhaps are not even perceived by the writer. Jay's accounts on this matter use Jean Starobinski's approach. Starobinski, one of the pioneers of the Geneva School of literary criticism in his concern with the hidden aspects of writing, states:

Despite our desires to lose ourselves in the living depths of a work, we are constrained to distance ourselves to speak of it. Why then not deliberately establish a distance that will reveal to us, in a panoramic perspective, the *surroundings* with which the work is organically linked? We would try to discern certain significant correspondences that haven't been perceived by the writer, to interpret his mobile unconscious, to read the complex relations that unite a destiny and a work to their historical and social milieu. (19)

Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to analyze the development of the approaches to vision in French thinkers' discourses, which will be guided by Martin Jay's book *Downcast Eyes*. Ranging from Plato to Jean-François Lyotard, Jay's book will serve as an introduction to the role of vision in Western thought concentrating on 20th century French philosophy. He examines writers, artists and thinkers who question the centrality and trustworthiness of vision and the consequent denigration of it from the Greeks to postmodern time. The bulk of Jay's book consists of a guide to the reader through the variety of criticisms of the dominant scopic regime. The choice for Jay's book is due to the views he covers, which are encyclopedic and constitute a comprehensive summary of

the following critics of ocularcentrism, and finally provide the contextualization for the French philosopher Jacques Derrida's prospects on sight. The Derridean poststructuralist perspective on sight will establish a negotiation with John Milton's coined expression "darkness visible" (Milton, 1996: 8) in the view of this thesis. Thus, Milton's expression will guide my reading and the remaining corpus of this research together with Derrida's approach to vision/blindness.

1.2 - The importance of the eye and its development from the Greek culture to the early modern era

To open up the realm of the visual and relate it to the literary field, the critic should realize the predominance of its influence. Greek culture has been the most influential tradition of Western thought. In the Greek accounts, the visual experience is an involvement of feelings and the other senses. Yet, sight is privileged over the other senses, and for this reason, the importance of vision is marked by a powerful beginning. Associated with sight, another Greek invention, philosophy, appears to demonstrate the contemplation of the visible. "Greek philosophy from Parmenides through Plato accordingly emphasized an unchanging eternal presence" (24). In this sense, the supremacy of the eyes becomes established because the high capacity of vision to symbolize presence. Presence would not be regarded as a temporal act like the other senses; on the contrary, it would correspond to a tendency to elevate the "static Being over" the "dynamic Becoming, fixed essence over ephemeral appearances" (24). The

fixed “present” for the Greek philosophers represents the visual act itself, what brings a difficult relation for the Greeks to work with motion.

From the great Greek philosophers and myths, approaches towards the eyes have received different interpretations. Starting from Plato, and throughout his writings, the presence of sight is emphasized. In *The Republic*, Plato claims that the intellect is “the eye of the mind” (175). Plato insists on the importance of the inner sight, reinforcing that the act of seeing is exercised through the eyes and not with them. However, at the same time that Plato calls for the need to see with the eye of the intellect, he makes his defense on the metaphor of the sun, as the greatest source of illumination and as a mediator to attain visibility. The sun is contemplated by Plato as a type of god and its illumination would stand for true virtue that comes to terms with knowledge. The eye, for Plato, is different from the other sense organs because, it needs a mediator, for example light, to make it work. The sun is the best source of light and its presence to provide light implies the need of a “present” reality in the conception of truth. For Plato, the sun is the author “of visibility in all visible things” and “not only the author of knowledge to all things known, but of their being and essence” (173-74). Plato’s thoughts become products conveyed by the metaphor of the sun, which turn out to be the basis for the subjects of metaphysics in the accounts of essence and fundamentals exposed to view by the supremacy of the sun.

Unlike Plato, Aristotle defends the power of the physical eyes to receive and discriminate many pieces of information at the same time, showing its magnificent power in relation to the other senses. Not only the controversy between physical sight and the internal sight, as in Plato’s and Aristotle’s assumptions occurs in Greek culture, but also

the malevolent aspect of vision is present in some Greek myths. Narcissus and Orpheus are condemned to despondency and death because of their sight. On the other hand, Medusa's sight causes the death and suffering of others.

The ambiguity of the role of the eyes from the Greek influence profoundly penetrates Western Culture. For the Greeks, the eyes are agents of the inner self, external agents only with a great capacity for the absorption of images. Another view of the eyes from the Greek myths is that they are elements that lead mankind to commit evil or elements that carry evil in themselves to transfer to others. This dual concept of vision can be associated to the dual concept of light. According to Jay, the "*speculation* with the eye of the mind" and the "*observation* with the two eyes of the body" (29) have provided a debatable ground for the many forms of ocularcentrism in Western culture.

Western culture has also received the responses of the struggle between the role of vision and the attitudes toward it from the medieval Christian tradition. In the medieval accounts of the senses, hearing was privileged in relation to the others. In the rank of senses of that time, touch would come in the second position and sight in the third. Nevertheless, the "antivisual Middle Ages" (35) is also the time in which Christianity realizes the importance of vision in worship. The advent of images as a powerful tool in "making the Christian story available to the hoards of new believers from non-Jewish backgrounds" (36), proved to be of high attraction to the illiterate, and so sight was again elevated to a primary condition.

The elevation of images, however, caused idolatry. In response to this fanatical practice, iconophobic movements aroused and had their culmination in the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation argued about idolatry and tried to establish a return to the

word as an attempt to replace the visual images by the literal word of the Bible. Reinforcing the capacity of the word to reach God, instead of images, John Calvin, one of the most prominent Protestant Reformers, even said that physical blindness was a blessing because through it one would listen to the voice of God.

Despite the resistance to images during the Middle Ages, the Renaissance thinkers considered the medieval fetish of images with great distrust, but Renaissance literature greatly exploits the use of visual references. Hence, the medieval and the Renaissance works on the issue of vision provide one of the biggest contributions for Western culture, that is, “the theoretical and practical development of perspective in the visual arts” (44). This contribution can be summarized in three basic points. First, based on the Platonic assumptions, sight was considered the most important of the senses, in spite of its potential for deception or its possibility of being the entrance for lustful thoughts. Second, the struggle between iconolatry and idolatry raised a visual question upon the differences of representation. Moreover, in the early modern era, the separation of the visual from the word or the text, promoted a liberation of art from the religious role with which it had always been associated. Finally, sight, apart from its sacred role, was evaluated for its political and social aspects.

As a response to the challenge imposed by Protestantism to the Catholic tradition, the baroque culture also appears to complete the Renaissance stratagem of power based on art. “The baroque’s subversion of the dominant visual order of scientific reason that makes it so attractive in our postmodern age [...] celebrated the confusing interplay of form and chaos, surface and depth, transparency and obscurity” (47), and it served as a great resistance to the static role of vision. The excessive use of images that distort as

well as dazzle, trying to express what cannot be expressed, is the main representation of baroque art. Its melancholy way of working with the visual showed the dominance of the ocular regime.

The advent of a dominant ocular regime was supported by many variations on the social, political, aesthetic, and technical views of the early modern era. The combination of different views “produce what has in retrospect been called ‘the rationalization of sight’” (49). The political role of vision now has its function, and a definition of codes of behavior and performance is established for sight. The development of the political and social surveillance behind the images opens up space for a type of “disentanglement of the figural from its textual task – the denarrativization of the ocular” (51). The process of “denarrativization” was reinforced by the great Renaissance artists’ introduction of new sorts of perspectives to achieve different illusions of the objects depicted.

In addition to this new perspective, or rather, the multiplicity of the visual role, inventions and discoveries of new mechanics of vision by Johannes Kepler and the explorations of colonizers were all parallel events that highlighted the use of sight to dominate the world. For Kepler, vision would not represent a direct physical mechanism because it would receive the images in a “reversed and inverted” (63) way, even though reversed and inverted images would reach the mind in the correct order. In Kepler’s assumptions, the “reversed and inverted” reflection of images reaching the mind in the correct order was inexplicable. As for the exploration voyages around the world, they were motivated by a great desire to see as well as conquer other places and enlarge the dominance of the world.

The doubtful notions of Kepler's description of the physical mechanism of the eyes were highlighted by René Descartes, who tried hard to provide his ideas with a great deal of plausible explanations. Descartes argued that vision would go beyond the projected image on the retina. In this sense, sight for Descartes, using Jay's words, would have an active potential role for "probing, penetrating, searching qualities" and to it "was given free rein" (63). In other words, the restraint of conditioning sight up to a limit on the retina and stopping at it because of unanswered questions would be replaced by, releasing it to all the dimensions it could reach. Descartes led a "campaign for visually conceived cognitive enterprise" (67), which was one of the influences for Walter Ong's conception of "modern individualism (the eye=I)", on "the depersonalization of the external world", and on "the glorification of observation as the only valid way of knowing the world" (67). Those aspects granted Descartes the title of a visual philosopher and his contributions were surely the basis of modern ocularcentrism.

Cartesian philosophy characterized the optical dominance of the modern era. Descartes, like Plato, established the idea that seeing reaches the mind. Vision, for Descartes, is a method based on the existence of former ideas already inherent in the mind. In this matter, the images formed in the brain are the products of a similar operation of reading the images that are not simply perfect reproductions of the external world. Thus, in Descartes's accounts, it is the mind and not the eye that exercises the act of seeing. Descartes's conclusions on the pre-existence of former ideas of signs and words that resemble the objects they signify are nowadays considered to be the forefront of the postmodern assumptions about the traces.

In short, Descartes's move from privileging representation over resemblance subtly opens up the possibility of a nonvisual consideration of the eyes. The gap that emerges is thus accepted as the main contribution of the Cartesian ocularcentric bias of the modern era, which deeply encourages the search for both the speculative and empirical features of vision. The valorization of sight and its release from a pure, physical action was elevated to a spectatorial and observational side. The modern era is the starting point for the risks of the physical expression of the eyes that will be the basis of this thesis, making it necessary to regard sight as a "darkness visible" experience.

1. 3 – Vision from the Enlightenment to early modernism

In the Enlightenment period, vision reaches its highest culmination. Enlightenment thinkers – Voltaire and Montesquieu may be cited – argued that ideas exist only because they are the result of the images registered in one's mind. They were also called sensationalists or positivists, and their main claim is that external perception is the source of one's ideas. The beginning of the Enlightenment can be traced by analyzing access to the courts' spectacles in the reign of Louis XIV. In those spectacles, visual art represented the sign of power. The king kept his royal image, which significantly meant the "Sun King" (89), as if his power could be compared to the power of the sun with all the luminosity of its rays. It is important to contradict the assumptions of the Enlightenment period for the main focus of this research. On one hand, the Enlightenment thinkers emphasize the external perception in the conception of thoughts.

On the other hand, the “darkness visible” perspective suggests the dangers of relying on the external only with a disregard of the inner sight. The sun may represent the greatness of luminosity, yet it may also blur vision and mask visibility. In the spectacles of the royal court, the visible aspects were masked and their political implications were concealed by their beauty and the pleasure conferred by the exercise of the physical sight.

The visual attitude of the spectacles resembled the court of the king and it brought pleasure to sight, which can be better understood in Montesquieu’s positive attitude toward vision. Although he died blind, Montesquieu said, quoting from Jay’s book, that “evidence is a joy of the look” and that “rationality, clarity [...] are not only defined as a type of knowledge, but also as a type of happiness” (90). After Montesquieu, the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau came to regard sight as a type of search for transparency. Transparency, in Rousseau’s accounts, was presented in the public festivals of his time. They were held in open air and for Rousseau were examples of the purest expression of presence. In the festivals, transparency would be not only the revelation of truth, but also a direct manifestation of the participants’ own inner truths and selves. Rousseau believed in the omniscient, divine eye and acknowledged that human visibility would perform an act of fantasy of total invisibility.

Rousseau’s thought on the apotheosis of transparency caused some ambiguity, which the French poststructuralist philosopher Jacques Derrida clearly pointed out. Transparency not only grants privilege to visibility, but also to the power of the spoken word. For Derrida, the festivals represented in Rousseau’s time do not mean the privilege of sight over the other senses, but a reversal of this order, with the elevation of language to a position as the most responsible element of contact. The visual experience is replaced

by the presence of the spoken word. According to Derrida, the festivals are public spectacles and can be considered “a theater without representation, or rather a stage without a show: without *theater*, with nothing to see” (1976: 306). On the “fake” stage, where festivals used to take place, visibility is no longer the main point of interaction. A place “where the spectator, presenting himself as spectacle, will no longer be either seer or voyeur, will efface within himself the difference between the actor and the spectator, the represented and the representer, the object seen and the seeing object [...] the open air is the element of the voice, the liberty of a breath that nothing breaks into pieces” (Derrida, 1976: 306-08). In an attempt to question the court spectacles and defend the festivals, Rousseau fails. For him, in the festivals the manifestation of representation disappears. Yet, Rousseau’s own definition of festivals turns their simple meaning into representation again. This example shows how ambivalent Rousseau’s ideas about sight were.

The Enlightenment and the ambivalent ideas that the Enlightenment thinkers helped promote showed the power of sight, but they also started some discussions on the valorization of the other senses. In Rousseau’s case, as Derrida argues, the visibility of the festivals was overcome by the power of the word, and the hearing sense becomes more emphasized. In addition, defenders of Rousseau’s ideas tried to dethrone sight from its highest rank in relation to the other senses, claiming that signs needed not only the visual but also linguistic experience to be read and analyzed. A Counter-Enlightenment movement sprung from these controversies on the supremacy of sight. In this movement, linguistic experience is claimed as evidence, highlighting the privilege of the spoken word over the image. The Counter-Enlightenment movement established a turnabout in

the ranking of the senses, and with such a change, noble sight was replaced by the powerful device for the comprehension of the spoken language: the ear. The elevation of the ear as the privileged organ in the perception of language caused a natural diminution in the prestige of sight.

The diminution of the Enlightenment faith in sight, for Jean Starobinski, was caused by two trends. The first was the desire for an ideal beauty that the “normal” physical eyes could no longer perceive, instigating a return to a neo-Platonic era.

A thirst for an intelligible Beauty, a reflection of the unity of Beauty, emerged strongly everywhere-in reaction [...] against the corrupting seduction of sensual pleasure. People aspired to an art that would no longer address itself to eyes alone, but instead, through the inevitable mediation of sight, to the soul. (145)

The second was the importance of darkness as the object that marks and contributes to the existence of light. Darkness appeared as a consequence of the French Revolution, in which the “Sun King”, the deepest representative of light in his spectacles, was replaced by the eminence of reason, encompassing the features of darkness marked by subjectivity and a blurred access to mind.

The two trends, as exposed by Starobinski, can be compared to the need to exercise reason through the inner sight instead of permitting seduction by the external and superficial “Beauty”. These two trends summarize the initial reversal in the power of physical sight and the insertion of a perspective that would set itself within darkness and out of it attain visibility: in other words, a “darkness visible” perspective, in which the figural “I” becomes a blind eye and true sightedness would be reached by penetrating the veil of the mind. Milton’s “darkness visible” perspective is indirectly reflected in the discussions on vision by the schools of literary and philosophical criticism. On the other

hand, the literary heirs of John Milton, such as William Wordsworth, William Butler Yeats, William Blake, and Thomas Carlyle, among others, reflect in their writings a direct influence of Milton's views on a more skeptical attitude toward the established dominance of physical sight.

These writers created lines of thinking that conditioned sight to an inner expression rather than a physical perception. Wordsworth argued that the eyes work as a dominant mechanism of philosophy and called attention to the despotic power of the bodily eye. According to Jay, Yeats appealed to the need of lighting "the lamp of inner inspiration" (108) and through it the inspired vision would open the lenses of a "third eye", the eye of the soul. Blake also proposed the metaphorical idea of inspired vision in his "four-fold vision" (109) uniting the senses of body and soul. Finally, Thomas Carlyle's metaphor of "spiritual optics"⁴ (Baumgarten 514), seems to describe the position of an eye turned inward, irradiating the private senses of the soul with the cognitive force previously expended on the world of empirical phenomena, and in this sense, he summarizes the "third eye" insertion into the realm of vision.

These literary views and the philosophical studies realized that the need to reach the mind transcended the path once granted to the senses, and a new aesthetic moment appeared. In the figures of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, the aesthetics of the sublime overcame the beautiful. According to Kant quoted by Jay, the sublime "which evidences a faculty of mind" transcended "every standard of sense" (107). The sublime created the expectancy of entering the depths of mind and helped raise enthusiasm toward reaching the inspired vision. In this manner, sight would go beyond the single existence

⁴ Murray Baumgarten reprinted Thomas Carlyle's 1852 "Manuscript on Creeds" under the title "Spiritual Optics" in his essay "Carlyle and 'Spiritual Optics'".

of its physical features and would be revived by Carlyle's visual metaphor of "spiritual optics".

The inquiry on sight in its power and the condition of going from the physical to reach the inner spiritual optics started the debate on an ocularcentric moment toward a position of doubt. Among other questions on the real nature of the visual role, there were clear implications that contributed to the vacillation of the Cartesian perspectivalism and the Enlightenment scopic regime. To worsen the issue of the pre-eminence of sight marked by the scopic movements previously described, technological innovations established a more distrustful state in relation to sight. Such inventions as the lamp and the camera with the consequent appearance of the photographic image, showed the precarious immediacy of vision even more and, at the same time, suggested a type of accessibility to view that had never been seen before.

Light opened the world to view. The accessibility that light provided to the panorama stimulated the ocular desire for images. Public illumination permitted the possibility of overcoming the power of the dark night. Borders between light and dark were crossed. Photography also aided the transcendence of limits. Photographs' observance of the limits between optical truth and optical illusion had a great impact on society. Therefore, the nineteenth century's experiments on light and photographs led to a challenge of the art of description that definitely exposed to view the Impressionist and post-Impressionist era.

The scopic mechanism decreased the power of the eye, which had existed since the Renaissance. However, due to the complications of the privileged status of sight in that period, new attempts to explore visual experiences culminated in and encouraged an

“extraordinary aesthetic efflorescence” that “we call Modernism” (150). In the pre-modernist time, the various references to images provided by the inventions of the light and the evidence of photographs had a great effect on the excitement of the visible. The euphoric moment, with the different approaches to visual practices due to the disillusionment with the ocularcentric discourse, led to a change in the fields of the visual arts, philosophy, and literature. This transitory moment tended to diminish the dominance of sight over the other senses.

To mark the beginning of modern movements, the Impressionist style set an intricate relation between vision and the other human senses. For the Impressionists, the internal physiological sensations must be all put together to determine sight itself. A process of perception would involve not only one sense organ but the whole body in the determination and combination of a visual experience. Moreover, the intensification of their works also encompassed the need to extend perception to a more bodily and concrete observation. Impressionism played on a direct decentralization of sight, and, in this sense, their self-portraits tried to evoke within their painting a wholeness of the living bodily being.

Yet, the attempt to introduce an art based on bodily perception did not occur without the contestation of an apparent attempt to privilege the use of the eyes. The Impressionists, even highlighting the bodily experience, were also considered beholders of passive eyes. The argument about an art that focused more on appearances brought the critique of the Symbolists into discussion. For the Symbolists, the Impressionists centered on a superficial art and the depth of ideas was not what really mattered in their art. The Symbolists, on the other hand, were characterized by their great desire to unveil the

mystery of the symbols of art, making “the logic of the visible at the service of the invisible” (157). Symbolist aesthetic, *per se*, had the tendency to evoke the connotative power of the object, rather than considering its static or basic meaning. In doing so, the Symbolists condemned the resistance to the stability of the object and favored a need for the poetic awareness of it.

Another artist started questioning the representation of art and its parallel notion of the presentation of form, the French Dada painter Marcel Duchamp. Duchamp expressed his refusal to accept an art that was expressed purely through the optical stance, and in this manner, his ideas attacked both movements, Impressionism in the visual arts field, and Formalism in the line of literary criticism. Duchamp’s artistic contributions had effective results for the history of painting, as well as for literature and philosophy. The relationship among visual arts, literature, and philosophy has been investigated since the Renaissance; however, after Duchamp, it took a different direction. Duchamp’s resistance to the immediate acceptance of form and the consequent criticism of the physical aspect of the eye caused a crisis in the matter of representation. Duchamp’s thoughts were reinforced by the ideas of the poet Stéphane Mallarmé in his writings. It seems that after Duchamp and Mallarmé, the evocations to an openness of the work of art invited the readers or spectators to get involved in questions of representation, communication, and language. The postmodern literary critic Jean-François Lyotard point out the contributions of Mallarmé’s writings as well as Duchamp’s inversion of art’s views. Lyotard comments on the unbalanced prism of literature from that period on: “when the word is made thing, it is not to copy a visible thing, but to render visible an invisible, lost thing: it gives form to the imaginary of which it speaks” (1985: 69). A

requirement for going beneath the visible itself to “really” search for meaning demanded a breakdown of the old structure of art and literature.

As for philosophy, Henri Bergson later attacked the primacy of sight over the ocularcentric heritage of French philosophy. According to Jay, “Bergson was the first modern philosopher anywhere to dispute the nobility of sight” (186); however, for other scholars, Soren Kierkegaard, Danish philosopher and theologian, was claimed to be the first. Even so, the hostility of Bergson and his critique seemed to have carried a lot more force on the antiocularcentric discourse. Since the first assumptions of Western philosophy, the dependence on visuality, clearly shown by Plato’s “Simile of the Cave”, reinforced by Descartes’s defense of the nobility of sight and supported by the Enlightenment thinkers, have characterized the tradition of philosophy and its speculation on the search for “revelatory illumination” (187). It was Bergson that strove against the sovereign position of sight in relation to the other senses. By doing so, Bergson “helped redirect philosophical inquiry back toward the body as intertwined with consciousness before the separation of mind from matter” (192). The body, for Bergson, was no longer an object of contemplation, but rather the center of the surrounding within which it was inscribed. With the body as center, its movement was what characterized the action of the world. Space and time became reduced to the limits of the body. Bergson’s defense of action over contemplation not only redirected his views on the importance of action in time and denied the power of the immediate and static role of vision, but was also the foreground to Derrida’s assumptions on *différance*.

The presentation of some assertions that are still discussed in the poststructuralist era, mainly the ones that revealed “the importance of temporal deferral as opposed to

spatial presence” (208), which culminated in *différance*, provide the contextualization for the Miltonic and the Derridean “darkness visible” perspective. According to the proposal of this thesis, “darkness visible” may represent the best choice for the position of sight in relation to the other senses. Hence, the arguments on the issue of sight, mentioned by the movements above in the fields of visual arts, literature, and philosophy, brought about a counter-tendency against the primacy of vision, which will be emphasized in the poststructuralist period. In addition, the representatives of these movements have attempted to unveil the assertions of the tradition of Western culture, resulting in an antivisual discourse that systematically established the grounds for the coming of late modernism and the beginning of postmodernism.

1.4 – Sight in modern and in postmodern times

The phases of modernism can be compared to or associated with the periods of pre and post-World Wars. Early modernism is thus more related to the beginning of the twentieth century up to the end of the Second World War. The second phase is the period after the two World Wars. It must be emphasized, that the periods between and after the wars were truly marked by great implications of sight. The World Wars evoked great fear of the physical eyes, that is, the grief of seeing the atrocities human beings were capable to commit to reach power. The panic caused by the wars attacked the masses directly and people started distrusting their eyes. In consequence, intellectuals experienced a type of loss in the trust of the eyes. The distrustful aspect of the eye is another invitation to the “darkness visible” perspective. Darkness represents, in this case, the blind state caused by

the loss of the physical eyes. The possible achievement of visibility would stand for the need to understand, through the dark horror of the wars, the reason for such events in history.

Invisibility was applied to the moments lived through in the shadow of the war. First, because enemies were inventing different ways of camouflage, and second, the smoke of the war caused by some attacks on earth and by air, compromised the clarity of light and instead of lucidity, darkness and opacity took control of the environment. Invisibility dominated the visible during that time and several attempts to reestablish visibility began occurring from that moment on, especially in the arts.

This part of the chapter will focus on the thinkers and movements from modernism to its transition to postmodernism and their questions and theories on sight. The intellectuals, thinkers, and movements are those from French thought that represented most of the changes in Western culture. Vision, as already mentioned previously, had its power diminished from the counter-Enlightenment onward. The dreadful consequences of the wars and the new movements also contributed to the denigration of the eyes and the arguments concerning their abilities.

To begin the sequence of thinkers that had a major importance on the analysis of vision, from this period on, the ideas of Georges Bataille must be discussed, as he was the one that clearly promoted the dethronement of sight from its noble position. The son of a blind man, Bataille, since his early writings, was already recognized by his obsession on the eyes. In his writings, *Visions of Excess* (1985) and *The Story of the Eye* (1986), he contrived against visual order and from it, he came up with the notion of the “enucleation” of the eyes. This enucleation consists of tearing the eyes out of the body

and reintroducing them through other bodily orifices such as the anus and the vagina. The separation of the eyes from the body tended to directly offend the Cartesian unification of the eye and the mind. Not only did the separation affect the traditional union body/soul, but also the reintroduction, or rather, the (re)embodiment through sexual orifices, affected the conventions on sexual behavior and language as well.

Bataille sought to transgress old concepts and violate the integrity of the eyes through enucleation. The consequences of enucleation would be disastrous for the high status of the eyes. First, from the eyes' removal to their reinsertion in the body, the body would suffer from instants of total blindness. Second, when being brought back into the body, the eye would be reinserted through the most denied parts of the body due to sexual constraints. Hence, the eyes would be associated with sexual parts in their low position in the body. Bataille's subversion of the traditional nobility of sight from its highest place to its dismemberment, and later to its association with sex, can be read as an attempt to liberate people from their submission and enslavement to the eyes.

The Derridean "abocular hypothesis", in his discussion of blindness in his book *Memoirs of the Blind* resembles Bataille's enucleation of the eyes. It also reflects the exercise of sight through a "darkness visible" perspective. The removal of the physical eyes corresponds to the elimination of their bodily function. In this sense, the dismemberment of the eyes follows a dark attitude that confirms the need to erase their physical aspect. Since Bataille attempts to liberate the eyes from their servile enslavement, their reinsertion into the body may suggest the possibility of attaining visibility from this act.

Like Bataille, the Surrealist thinkers and artists alluded to a “darkness visible” aspect in their art. The Surrealists sought to revolutionize the arts and grant to them the force of the rediscovery of daily activities and the interaction of vision (the seer of life) with art and words. In Surrealism, images help bring back a type of innocent version of vision. André Breton, French poet, essayist, and one of the founders of Surrealism, assumed in his thought that the first contact with an image would open the possibility of an automatic message between the beholder and the object of art to take place. In Jay’s words, through Breton’s “automatic message”, “what was revealed was often understood as a direct manifestation of the unconscious desire” (241). The possibility of reaching the unconscious could be linked to the revelation of inner desires. Breton’s metaphor of a window began to symbolize the condition of seeing. One would see through a window (the work of art) and would reach there what could be related to the unconscious.

According to another Surrealist artist, René Magritte, the window would be the device through which the seer could be outside of it as well as outside of his/her own self, which would result in a mental representation to be concluded inside the self. For him, representation based on subjectivity and the experience inside the self could vary and go beyond any possible relation, what he called “the betrayal of images” (246). When Magritte alluded to a betrayal of images, he was already putting in check the visual image in relation to the thought it could resemble. In conclusion, his notion of an internal and external relation of image and the need of thought to complete it brought consequences for the purity of the image and already emphasized an interrogation of the innocent eye previously privileged by Breton’s defense. The Surrealists challenged art, whether in photographs or in films, to question the conventions of sight, and so they have

contributed further to the ongoing crisis of ocularcentrism. Surrealism has added more controversies on the philosophical assumptions about vision, which afterwards helped formulate the philosophical movement called Phenomenology.

Phenomenology can be defined as the philosophical movement that had its basis in the ideas of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. The best representatives of this philosophical venture were Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who rediscovered Husserl's tendency in favoring ocularcentrism. Phenomenology, according to Husserl, follows the course of a type of "neo-Cartesianism". In Husserl's accounts, the importance of sight should be regarded as a rigorous scientific investigation of ideas in all their conceptual clarity. Although the analysis by Husserl can demonstrate his neo-Cartesian tendency, the other thinker of Phenomenology, Heidegger, had another position as a critic of the primacy of vision.

Heidegger's goal reflected his doubtful position in relation to the power of sight. He kept his assumptions based on the privilege of the ear. His admiration for the Hebraic beliefs of "hearing God's word" (269), helped him favor the ear and, at the same time, mistrust belief in sight, which was a tradition inherited in our Western ocularcentric society from the Greeks. For him, the power of visual manipulation was nothing less than an uninteresting position of society. He rejected the dualistic subject/object analysis in which sight appears to be the matter of its definition. He questioned visual metaphors and claimed that they represent the sort of distance that impairs clear understanding. He even "employed visual metaphors of his own to evoke his alternative to the dominant metaphysical/physical tradition" (273). This aspect of his ideas emphasizes his concern about the power of a visually passive society.

Heidegger suggested a type of difference between two modes of vision, one called epistemological and the other called ontological. The epistemological is the one that Heidegger blamed constantly, especially because of its rigid and restrained manner. As David Michael Levin has written in his *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation*, the epistemological for Heidegger carried the following imperfection:

The visible deeply *objects* to our objectification; it will not fully give itself, will not wholly yield itself, to our desire. The most extreme evidence in which this is visible appears when we engage in an exercise in intensive staring: “a fixed staring at something that is purely present-at-hand (*vorhanden*).” In German, the word which we translate as “representation” is *Vorstellung* [...] I submit that the concealed essence of “representation” begins to appear through this interpretation, and that it is, in a word, *staring*. (68)

Levin has analyzed Heidegger’s opposition to the epistemological role of vision, mainly because of the “staring” characteristic of objectification. Heidegger had always condemned the synchronic feature of the fixed gaze that had primacy in Western philosophy. He claimed that the fixed staring gaze granted force to space and forgot to acknowledge the importance of temporality in Western metaphysics.

The other mode of vision, the ontological, on the other hand, displays the best side of sight, according to Heidegger. In this mode, the viewer is circumscribed in visual surroundings and his/her field is limited by what he/she is able to see around him/her. In this limited visual locus, the viewer “is not just sensing something, or staring at it. It implies circumspective concern” (275). The word circumspective has its origin in the Latin *circumspectus*, the past participle of *circumspicere*: ‘to look around, to be cautious’, from *circum-* + *specere* ‘to look’, in the sense of spying (*OED*). The definition implies a careful look to consider all circumstances and possible consequences, or the

exercise of a prudent look. As “circumspective” is defined, the ontological mode of vision involves careful observation and analysis of the possible consequences of the gaze.

When a careful view of a certain situation undergoes a moment of analysis and consideration, the view goes beyond the physical dimension of the look and attains another level of comprehension. Thus, it can be concluded that Heidegger’s criticism of the static gaze demonstrated his concern about a certain passive position of the viewer that had often been imposed by Western tradition. However, his claims about the ontological gaze privileged the viewer as the one who sets, analyses, and completes the conclusion of the gaze. In this process, instead of a direct representation of the object, the subject performs the act of interpretation of it. Despite this incisive defense of the ontological mode of vision, Heidegger maintained his position against the supremacy of the eye.

The French thinkers who analyzed the aspects of Husserl’s and Heidegger’s phenomenology, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, as mentioned previously, also argued their point of view on the epistemological and ontological modes of vision. Sartre invoked a refusal of any expression of value given to sight as a plausible one. For Sartre, not only did the epistemological mode fail in the relation of space being more important than time, but also the ontological weakened intersubjective relations, in the subject/object interaction. Unlike Sartre, Merleau-Ponty had a favorable attitude towards the ontological mode, and by doing so, he can be regarded as a defender of sight that tried to restore the nobility of vision.

In his discussions, Sartre made three critiques against sight that helped define the denigration of vision in the middle of the twentieth century. The first “is his rejection of

an opaque transcendental ego intruding into the translucency of pure, active consciousness. The second is his radical separation of perception, visual or otherwise, from the derealizing, nihilating imagination” (286). The third critical point was the primacy of vision to conceive the meaning of an object. The insufficient role of vision to describe an object gave way to a type of leveling attitude toward not only vision but also the other senses. From these three general critiques of Sartre, the result of all of them intertwined, was the logic of the pure subject. The pure subject was the outcome of “the seeing without being seen [...] one’s body is turned into an object of the other’s vision for oneself as well” (290). For Sartre this logic has been haunting Western philosophical and religious thought since the biblical story of Adam’s Fall. Right after the Fall, Adam and Eve acknowledged that they were naked because they could not escape the eyes of the vigilant God. Thus, when the body is the revealed image of the other’s view, it turns itself into a “fallen object”. The victimization of being the fallen object of the other’s gaze was the main line of criticism that Sartre adopted to argue against vision.

In spite of the friendship between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, the latter did not follow the same radicalism as Sartre on the issue of vision. Merleau-Ponty, on the contrary path of Sartre, attempted to reaffirm his Phenomenology based on the nobility of sight. The works of Merleau-Ponty can be read as performing two definite phases. The first corresponded to the phase in which he investigated Phenomenology as the study of essences, including the two main essences that for him describe the world: the essence of perception and the essence of consciousness. He defended Phenomenology as a method of describing the nature of people’s perceptual contact with the world. Perception becomes the background of experience that guides every conscious action. The world, for

Merleau-Ponty, was a field for perception, and through perception human consciousness would give meaning to it. In their first phase, the works of Merleau-Ponty showed a type of enthusiasm toward the recovery of sight's nobility, and he believed in a possible expression of philosophy based on perception that would most likely become a post-Cartesian philosophy.

The second phase of Merleau-Ponty's work still searched for the accomplishment of sight as the powerful "device" in the great world of perception; however, in this phase, Merleau-Ponty seemed to be a little more skeptical about his ideas and allowed this line of his research to be more questioned on the issues of vision. A deeper kind of analysis took place in his career from the Sixties on. He started broadening his scope in the terms of senses. He realized that perception would not be limited by the high power of the eyes; on the contrary, the eyes would need the efficacy of the other senses to integrate the full experience of perception.

The full perception was defined as an action that included all the senses. The ideas of Bergson as pointed out previously could be considered a major influence on Merleau-Ponty's action of full perception. Similar to Bergson's concept that "perception was active, rather than contemplative" (302), Merleau-Ponty's unification of the senses would perform the same act of perception. The communication among the senses created a harmonic linking. Merleau-Ponty placed a strong emphasis on the harmony of the senses as if they would compose the "flesh of the world" (316). The "flesh of the world" could be best explained as the formation of the Being, which contained an internal process of articulations and distinctions.

The internal process corresponded to a visible and invisible condition that fulfilled the being. In his book *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968), Merleau-Ponty insisted that “an anonymous visibility inhabits [...] us, a vision in general, in virtue of that primordial property that belongs to the flesh” (142), a visibility that is invisible. Besides the communion of the senses claiming the internal process of perception, another piece of contribution came up to incorporate the full possibility of perception – language. Merleau-Ponty was fascinated with the power of language to provide the meanings of perception with a clearer speech. According to Jay’s account, Merleau-Ponty extended his fascination to his studies of literature and in so doing he realized that the “literary language in particular provides the demonstrative stories that inscribe the invisible in the visible” (324). The use of Heidegger’s words in which language is “the house of being” (324) shows Merleau-Ponty’s significant incorporation of language in his ideas as the best supplement for the senses in the fulfillment of perception.

Finally, Merleau-Ponty’s contributions to an ocularcentric theory of the world respected the two phases of his researches. In the beginning, he emphasized the importance of perception as the basis for meaning and communication. However, at the second phase of his career, he started to mingle perception and language and tried to explore how language works and intersects with the senses to complete perception. In such intersection, the chiasmic aspect of the visible and invisible appears and represents Merleau-Ponty’s great influence on philosophical assumptions about perception. Merleau-Ponty’s account in his book *The Visible and the Invisible* support the parallelism between his ideas with the Miltonic “darkness visible” and the Derridean perspectives that are the focus of this thesis, as can be seen in what follows:

The invisible is *there* without being an *object* [...] the “visibles” themselves, in the last analysis, they too are only centered on a nucleus of absence – [...] When I say that every visible is invisible, that perception is imperception, [...] that to see is always to see more than one sees [...] - One has to understand that it is visibility itself that involves a nonvisibility. (257)

The visible and invisible aspects on sight defended by Merleau-Ponty's decentralization of perception appeared at the end of his career and was a more detailed relation of perception, granting to it an intertwined aspect with language. His assumptions on perception as the basis of meaning as well as his remarks on the matters of the absence of a visible sign, anticipated the Derridean play of traces and have brought Merleau-Ponty a great amount of criticism.

One of the main critics of Merleau-Ponty's new philosophy of perception was the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. However, Lacan also recognized Merleau-Ponty's important inquiry of vision when he discussed the issue of visibility and invisibility. For Lacan, Merleau-Ponty only failed when he interpreted the visible and the invisible through a chiasmic aspect. Lacan suggested that Merleau-Ponty should have applied instead of the visible and the invisible, the terms eye and gaze, and afterwards analyzed the implications of both. Nevertheless, before entering the psychoanalytic world of Lacan and its applications, as well as criticism on sight, one must go directly to the basis of psychoanalysis, which is the Freudian heritage. Lacan can be read as the French interpretation/reception of Freud. For an analysis of Lacan's participation in the antiocularcentric discourse, it is necessary to focus on Freud's anti-ocular aspect of his theories.

Freud elaborated his ideas on the unconscious, insisting that a reading of the unconscious itself ought to be done with both eyes either closed, or with just one wide

open. For Freud, “Psychoanalysis was then first and foremost an act of interpreting” (170)⁵, making the hidden traces of the unconscious become conscious and “apparent”. Freud’s interpretation of the unconscious could be compared to the Derridean suggestion of reading/interpreting as an act that must proceed at night, following a “darkness visible” aspect. The attempt to perceive the unconscious opened a lacuna in Freud’s theoretical ground about the issue of vision, which was widened by another Freudian concept, “The Uncanny”. In “The Uncanny”, the fear of going blind or the castration of the eyes was compared to a consequent castration of the sexual object. In this sense, the eyes would no longer find their identification in one’s own body. The concept of “The Uncanny” brings about the idea of a “double” (162), which proceeds with the identification of the other, through the eyes, for the completion of oneself. The ambiguity in the constitution of the self generated the complex analysis of the psychoanalytic function of vision. Moreover, Freud’s famous talk therapy, avoiding physical eye contact, could be regarded as one of his contributions to an anti-ocularcentric position. Freud’s avoiding the eye contact with his patients during therapy resembled the placing of one in front of a mirror. The patient’s look, without the reciprocal view of the doctor, established the dominion of the hearing sense in the therapy and consequently, a dethroning of sight. Lacan made use of Freud’s theories, updating them with the most antvisual representation of Freud’s works, and elaborated a linguistic psychoanalytical evaluation of vision.

Lacan’s ideas about the formation of the “I” were developed concomitantly with his other commentaries on other theories of Freud. The Lacanian main assumptions worked on the matters related to “the mirror stage” in the complex production of the “I”.

⁵ The references to Freud’s essays “Beyond the Pleasure Principle” and “The Uncanny” are from Rivkin and Ryan (2000).

From the physical difference between the seer and the subject of the seer's view emerged the quest for the wholeness of his or her *Ideal-I*. According to Lacan, this quest is never accomplished, because human beings are in essence agents of a never achieved perfection. Like Freud's approach in "The Uncanny", for Lacan the subject "I" does not command the central position of the struggle for one's life; on the contrary, the self is recognized in the other. In his essay "The Mirror Stage" (1977), Lacan's dialectic entails recognition of the otherness of the nonself, which culminates in a "specular double" aspect. Hence, Lacan started his defense of the function of language in maintaining the preservation of the other, and therefore, frustrating specular identity.

In the process of self-realization, Lacan introduced, as pointed out previously by Merleau-Ponty's observation on the visible and the invisible, the terms "the eye" and "the gaze". Lacan recognized Merleau-Ponty's right attitude "in dividing the scopic field" (358). In both situations, be that proposed by Merleau-Ponty or Lacan, the inquiry on vision is clear for the formation of the self. The role of the physical eye characterized Western philosophical plenitude of the Cartesian *cogito*. A division between the function of the eye and the gaze represents a removal of sight from its supreme position. The division inscribed in sight transforms it into a "scopic drive" (359). For a drive, one may understand the eternal search outside for the erotic in need of self-fulfillment.

Lacan suggested an intersection between the two spheres, the eye and the gaze. For such enterprise, he used Roger Caillois's "intersection of two planes" (365) portrayed in the figure of triangles. In one triangle, the one that stands for the Cartesian notion, the eye occupies the apex and the object stands far from the view of the eye. The other triangle symbolizes the gaze and is portrayed by a flash of light at the apex. The apexes

of the triangles serve as the example of a type of intersection of both, since both the eye and the gaze occupy them. In the intersection, both coincide in form of a unified but also divided image. Apparently, this representation summarizes Lacan's formulation. However, in Jay's account of Lacan, he realizes that it is quite difficult to reduce "Lacan's complicated dialectic of the eye and the gaze in any simple formula" (367). To problematize even more Lacan's attempt to represent the eye and the gaze, his ideas suggest a comparison of the ocular system to a labyrinth. For Lacan, the ocular system also has mysterious mechanisms that may assure it the intricate features of a labyrinth.

The use of Lacanian thought, especially his choice for Caillois's representation of the triangles with their intersection, together with the maze of a labyrinth, demonstrate the dark realm of vision up to the moment of attaining visibility, and, in a sense, they provide a contextualization for Derrida's ideas. Derrida's blindnesses, which will be discussed later, seem to be a product of the Lacanian suggestion of the intersection of two spheres in a long and intertwined path to interpretation.

Lacan's suspicion of the gaze was one of his main contributions to the complicated ocularcentrism of his time. Not only did he become a critic of the supremacy of sight, but was also considered to be much more radical than Freud. As a structuralist, Lacan helped reinforce the significance of language over perception. The appropriation of Lacanian ideas can be easily perceived in the works of his structuralist companions, especially in the French theoretician, Louis Althusser.

Louis Althusser, a Marxist structuralist, acknowledged his interest in Lacan's theories. Althusser seemed to have comprehended the Lacanian position of criticism against ocularcentrism. What Althusser showed, using the ideas provided him by Freud

and Lacan, was the pervasively in-conscious character of ideology, inherent in social practices, in the process of attribution of meaning. In his essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”, ideology constitutes an illusion of and an allusion to reality (Rivkin & Ryan 294). His ideas reinforced the sort of an imaginary relation that is established in the ideology of a system. What is represented in ideology is not the system with its ideal relations that govern the existence of an individual, but an imaginary relation of the individuals to the “real” relations in which they live.

For Althusser, the conceptualization of ideology is the representation of certain systems such as religion, the school, and others, and how the individuals deal with or live under them. With religion as an example of ideology, individuals perform their actions because they believe that through them they can attain something else. They go to masses or services, they kneel, they pray; in other words, through visible performances, they represent themselves in the rituals that follow some of the “correct attitudes” established by religion. Thus, through a material consolidation, that is, a visual representation, the individuals accept their act according to the other’s ideas. The individual’s identity is established with respect to a series of acts imposed by the laws of these great structures. In this sense, the only way that an individual has to become a subject is by visibly subjecting himself or herself to the systems’ imposed laws.

Lacan and Althusser discussed psychoanalysis and the ideological effects of it upon the individual/subject. To whatever degree, their critique of the ocular-centered condition of society had psychological and social complications. Instead of an “I” that subjects itself to fit the codes of behavior suggested by the great structures, in their accounts, they provide the denouncement of the risks of the reliance on the visible and

attempt for the openness of the invisible in the eye/I act of seeing. Their contributions can be related to the process of self-formation that coincides with the introduction of a “darkness visible” perspective in the constitution of the “I”. In this matter, the constitution suggests the erasure of the physical implications of the eye’s subjection and the insertion of the “I” with a higher valorization of the inner aspect in the presentation of the subject constituted as an “I”.

To broaden the scope of the implications of the formation of the “I”, the thoughts of Michel Foucault and Guy Debord must be analyzed, especially because they extend the problematic issue of the domination of sight in the visual constitution of the “I” to other fields like the medical, social, and political. The French philosopher Michel Foucault questioned the notion that vision incorporated the phases of an ideological construction of the subject, but also that sight possessed one aspect that directly inflicts its power for the maintenance of control through surveillance. In *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of Prison* (1991), Foucault interrogates the powerful device of surveillance, when he considers the complications of the empirical medical gaze based on Jeremy Bentham’s optical mechanism for surveillance, the panopticon. The medical gaze was grounded on the direct observation of patients who suffered from mental diseases. According to Foucault, the deep analysis of a patient would turn him or her into a victim of an ocular and authoritative control. Foucault condemned the one-way direction of the psychological gaze, in which the doctors would perform their careful and, for them, empirical vigilance, and disregard the active reciprocal gaze. The passivity of the patient with respect to his or her condition of simply receiving the action, was compared to Bentham’s panopticon.

The panopticon was idealized by Bentham as the perfect mode for controlling the behavior of prisoners. It can be compared to a type of physical structure that corresponds to the elevated position of the eye of God that is able to see and know every action of His creation. The look from above exercises a total control on the people that are a part of such a prison. In the panopticon, the monitoring system of the prisoners requires constant vigilance. The super-vision helps ensure that the guidelines are followed by those under the optical gaze. The prisoner never knows at any given moment if supervision is being performed or not. Therefore, the fear of constant observation makes the prisoners always obey the rules imposed on them. Thus, the major effect of the panopticon is to induce in the prisoner a state of conscious and permanent visibility that ensures the automatic and direct functioning of power.

For Foucault, according to Jay's accounts, "our society is [...] of surveillance [...] We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine" (411). Foucault, in this aspect, concentrated his critique on the dominance of an ocular and vigilant power that tends to ensure discipline and regulate the subject's passive position as the object of the gaze. In the view of this thesis, the Foucaultian implications of the panopticon can be highlighted in the lines of *Paradise Lost*. The references to them will be studied further in this thesis, but they already anticipate the broader Miltonic scope of the discussions on sight.

Unlike Foucault, with his focus on the controlled view of the eye with its power to regulate the object of the gaze through constant observation, Guy Debord and his Situationist colleagues pointed out the dangers of being the subjects of the gaze. Differently from Foucault, the Situationists believed in the possibility of the reversal of

the subject, who would turn into a new subject. For the new subject, one may understand a more active, direct involvement with the purpose of making the ocularcentric bias turn against itself.

For Debord, the world of illusion in which society takes part became a “gigantic spectacle” (429), because the visible product of consumption is now part of a much bigger system, the one that unites production and consumption. In his antiocular discourse, Debord marks the problematic issue of the growth of vision in this society of consumption, the type of consumption that is first performed through the eyes. Although the discourse of the Situationists seems to have been set apart, the notion of the subject and society as spectacle left its thoughts that highly influenced postmodern thinkers. Foucault and Debord reinforced the dangers of discourses based on the supremacy of the ocular representation of the twentieth century. Other thinkers also came along to strengthen the critique of the ocular-centered tradition. The new technologies in the visual field added to the analysis on the implications of the dominance of vision marked Roland Barthes’s and Christian Metz’s significant discussions on photographs and cinema respectively.

Roland Barthes, a structuralist, semiologist, and a cultural critic, believed that the image should be considered a visible text and should be analyzed through the combinations of the gaze and of the rhetoric of language. In his essay “Right in the Eyes” (1985), published posthumously, he concluded his concerns about the gaze, considering its analysis a science that

interprets the gaze in three combinable ways: in terms of information (the gaze informs), in terms of relation (gazes are exchanged), in terms of possession (by the gaze, I touch, I attain, I seize, I am seized): three functions: optical, linguistic, haptic [...] it is an *anxious* sign. (238)

For a structuralist reader who returned in the belief and pleasure of the binary oppositions, the three functions of the gaze come to contradict his defense of the dualistic reading of a sign. However, the functions of the gaze seem to better explain and summarize other arguments previously regarded as the necessity of evaluating the gaze in its different complexities. At the same time that he recognizes the gaze as an anxious sign, Barthes calls it not a sign but merely an object of significance. The ambivalence of his treatment of the gaze seems to summarize the difficulty in simply applying a ready-made order of signification to it. Even his interpretation of the three functions of the gaze appears as reinforcement for his uncertainties in relation to vision.

To further complicate his approach toward the gaze, Barthes's preoccupation with the role of the photograph as a product of an emotional trauma justifies his considering the gaze an anxious sign. For Barthes, according to Jay, the anxiety provoked by the photograph in the eyes of the beholder is related to "a new space-time category: spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority, the photograph being an illogical conjunction between the *here-now* and the *there-then*" (443). Besides, photographs suggest the sorrowfulness of the loss, especially because they represent only the part of an action in which the wholeness may never be "really" revealed. Loss in this sense is read as death, which for Ronald Barthes concludes the absence of the real/human image on a piece of paper. As he points out, death is the cognition of photography.

Another conclusion that Barthes reached in his theories is related to the difference between photography and cinema. Some consider cinema as the expression of animated photographs. Barthes, on the other hand, preferred to regard cinema as a complete discrepancy from photography. He described photographs as parts that could not signify

their whole. For film, Barthes acknowledged the possibility of wholeness, comparing them to literature and recognizing in them the focus on narrative. In this sense, films are texts to be decoded and analyzed. The condition of a decoding analysis changed the filmic realm to a semiological study, including in it a critique of the fundamental issues that were behind the scenes and plots of the cinema.

For the essays concerning the semiological analysis of films and their particularities, Christian Metz's contributions to the scope of the cinema in the antiocularcentric discourse of his time should be taken into consideration. Metz agreed with Barthes when he claimed that films were different from the stillness of the photograph. Moreover, Metz also agreed with the Barthesian position of photos as the evocation of a past event. For Metz, films bring forth the sensation of present, because the moving scenes produce an effect of real life. The reproduction of scenes of life, either showed in the past or future, apparently duplicates scenes of "reality". Metz tried in his essays to explain the effect of the illusions of cinema on people's lives and how the projected reality of images can affect them.

In the scope of the illusions of images suggested by Metz, Jean Baudrillard's "hyperreal" world also opens up the main discussion of figurality in postmodern discourse. For Baudrillard, images cannot simply involve the dangers of the panopticon or a society of the spectacle to keep the authoritative gaze of capitalism. In fact, images do not represent the real but a "hyperreal". "It is a hyperreal, produced from a radiating synthesis of combinatory models" (Baudrillard, 1994: 2). In this sense, the eye loses its power of commanding the entrance of images and dominating the interpretation of them. Images become a product of combining past/present events and acts and exercise their

“hyperreal” presence no matter how powerfully the physical exercise of the eyes imposes itself.

The implications on the issue of images suggested by Baudrillard are concluded in the postmodern remarks of the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard. Lyotard argues that postmodernism is haunted by the figural. In this sense, discourse for Lyotard follows the direct lines of a text while figures involve a spatial line, that is, the figural can lead to other dimensions of significance. The spatial turns out to be so distanced from a ready-made interpretation that Lyotard calls the ground of the figural invisible. The notion of absence is emphasized by the figural and, in this way, vision for Lyotard should be the receptacle of the invisible. Lyotard shows that vision has its restraints and limitations, and that the eye may read the figural and possibly reach expressions of the unconscious in a rather mysterious or dark way.

Lyotard’s writings can be better described as a struggle with the relative reduction of the scope of discourse. Lyotard, through the use of several plausible analogies in the fields of arts (more precisely modernist paintings), literature, optics, psychoanalysis, and others, insists that language possesses the vertical role of designation, that is, its signification cannot be reduced to the flat effect of the horizontal system of opposing the linguistic terms. Thus, language “relies on the difference of the referent from the system, on the opacity of the sign rather than the transparency of the signifier” (The John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism, 2005). Nevertheless, Lyotard is not a defender of any strategy to reinforce the act of returning to the reality of things or absolute truth in the analysis of the figurality of a text. For him, the density of the object goes beyond that of textual space; it escapes textuality simply

because the differences within a text cannot be reduced to a simple set of binary oppositions. In this sense, reading should proceed as a suspicious act over the stance of perspective.

The identification of a certain incredulity toward a text, especially the great literary works that used to be regarded as sacred texts, marks for Lyotard the beginning of postmodernism and his questions about the legitimation of discourse in such texts also emphasize his worries about the dominance of the visual experience of reading. He also acknowledges a distinctive stage that sets the changing of modernism to postmodernism, which is the perspective in relation to the aesthetics of the sublime. The sublime is defined as the condition of transcending greatness, whether in the physical, moral, intellectual or artistic realms.

The first study of the value of the sublime is from the treatise *On the Sublime* by the Greek teacher and rhetorician Longinus, in the third century A.D. In the eighteenth century, Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant returned to the issue of the sublime in their writings. For Kant, the sublime stands for a feeling originating from the aesthetic of judgment, in which we, human beings, come to the conclusion of the limits of human nature. Kant also depicts the sublime in relation to how the mind works under effects alternating between two states, attraction and repulsion. The mind is involved in an oscillation between these two states and the complexity or impossibility of reaching one specific pause opens it up to infinity, which is a cause of the sublime.

The sublime can be read as the invisibility of the figural. The analysis that reaches invisible infinitudes and holds one to a position of either attraction or repulsion, transcends the limits of a single and direct interpretation and leads to greatness. In Jay's

account, Kant concludes his ideas on the sublime as “the experience that ‘alludes to something which can’t be shown or presented’” (582). The sublime being something that cannot be demonstrated infests the world of thinkers, with questions on representability that preview postmodern thought with the ghosts of unrepresentability.

In conclusion, the position of the postmodern thinkers, more precisely, that of Lyotard, is encouraged by Emmanuel Levinas’s argumentation against the Greek cultural influence and promotes a deep suspicion of visual representation. The search for transparency is simply discarded in the postmodern time. Postmodernism has its own slogan, which is opacity. The antiocularcentric discourse is now reinforced by the allusions of postmodern thinkers, who tend to worsen and complicate any attempt to return the eyes to their supremacy over the other senses.

Lyotard’s ideas suggesting the oscillation between the figural and the literal sight and his basis on opacity conclude Jay’s book and open the way to an introduction to Derrida’s theories and hypotheses of blindnesses. Jay’s words based on the French thinkers who have represented one of the frames of the literary criticism of the West show how visual metaphors interfere in language. Visual representation inevitably involves an interaction with language, and the results of such an interaction consist of the rhetoric of the perceptual experience and the figural constructs beneath them. Thus, according to the reading of this thesis, sight in Jay’s book concentrates on the representation of its movements and emphasizes that through downcast eyes the high elevation of view descends to the stance of a down-to-earth analysis.

An analysis, like that made in Jay’s book, may serve as the basis to contextualize the Derridean thought and support the view of this research in the examination of the

visual metaphors in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and also see how they perform their movements in the representation of vision. In short, Milton's "darkness visible" metaphor from *Paradise Lost*, written in the seventeenth century, seems to me the best expression to conclude the present analysis. The deepest point of the fall of sight intertwines visibility with its dark aspect and elucidates the dangers of trusting the immediate image of the gaze. The analysis of the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost*, under the Derridean scope, will prove to be a discussion on the movements of sight and its implications in the determination and identification of the serious debates on the self-formation of the eye/I, and the need to establish one's (in)stance⁶ in the realm of interpretation.

⁶ To attain the main focus of this thesis, which is, the reading of the figural "I" in a "darkness visible" perspective, I will play with the words instance and stance to supplement such an attempt. The prefix "in" will be separated from the word "stance" to suggest a need to go into an inward process. The words instance and stance will be defined according to the following meanings, respectively: a) a step, a stage, or situation viewed as part of a process; b) a posture, an intellectual or emotional attitude. In this sense, the attainment of a "downward path to wisdom" will proceed through a "darkness visible" perspective, in a gradual exercise of seeing inwardly that culminates in the act of reading as a process of experiencing an inward stance, or rather, an intellectual attitude.

2 – The Derridean approach to vision/blindness

Martin Jay's book *Downcast Eyes* (1993) has provided a general view on the issue of sight from its first references to the postmodern moment. Jay's encyclopedic accounts also emphasize Derrida's role in the denigration of the power of sight in the approach focused on French discourse, on the arguments of the visual field within physical perception, its social and political implications, and based on the assumptions of other thinkers about visual metaphors as has never been done before. The bulk of *Downcast Eyes* works as a guide to reach, through the variety of criticisms on ocularcentrism, a comprehensive summary of the wide range of critics and their thoughts on this issue, and finally provide the contextualization for Derrida's prospect of sight. Jay's encounter with Derridean thought concerning the aspect of sight has delimited Derrida's theories in a double reading of specular tradition and his position with respect to white mythology. Derrida's arguments on the visual elements of discourse are paralleled to his own questions on the "metaphysics of presence". The illusion of presence is responsible for the illusion of the immediacy of sight. In such discussions, Jacques Derrida has been one of the greatest influences on the philosophical thoughts since the 60's.

Derrida's name is associated with the word *deconstruction*, for the absorption of this word in Anglo-American vocabulary and criticism. Yet, his works must be

acknowledged not only for this term, but also for his contributions to question Western philosophical assumptions. Since the introduction of Derrida's works, the influence of his writings has gone farther than he expected, surpassing the limits of philosophy and literary criticism and invading other fields such as theological studies, drawing, painting, and musical schools.

Jacques Derrida set forth his philosophy in a large number of texts. Given the amount of writings and the extended line of thought of this philosopher, the scope of this thesis will concentrate only on a small part of the Derridean world. To understand Derrida's play on the issue of sight, a brief view of his studies will be presented. Yet, the immediate object of Derrida's text that will serve as the basis for the line of research of this thesis will be his book *Memoirs of the Blind* (1993).

The reading of Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind* will provide the ground for the debate on the importance of the visual metaphors in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In this Chapter, my intent is to prove that Derrida's approach to vision and blindness, and the matters concerning the risks of the immediacy of sight can be compared to Milton's view, suggested by the employment of the visual metaphors in *Paradise Lost*. In fact, Milton's "darkness visible" perspective is compatible, in the view of this thesis, with that of the poststructuralists, particularly with that of Derrida. Therefore, it is argued that the perspective proposed by the lines of *Paradise Lost*, an epic poem of the seventeenth century, negotiates with the dialectics of traditional philosophy on the issue of vision/blindness in the contemporary period.

2.1 – An overall view of the theories of Jacques Derrida

In the first text published by Derrida, in 1962, *Introduction à L'Origine de la géometrie par Edmund Husserl*, he makes a direct reference to literature, to be more precise, to the Irish writer James Joyce. In the works of Joyce, Derrida became acquainted “with the explosion of metaphoricity and of multilingual association” and declared his fascination for “the tension between these two interpretations of language” (Caputo, 1997: 182), the literal and the figural. Based on the conclusions of his first work, in which Husserl insisted on “the imperative of univocity” (Derrida, 1978: 100), and that the meanings of words would be kept the same throughout times, Derrida could perceive the difference in Joyce’s assumptions in comparison to Husserl’s. Joyce, as opposed to Husserl, cultivated plurivocity and claimed that every word would receive within its own load the highest amount of associative significance according to the different views in which it was inserted.

Husserl, seduced by the possible forces in the constitution of meaning, finally admitted a certain alteration in the power of univocity. Feeling the self-limitation of univocity, he raised the question of plurivocity with the mutation of the significance of words and ideas. It is with the arguments on meaning and the position between two poles of signification, the univocal – representing the present – and the plurivocal – opening other contexts – that the idea of an operation upon meaning is brought to life. Deconstruction would be the tool for this operation. The announcement of the word deconstruction came later with the publication of *Of Grammatology* (1976). The birth of deconstruction may be regarded as a Husserlian theory of the constitution of signification and a Derridean exposition of Joyce’s concepts on the playful effects of meaning. Yet, Derrida warns that the play of meanings could not simply take any direction, resulting in

a wide variety of inferences; on the contrary, it consists of the idea of reinscribing meaning with a different play, the “play of traces” (Caputo 184). The concept of traces will be brought into the discussion further on, but before it, a deeper approach to deconstruction is necessary.

The play of different significances works directly with the concepts of the “metaphysics of presence”. Derrida chose and adapted the “Heideggerian word *Destruktion* or *Abbau*” (Kamuf, 1991: 270-71), because it signified a type of operation showing the traditional structure of the fundamental ideas of Western metaphysics. Deconstruction, for Derrida, did not represent annihilation, but an attempt to (de)construct the concepts and constructs considered to be given fundamentals. To understand Derrida’s idea of “to deconstruct”, it is necessary to go to the first allusions of his creation of this word. Derrida used, according to the French dictionary *Littre*’s definition, “*Déconstruire*. I. To disassemble the parts of a whole [...] Grammatical term. Disarranging the construction of words in a sentence [...] To deconstruct verse, rendering it, by the suppression of meter, similar to prose” (Kamuf 270-71). The simplification of the “origin” of Derrida’s deconstruction does not intend to underestimate the importance of this term. It is simply a way of exposing Derrida’s first position, not against the tradition of philosophy, but against the limitation of the immediate meaning suggested by the structures, which, as parts of a whole, signify assumptions that attempt to relate their allusions to absolute fundamentals.

Philosophy has, up to Derrida, been the study of the “metaphysics of presence”, in which “all names related to fundamentals, to principals, or to the center have always designated the constant of a presence” (Culler 92). The “metaphysics of presence” has

permeated its power of setting the world in a logocentric order. The logocentric order, denominated by a frame of binary oppositions, such as nature/culture, consists of two terms. The position of these two terms is marked by the superiority of the first term “that belongs to the logos and is a higher presence” (Culler 92) in relation to the second term, considered inferior.

In Jonathan Culler’s accounts of Derrida’s discussions on the hierarchical encounter of the two terms in the binary position, he argues about the belief that the opposing terms carry the absolute idea of truth, as follows:

arguments cite particular instances of presence as grounds for further development, these instances then invariably prove to be already complex constructions. What is proposed as a given, an elementary constituent, proves to be a product, dependent or derived in ways that deprive it of the authority of simple or pure presence. (94)

In this manner, according to Culler’s account, the word de-construction brings the possibilities of de-constructing the social constructions that are mistakenly considered given concepts with the values of full presence.

Derrida, as mentioned above by Culler, appeals to a reflection on the hidden structures of the binary oppositions. Deconstruction, as indicated in his book *Dissemination* (1981), is not a strategy that searches for the total destruction of meaning, but radically opposed to this, it is what opens up the meaning of language, which through writing is marked by “the disappearance of natural presence” (xiv), the immediacy of the first meaning attributed to one’s reading. To use Derrida’s own words:

Deconstruction is not a form of textual vandalism designed to prove that meaning is impossible. In fact, the word ‘de-construction’ is closely related not to the word ‘destruction’ but to the word ‘analysis’, which etymologically means ‘to undo’ – a virtual synonym for ‘to de-construct’. The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or generalized skepticism, but by careful teasing out of warring forces of

signification within the text itself. If anything is destroyed in a deconstructive reading, it is not meaning but the claim to unequivocal domination of one mode of signifying over another. This, of course, implies that a text signifies in more than one way, and to varying degrees of explicitness. (xvi)

Unfortunately, Derrida's deconstruction has been suffering from a wide range of misinterpretations. Some apply it as a method of reading. Some try to impose on it limitations by placing it within the "post" moments such as postmodernism and poststructuralism. In limiting deconstruction as a type of reading, most of the claims lie in the presupposition that through it, philosophy has ended because it exposes philosophy to an abyss with no surroundings or final conceptions.

In "A Letter to a Japanese Friend" (1988), the turbulences of deconstruction seem to be well explained because Derrida is asked to define it. First, Derrida proposes that deconstruction is not something to be enclosed in a delimitation such as "deconstruction is X" or "deconstruction is not X" (Kamuf 275). Instead, it is a term that should bear reflections on its function and it acquires its value when it is inserted in a "chain of possible substitutions, in what is too blithely called a 'context'" (Kamuf 275). Furthermore, he insists that the possibility of reaching the interfaces of deconstruction occurs only through the replacement and determination of other words such as "trace, *différance*, supplement, hymen, pharmakon, [...] etc" (Kamuf 275). In this sense, to reach a type of deconstructive (in)stance, one should take into consideration all the possibilities of the words above, as well as their implications in a variety of contexts, bringing forth the different conceptions in their readings and (mis)readings.

Différance, Derrida's coined term, appeared in a lecture he delivered in 1968. The use of the variance of the "a" in the word *difference* is to call attention to a difference that

can only be perceived through the graphic interpretation of the word. The “*a*” sets the difference between writing and speech, because when they are spoken in French – *différance* and *différence* – no alteration can be perceived. Derrida points out that *différance* is not simply a word, nor is it a concept that can be represented by a fixed definition; it is rather an association that dissociates at the same time that brings together two forms of signification. To make it clear in English, it is necessary to understand the French origin of *différance*. The verb “to differ” that in French is “différer” means both to be unlike, in terms of difference, and to delay, in terms of an interval of spacing. In this manner, *différance* can mean an access to meaning through the analysis of a temporizing and spatializing state.

Derrida’s introduction of *différance* appeals to the graphic intervention that has no indication of or intention to shock any reading or reader or expert in language. He suggests in his text that the graphic difference may lead sight and hearing to sink “into the darkness”, where the difference “never constitutes the fullness of a sensible term, but draws out an invisible connection, the mark of an inapparent relation between two spectacles” (Derrida, 1972: 387)⁷. In the Derridean words and in the scope of Milton’s phrase, *différance* parallels a view through a “darkness visible” perspective. The darkened state of meaning goes from the present/absent state that varies from speech to writing. Hence, speech is acknowledged as a present contact with meaning, marking the sign of its presence and thought. Contrary to speech, writing consists of sets of graphical

⁷ Derrida’s lecture on *Différance*, delivered in 1968, was published in *Marges de la Philosophie* (1972). Since the version available is in French, the references to this Derridean essay will be from: Rivkin and Ryan (2000), where it was published in full, and in English.

marks that are separated from the presence or the present thought that may have produced them.

Writing, in this view, is characterized by an absent representation. Speech is not the possessor of presence, as it had been defended since Plato's time. Derrida claims that the trace or the memory already present in one's mind prepares in advance its own present/message before it is uttered or written. The absence of the sign contributes to the differentiation of the binary presence/absence. Derrida points out that the "a" that features the change between *différence* and *différance* characterizes the gap in the play of difference of the interpretation of the sign.

The concept of sign, proposed by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, is symbolized by the representation of the "thing" that stands for meaning or referent. The sign encompasses the representation of a present, because not only does it take the position of present, but also its state. However, the present that the sign carries must be marked by an absent condition due to the deprivation of the instance of the present in the act of interpretation. Derrida shows this present/absent condition in a much clearer way when he states that any sign "would thus be a deferred presence". Be it monetary, electoral, written, or verbal representation, it might be understood by a circulation of the external signs that defer the moment in which we can encounter the thing itself, make it ours, consume, touch, see it, intuit its presence (Derrida, 1972: 391). The signification of the sign, in this circulation, is marked by a play of temporization and space that employs the mediation of the sense of sign. Consequently, the sign is never present in a sufficient idea of presence to define itself, but rather, it is "inscribed in a chain or a system, within which it refers to another and to other concepts, by the systematic play of differences"

(Derrida 392). From the play of differences, the idea of the trace emerges. The process of signification goes from an initial darkness to a condition of visibility, which moves from deferral to differing until a possible meaning, according to the context within which it is circumscribed may be referred to.

The idea of trace has its beginnings in Nietzsche's, Freud's, Levinas's, and Heidegger's discussions and studies. Derrida in his text *différance* mentions the philosophical and psychoanalytical basis he borrowed from them up to the point of reaching his spatializing and temporizing conclusions on the trace. All the articulations he provided are of great importance, but this study will stick to the matter of the interpretation of the sign in literature to reduce discussions on the "de-limitation of ontology of presence" (Derrida 401) for the sake of language and the reading of literary texts.

The concept of trace cannot be detached from the idea of *différance*. All difference produces the trace, and all the differentiation of the trace in terms of time and space constitutes *différance*. Derrida conceptualizes the trace as a term that has no ground when he says that "the trace is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself" (403). Yet, Derrida provides another clue to help in the understanding of this word, that is, when it is associated with *anamnesis*. Anamnesis is the ability of remembering and forgetting things. In a state of anamnesis, the position of the trace swings back and forth in a past/present/future extension, not only of time, but also in space, and makes of it a perceptible as well as an imperceptible sign, which cannot be fixed in a synchronic stance, but rather, in a play of diachronic insertions.

The play of traces can be demonstrated in the use of language or of any other code of forms. In such accounts, the play requires an anticipation of the metaphysical assumptions before the delimitation of words in signs. This practice, according to Derrida, brings forth “the transformation of general semiology into a grammatology”, causing a critical performance of the latter “upon everything within semiology – right down to its matrical concept of signs” (1972: 396). In this manner, the term *différance* is conceived as a direct consciousness of the determination of presence, and its effect on the system of significations is no longer defined by presence; but instead by the play of traces that results in *différance*. The play of traces, or the idea of *différance* itself, possesses a type “of inscription prior to writing, a protowriting without a present origin, without an *arché*” (Derrida, 1972: 396). For this, it can be understood that prior to any act of signification, there is the inscription on the consciousness of the subject that retains its position as its own self-presence or “self-perception of presence” in the traces of memory.

Like the trace, other terms refer to the idea of *différance* and inscribe in it acts of signification. At the same time, they suggest the dangers of the essence of a present that does not belong to its delimitation. The attempt toward a periodization in terms of time and space turns out to be risky in relation to reading and interpretation. The terms are: the supplement, the *pharmakon*, and the hymen. Analyzed in different texts and contexts, these three terms relate to the need to cross boundaries and shake up the order of understanding and meaning. Derrida also used other options in a long list of terms, which, according to him, may have no end.

The supplement is analyzed in *Of Grammatology*, and in Derrida's analysis he takes Rousseau's assumptions about this word to describe writing. As for its meaning, it has a double signification, because it means at the same time a missing piece and an extra piece. Rousseau claims that writing is derived from speech and, in this way, writing mirrors speech but is less appropriate than speech to expose meaning to its presence of signification. For Rousseau, writing would be a supplement to speech. Derrida's criticism lifts the two senses of the word supplement to deconstruct Rousseau's conceptions. The floating of the two ideas of the supplement, as something that adds, and something that supplants, parallels Derrida's questions on the "undecidability" of the meaning of this word applied by Rousseau. Derrida makes use of the undecidability of the concept or of the word supplement to emphasize the need to establish a play of significances in every attempt towards a well-informed reading that is constantly concluded with the certainty of the end of presence and the establishment of *différance*.

Like his interpretations of Rousseau's supplement, Derrida questions the choice of Plato's *pharmakon* to describe writing. Derrida's analysis in "Plato's Pharmacy" (1981) again highlights the double meaning of Plato's word. *Pharmakon* can mean both a remedy and a poison. In classical Greece, *pharmakon* was a drug that could be used either as a cure for illnesses or a cause of them. Derrida's questions on the undecidability of Plato's word once more refer to the necessity of instituting *différance* as the basis for meaning. However, with this text, the scope of *différance* is broadened to the field of translation. Derrida points that the problem is not simply the translation from Greek to other languages, but also the need to translate a nonphilosophical sign into a philosophical one. In the passage of a sign into philosophy, this very same sign is

required to undergo a certain reduction of its original meaning. Translation for Derrida represents a type of writing as well as reading, which like the poles of the *pharmakon*, leaves open a space that at the same time brings sameness and difference to itself. Thus, translation repeats itself, supplements itself, cures itself, but can also endanger its own structure.

Translation for Derrida has always been a crucial topic to be dealt with. As mentioned above, translation sets a risky struggle between the “original” as the text to be translated, and the text product of the translation. Derrida states that the problem of translation resides exactly in the moment of the *trans*. The “trans” establishes a movement of “translation, transference, transport, transformation” (Kamuf 242), — and I would include in this list also the word “transgression”. In this movement of thought, between marks of origin and destiny, *différance*, or rather, the deferral and the differing ideas take place and do not deny that a certain failure in the correspondence of the message may occur.

In this respect, through a deconstructive stance, translation bears the possibility of a loss that may challenge the limits of philosophy. Any other text, moreover, may expose rather than hide the very limitation of the act of the transference, transportation, transformation or, at an extreme point, transgression of the original meaning. The plurivocality of texts, something already pointed out in the beginning of the discussion on deconstruction, frequently makes translation embedded in questions that must be left unanswered due to the limits of one language to another.

However, Derrida also includes possible answers for the possible gaps of the *trans* movement when he declares the aporias of life. “The word ‘aporia’ appears in

person in Aristotle's work, *Physics IV* (217b)" (Derrida, 1993: 13), and from Derrida's first acquaintance with this word, he became interested in the aspects of its limitations without limits, its condition of crossing borders and blocking them. He mentions that it leads one to experience a nonpassage, and through this experience a paralysis occurs, but it does not bring forth a negative sense; on the contrary, it blocks one's way at the same time that it separates one from it. It refers to the idea of an unprotected attempt that is in front of oneself, and, to a certain (mis)guidance, it can also become a door to some other project.

The term "aporia" marks the coming to a border/edge that instead of signifying an end, opens a fissure within itself, suggesting that the nonpassage be replaced by a decision that does not symbolize a dead-end, but simply leads to the possibility of experiencing "an interminable experience" (Derrida 16). Concepts of borders, such as the frontiers of territories, languages, cultures, etc., lose the singularity of a unique description of border as a reference to something to be crossed, and raises the possibility of a double concept, through the experience of aporia. The double concept is related to the moment of the decision that "concerns the choice between the relation to an other who is *its* other" (Derrida 18). Derrida, to exemplify this double concept, invites his readers to reflect on the viewpoints of a border, recalling its memory, and identifying its duties.

In the Derridean references of viewpoints, he suggests the condition of Europe nowadays. In Europe, the same attempt that intends to preserve its memory and identity, tries to open the European borders to welcome the other. Foreigners become part of Europe and the acceptance of alterity brings forth hospitality and civil consciousness. The

respect for differences goes hand in hand with the desire for a national identity. The present is then haunted with the ghosts of the past and future and can only be safe through experiencing it in the poles of difference of time and space. The idea of *différance* is recurrent in Derrida and it is impossible to proceed with the analysis of his *oeuvre* without returning to it all the time.

Aporia, thus, becomes a paradoxical experience. It is multiplied and its growth opens up the condition of aporias. The nonpassage or the impasse(s) of aporia(s) destroys the walled-up or closed concept of a limit and establishes “the rhetoric of the space of appropriation” (Derrida, 1993: 4); in other words, the (in)stance of a porous limit, “permeable, and indeterminable” (Derrida 20). The porosity or permeability of the limits reinforces the possibilities of reading, in its various fields, to proceed under the condition of the aporetical experience of an “interminable experience” through the rhetorical strategies of language. *Aporias* (1993), one of the last books published by Derrida, seems on the one hand to sum up his works and, on the other hand, to call for the necessity of a continuous action upon the tradition of criticism and its transcendence beyond the limits of philosophy to reach other fields.

To supplement the questions on an aporetical experience, the hymen, the last of the terms to be analyzed, seems to illustrate another example of the arrival to a limit, which is not exactly a porous one, and its transgression, with the chance of the choice to become a union of forces of differences and similarities. The hymen, “the thinnest of the veils [...] is found near the center of Mallarmé’s text” (Kamuf 169). It appears in the text “The Double Session”, as part of Derrida’s book *Dissemination*. The hymen again appears as a term that has two meanings and represents Mallarmé’s reflections upon

writing. It refers both to the condition of virginity and to the consummation of an act. For its etymology, hymen is related to a membrane that may envelop or cover parts. As for Derrida, it links up with a “whole network of weaving” (Kamuf xxxvix), similar to the one found in a spider-web. He associates this term with sexual difference, as a barrier that marks the difference from the inside to the outside, which delimits a division between them, and, at the same time, can promote their union. It thus conjoins two senses of the articulation of division/union. At first, the hymen veils, and later it unveils its own condition and opens itself to another play of choices.

The hymen parallels, in my point of view, the accounts of aporia. There is a limit circumscribed under a whole network of cultural assumptions and prejudices. Questions of virginity, feminism, patriarchal arguments, in short, a great deal of arguments are raised. The mere act of choice, however, can overcome all of these forces, cross this border, and establish another amount of signification that probably will lead to a much wider net of meanings. The rhetoric of space crosses different dimensions and provides the chance of constant exposure to interminable experiences.

The terms, words, strategies, or operations mentioned only suggest Derrida’s wide range of ideas and thoughts. They pinpoint, in a brief way, some of the main ideas of Derridean dialectics, but there is a passage in his book *Positions* (1981), which seems to best summarize his thought:

It has been necessary to analyze, to set to work, within the text of the history of philosophy, as well as within the so-called literary text [...] certain marks [...] that by analogy [...] I have called undecidables, that is, unities of simulacrum, “false” verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics (the *pharmakon* is neither remedy nor poison, neither good nor

evil, neither the inside nor the outside, neither speech nor writing; the *supplement* is neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, neither accident nor essence, etc.; the *hymen* is neither confusion nor distinction, neither identification nor difference, neither consummation nor virginity, neither the veil nor the unveiling, neither the inside nor the outside, etc ... neither/nor, that is simultaneously either/or [...]). (xvii)

The breathless reading of the words above does indeed lead one to the undecidable, to the limitless world of signification. The play of traces or *différance* and deconstruction all transcend the degrees of immediacy toward a space and time different at first, but afterwards open, leaving the entrance open to a search for the several possibilities of meaning. The text for Derrida, though, is not an enigmatic set of lines closed as if in a chest, impossible to have its forces unleashed; on the contrary, it is a piece of work that is open to various possibilities of movements for its decipherment. Deconstruction, according to the point of view of this thesis, corresponds to an attempt to decipher a text. To use Derrida's choices, decipherment would not be a *techné* of reading, but an *epistémé* to facilitate chances of criticism and afterwards the proper acquisition of knowledge.

A downward path to knowledge through the possibilities of the experience of blindness will serve as support for the study of Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind*. Derrida's rhetoric of vision and blindness will eventually furnish the reading of the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost* to propose Milton's "darkness visible" expression as a form of experiencing the complications of the immediacy of sight and its risks in interpretation. In this respect, the Miltonic phrase and approach to vision may reflect one of the major concerns on sight discussed in the Derridean thought in our time, which is the danger of the conduction of reading based on the immediate act of sight, without the exercise of the (in)stance in the matters of interpretation.

2.2 – Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind*

Memoirs of the Blind was published in 1990 as part of the first edition and exhibition of the series *Parti Pris* – or *Taking Sides*. Derrida was invited to organize and provide his analysis on the discourse and on the drawings collected in that exhibition. According to the view of the exhibition's curator, the reflections of Derrida go “to the heart of the phenomena of vision, from blindness to evidence”⁸. The choice for this Derridean text, among his several works, is determined by its features that work directly with the issues of sight and blindness.

In the preface to this book, there is a brief summary of the points that will be discussed, which, although related exactly to sight, are nothing more than Derrida's discussion on the grounds of philosophy's “metaphysics of presence”. In this approach, “Blindness, disappropriation, [...] the cancellation of what makes representation possible” – vision or its immediate act – help open the eyes “but only in order to cancel them”, leading “us by the hand toward” another “legacy that is passed down in darkness” (viii-x). Therefore, this writing throws light on the shadow, making visibility possible in a state of utter darkness.

Derrida's view in this work, however, is applied to the drawings of the exhibition as well as to the discourse or the narrative suggested by them. Nevertheless, my reading

⁸ The references to Derrida's *Memoirs of the Blind* (1993) will be cited parenthetically throughout this chapter with the number of the pages (vii).

of his view will be adapted to fit the approach to the rhetoric of vision in literature. For this reason, this book will support the analysis on Milton's "darkness visible" perspective in the interpretation of the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost*.

Derrida starts his "view" by pointing to the problems of seeing and believing immediately in what is seen. Such an act already suggests that there is skepticism about the use of the eyes. He states that the moment of seeing should concomitantly be a moment of reflection on what is viewed. Reflection, or a judgment on the view, would yield another process, one that should be lingered and for this purpose he proposes two hypotheses of sight. The aspects of *différance* appear clearly in his approach. The two hypotheses deal with two types of blindness that will provide the grounds for his points of view.

In the first hypothesis, Derrida argues that "the drawing is blind [...] and in the moment proper to it, the operation of drawing would have something to do with blindness [...] in this *abocular* hypothesis [...] the blind man can be a seer, and he sometimes has the vocation of a visionary" (2). Derrida exemplifies the idea that when the drawing of a blind person is made, the blind person that is represented in the drawing itself can demonstrate through his/her blindness the moment of seeing. In other words, the blind person produces vision and the rhetoric of his/her drawing symbolizes the experience of sight. In this thesis, the *abocular* hypothesis is more appropriate to read Milton as the blind man, who possesses the vocation of a true visionary. This notion will be discussed further on when the analysis of Milton's works, especially *Paradise Lost*, is made.

The second hypothesis is related to "an eye graft, the grafting of one point of view onto the other: a drawing of the *blind* is a drawing *of* the blind" (2). At first sight, this

hypothesis generates a rather confusing idea, but one must understand the different dimension of such position. The draftsman who is ready to start the drawing is absorbed in the theme of blindness in such a profound way that he experiences blindness through the blindness of the blind figure chosen for the drawing. Derrida mentions the representation of “a drawing potency at work” (2) through the experience of the *trait*. The trait resembles the trace, the idea of a mark or a line. Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, this hypothesis will serve as the possibility of attaining the meanings of the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost*, from which the “darkness visible” perspective can be experienced and transposed to the realm of the play of traces. The play of traces will provide the possibilities of significances of such an expression at a contemporary moment. But for the time being, it is necessary to proceed with the accounts of *Memoirs of the Blind* before a more direct approach to *Paradise Lost* is possible.

The allusions to the trace continuously appear in Derrida’s views with the two hypotheses. In this manner, he raises a question about the act of writing without seeing. Through the hands, the unseen words of the blind writer receive their form in a rather limited space, yet their forms only become forms due to a process of “trusting in the memory of signs and supplementing sight” (3). The play of traces commands the enterprise, which for Derrida must respect the finger/eye movement that is coordinated by the mind and exercised by the (in)sight and the touch. Hearing is also included in such an attempt and Derrida remembers that the sonorous act is also an invisible one and is, like the experience above, *from and of the state of the blindness*. The finger/eye reference reassures the play of the hands in the act of writing as well as drawing. The hands are the tools employed in the very representation of the trace and for the blind they also refer to

the possibility of anticipation, for example in an accident or simply in the prevention of a fall. At the beginning of the first chapter, with the references to the Greek influences on Western thought, the eyes were considered the initial tool for the act of anticipating things. Yet, for the blind, according to Derrida, the hands anticipate the performance of the blind person's acts.

The importance of the hands in the expression of the trace is highlighted in the description of the first set of drawings that Derrida makes, on the healing of the blind by Jesus⁹. The finger/eye of “the master of truth [...] guides the other towards the spiritual light” (6). In the drawings, sight is restored by touch or by the simple direction of Jesus' finger toward the eyes of the blind. Derrida uses the expression “the play of fingers” (12) to depict the fingers of Jesus as the instruments that bring to the blind the possibility of a return to the self. In this manner, the restoration of sight brings one to light, to a return to the power of seeing and knowing oneself again. The play of the fingers produces the play of the traces, once the healing of blindness helps the blind to recall his former condition, and the traces of the past come to life anew.

In classical Greek theories, to see has to do with the idea of knowing. Derrida in this matter refers to “Plato's Cave”, in the *Republic*. The prisoners of the cave experience blindness because what they see and know are projected images through shadows. The production of images of the mind of the blind through shadows looks like the situation of the prisoners in the cave, who suffer from a “phenomenal prison of the visible world” (15). Their conditioned sight is apparently optional, because they are represented as

⁹ It is important to recount the examples used by Derrida in his book *Memoirs of the Blind* to depict the blind and blindness. These examples illustrate his hypotheses and are also recalled in the analysis of *Paradise Lost*.

motionless figures, without any attempt to reach the images reproduced in front of them, as their hands are prevented from reaching beyond the images. In short, their hands cannot exercise one of their major instincts in the case of the cave, that is, the moment of touching the image and anticipating what it may reveal, because their trust is based on the anticipation of their physical eyes.

In terms of anticipation, or the possibility of reaching farther, Derrida makes an allusion to the three sensitive organs that he has already cited: the eye, the ear, and the hand. He suggests different situations in the exercise of these senses: first, the blind person who counts on the hand and the ear to anticipate better, and second, the seer to whom the visual anticipation goes even farther. The eye, in these different sensitive aspects, possesses the condition of going farther than the other options. There is in his tropes a certain detour of the direction of his words. Derrida affirms that these tropes will guide his writing over a “rhetorical supplementarity” that may expose the eyes’ ability to go farther and farther. In his words, “this too-much of sight” can lead his interpretation to the “heart of blindness itself” (16). Through sight or too-much of sight, the words from then on might lead his readers to the experience of blindness.

To illustrate the experience of blindness, Derrida describes a dream he had, in which there was

a duel of these blind men at each other’s throats, one of the old men turning away in order to come after me, to take me to task – me, poor passerby that I am. He harasses me, blackmails me, then I fall with him to the ground, and he grabs me again with such agility that I end up suspecting him of seeing with at least one eye half opening and staring, like a Cyclops [...]; he restrains me with one hold after another and ends up using the weapon against which I am defenseless, the threat against my sons [*fi ls*] [...]. (16)

Derrida avoids giving an immediate interpretation of his dream, explaining that such an attempt would correspond to a habit that is so inherent to our culture, which is a certain excess of anticipation that usually leads interpretation “into a misguided or seduced reading” (17). To begin with the analysis of his dream, Derrida recalls how many references to blind people, their lives, and acts have echoed in studies from Greek mythology and biblical characters.

First, he mentions Oedipus and Tiresias and how their *mythos* have affected diverse generations on the problematic issue of sexual difference, among other issues. Second, Derrida alludes to other Greek myths, such as the fact that Narcissus can only live if he does not see himself. Narcissus is not a direct allusion to blindness but to the dangers of the use of his literal eye. He cites the blind men, the great “dead-eyed” figures of the Old Testament, such as Samson, Saint Paul, Tobit, among others. He compares the blind men of his dream to those of different succeeding generations. Finally, he calls attention to the fact that his dream about the duel with the blind man and the risks to his sons came to him when he had not yet chosen the theme of the exhibition but was wondering about it. In addition, another fact disturbed Derrida’s following up the procedures of the exhibition, a facial paralysis, which interrupted his activities for the enterprise for thirteen days. During his ailment, Derrida experienced blindness, just like some of the great figures that have shaped Western thought.

The references to Derrida’s own life are relevant because they represent blindness in two senses. In the dream, a blind person was able to beat him with such accuracy that Derrida doubts the real state of blindness of the man. In his facial paralysis, he could temporarily experience blindness himself. After his recovery, he went back to the

meetings to discuss the exhibition. He was surprised when driving back home with a striking theme for this work, *L'ouvre où ne pas voir* (*The Open Where Not to See*) (33), which after all the accounts, became *Memoirs of the Blind*. The opening that does not see reinforces the main focus of this thesis, which is, the opening of the eyes for their erasure making the act of seeing proceed in a “darkness visible” aspect.

Derrida suggests that his autobiographical account served as the basis for his analysis and reinforced the need for using it to point out his thoughts concerning blindness. Derrida published several essays on the implications of autobiography in the intermixing of subjectivity with historical and political accounts. In his book *The Ear of the Other* (1988), Derrida stresses that the autobiographical aspects of Friedrich Nietzsche, to a certain extent, represented his own signature and era. Nietzsche's life becomes a text through the ear of the other, who possesses the power to sign as well as to signify it.

The ear, according to Derrida, is totally involved in discourse because it helps establish the bridge that connects discourse to writing. In this sense, “the ear is not only an auditory organ; it is also a visible organ of the body” (1988: 50). Visibility connects the other senses and sensations in the elaboration of discourse. The reference to Derrida's accounts on autobiography and discourse justifies Derrida's words and attitudes in *Memoirs of the Blind*, because they are products of the traces of memory and the traces that have been left in us since Plato. The autobiographical records of one person, according to Derrida's view, penetrate two fields: “the body of the work and the body of the real subject. The biographical is thus that internal border of work and life, a border on which texts are engendered” (1988: 41). The events of his life are texts and should be

regarded in the elaboration of this other text, but they may not prevail upon the accounts of the drawings' collection; on the contrary, they should be granted the same value because they are also texts.

In *Memoirs of the Blind*, the references to the traces of memories focus on the great "dead-eye" figures that have shaped Western thought with their experiences with blindness. The Greek myths are for Derrida of great importance in his approach to blindness, but because of the exhaustive significance placed on their stories and the great deal of writing and research on them, Derrida's preference is for the stories of the biblical blind men. The biblical blind men provide a different perspective on blindness, which is regarded, on one hand, as a carnal failure with emphasis on the literal sight, and, on the other hand, the possibility of a type of interior sight, with the eyes directed toward the interiority of the self. In the biblical memory, this difference in perspective is also marked by the two sets of stories of the Bible, the Old and the New Testaments.

The two testaments bring forth the two different views on blindness. In the New Testament, blindness represents the possibility of the bearer of truth in restoring the eyes of the blind so that the experience of light can occur. As already described in the previous paragraphs, these approaches are related to the presence of Jesus, the pure healer of sight in the New Testament. The literal sight is highlighted when Jesus brings light to the eyes of the blind. The blind man, after the moment of his healing, becomes the example of the seer that can use the force of his physical eyes again. The image of the Son as the bringer of light was anticipated in the images of the sons of the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, contrary to the New, the physical exercise of sight lacks potency. The literal vision is replaced by a different form of illumination. The blind

figures of the Old Testament accept blindness as a type of punishment or suffering, but also as a feature of the chosen one. They experience the light and words of the Lord as whispering in their ears and they exercise their view according to this sublime vision. In the drawings, there are representations of Eli, Isaac and Tobit. Derrida notes the importance of these figures and associates them with his own dream. The duel of the generations would be interpreted in the case of these fathers and their sons. Derrida mentions all three in his approach on the drawings, but I will focus on Tobit because his story not only seems to summarize the others, but also reinforces the figure of the son as the light and visibility of the father, just like the image of the Son in *Paradise Lost*.

In Tobit's story, the duel seems to take place in his own struggle for life and his need in helping his son and wife to find comfort and a better life after his failure. Blindness at first is seen as a fall, because Tobit is prevented from working and participating in life in general. For the healing of Tobit, not only in the restoration of his sight, but also in the salvation of his family, a third part may be included in the struggle and the duel demands a supplementary element. The blind and his son need the interference of this third party to complete their salvation and story. An angel of God, Raphael, comes and stands for the third presence in the scene to make healing occur. Raphael not only accompanies Tobias, Tobit's son, in his search for his family wealth, but also teaches Tobias how to cure the blindness of his father. On his return, Tobias heals his father's lost sight, and his father greatest happiness is the seeing of his son back home and the possibility of viewing his image again. The son's image is the purest expression of salvation for Tobit.

In the drawings that represent these passages from the Bible, the image of the son healing his father is in the central position and the angel is put in a marginal position. Derrida concludes that Raphael stands for the visible presence of the invisibility of the power of God that Tobit has received through his faith. The third part in this story represents the expression of the “visible signs of the invisible” (29). The observance of such traits, for Derrida, brings to visibility the narrative of a scene of restoration that received before its own composition the blessings of a pre-performative act. Thus, the representation of the graphic lines is established by the pre-condition of faith, knowledge, and sight. Sight is restored by the vision of Raphael and by the seeing of the viewer of the drawing, who has the possibility of experiencing blindness/sight/observance/view.

The representation of the Son and the presence of the angels in *Paradise Lost*, together with Adam and Eve, can be compared to the restoration of sight from a former blind state. After the experience of the Fall, Adam and Eve seem to be involved in a duel and their inner anxieties are resolved by the interference of the Son, who is made visible before their eyes.

Besides the view of the duel of generations of the biblical references, Derrida recalls the memory of the great blind men of the literary field. Derrida adds that memoirs came to his mind when he chose to enlighten his research with the works of great, “dead-eyed elders of our literary memory” (33), such as Homer, Milton, Joyce, and Borges. Hence, Derrida decided to couple them, Homer and Joyce, Milton and Borges in an attempt to set up a duel. In doing so, he would have the blind men of different generations coupled, which would stand for his dream and the questions he had in mind originating it.

In the lineage of these great blind writers, Derrida suggests again that blindness works as a “sign of being chosen, a sign that one must know how to recognize in oneself, the privilege of a destination, an assigned mission: in the night, by the night itself” (33). This sign corresponds to a wound, which for some may have been caused by the excess of their own life. In this sense, Borges implies that Milton’s blindness came to him through Milton’s excessive attempt at expressing himself through his writings. Borges compares his destiny to Milton’s and has Milton in his mind in all his words. To bring a blind man to one’s memory and through it to accomplish self-identification is what Derrida calls a recognition “in the night, by the night itself”. Derrida marks Milton and Borges’s duel of comparison and identification when he mentions, using Bataille’s words, that the experience of memory is also the experience of authority, and that in the space of memory one is able to reach blindness.

In his rhetoric of blindness, Derrida adds a report of the experience of his mother, in the last days of her life. In the description of her state of complete blindness and disconnection with the living world, Derrida suggests that he could see in her veiled eyes – due to cataracts – that she “was walled up” (39). The walls of blindness would represent a closure to the visible world, a stance of isolation within the limits of darkness. The view of his mother reinforces his rhetoric of blindness and the image of Milton’s Samson seems to be the best referent to fulfill such imagery.

Derrida proposes that Samson’s character represents Milton’s self-portrait and compares Samson’s saga to the best example of a living-dead figure, walled-up in his own state of darkness and isolation. The rhetoric of blindness seems, once again, to change its direction through the view of Derrida’s mother and the words of Milton’s

Samson. The state of isolation, the “insularity of the image” (40-41), the locking of a life in complete darkness, in a “prison within prison/inseparably dark” (Milton, 1991: 676), are all effects that turn blindness to a condition of self-abandonment.

With the examples referred to above, Derrida suggests the two hypotheses of blindness. The two hypotheses, as mentioned previously, are related to the two types of blindnesses, the first, the *abocular* hypothesis, and the second, the reaffirmation that the *drawing of the blind* is experienced through a certain aspect of transcendence. Derrida names these two blindnesses, the transcendental, which stands for the second hypothesis, which means the experience of blindness through pure transcendence, and the sacrificial, which is the *abocular* hypothesis.

The transcendental reflects “the invisible condition of the possibility of drawing, drawing itself, the drawing of drawing” (41). As for the sacrificial, it stands for the description of “the sacrificial event, that which comes to or meets the eyes, the narrative, the spectacle, or representation of the blind” (41). The two blindnesses intervene and repeat each other. The transcendental does not aim at exposing its scope to a sacrificial dimension of total castration, nor does the sacrificial demand an entire absorption outside the limits of the blind. On the contrary, in their intermixing state, “sublimation or interiorization” enlightens “the intelligible light” to attain a “supernatural revelation” (43). As for this thesis, the process of interiorization resembles the undergoing on a “downward path to wisdom”, in the search of inner truth, which passes down in darkness up to the attainment of visibility. In this sense, the transcendental and the sacrificial blindnesses are, indeed, two scopes of interpretation and rhetoric that proliferate their meanings with the elevation of the figural eye/I and the denigration of the literal eye.

The powerlessness of sight is summarized by Derrida in three categories. The first category is the *aperspective* aspect of the trait/trace. The trace marks the invisibility of the visible, mainly because the visibility of the present scene cannot be seen in all of these dimensions. The present view involves the absence of all the traces symbolized in such a view, which cannot be grasped in that immediate sight. For example, the immediate seeing of a drawing, as mentioned before, involves a wide range of significations that are not present at the moment of the view; on the contrary, they refer to memories acquired up to the moment of that scene. The same accounts are accomplished in literature and other aesthetic expressions that require interpretation.

The tracing of the first graphic line, in the case of drawings (and I may also include literature), is originated from all the memories recounted at the moment of the act of putting into form what occurred in the mind. Even if the representation follows the idea of *mimesis*, it is an act that “must proceed in the night” and “it escapes the field of vision” (45). The presence of the invisible intermingling with the visible asserts how the *aperspective* category is based, “as the anticipating perspective or the anamnestic retrospective” (45) of the trace that brings about the line of representation.

Thus, the trace is the purest representation of memory itself, the reserve that contains the absorbed emotional events of one’s life, be they negative or positive. The memory blinds the physical exercise of one’s eye while sight tries to impose its supremacy within its immediate act. This aspect characterizes the establishment of a duel between the invisible and the visible. Derrida reflects upon the duel, comparing the duel between the invisible and the visible with the duel of his dream. As for his dream, the blind man seems to exercise another visual tool since he could strike Derrida accurately,

at which Derrida mistrusts the man's complete state of blindness. Derrida refers to the Baudelarian¹⁰ rhetoric of the duel to better exemplify the interpretation of his own dream in terms of blindness. According to Charles Baudelaire, the absorption of seen images is reinforced by the great need of seeing everything in its details. The artist, then, suffers from a conflict of assimilating his/her view with all the memories he/she has. The impartiality of the eyes in the consideration of the immediate sight turns out to be a rather complicated issue and makes for confusion. The harmonious interaction of the external view within the internal memory is compromised and the duel then is set up.

Baudelaire, in his approaches towards memory and in relation to the duel of the visible with the non-visible, defends a certain "*order of memory*" (48). For him, memory precipitates the instant of the view; consequently, the origin of art is attributed to the performance of the "show of memory" (49). However, memory also fails, even with its powerful anticipation of facts. Hence, a complete reliance on memory seems to be a deficient act.

The duel's effects can be concluded as follows: the in-visibility of the trace haunts the presence or essence of the visible; then the visible itself becomes invisible due to the supremacy of the trace; and finally, blindness turns out to be a product of the visible. The *aperspective* category is thus reflected in the non-visible condition of the trace, which makes the artist become blind to his in-visibility.

The second category is "*the withdrawal [retrait]... of the trait*" (53). This aspect appears after the tracing of the first trait of drawings, yet for this approach, the trait is replaced by the expression of the graphical form. The trace is no longer the contour of a

¹⁰ The reference of Charles Baudelaire's ideas will follow Derrida's account on *Memoirs of the Blind*.

limit. It is like a shadowy path that is first intended to mark the boundary between the inside and the outside. It fades, however, and turns out to be “inaccessible in the end” (54). The name of this aspect, “the withdrawal of the trait”, seems to summarize its potency. The trace occupies a certain space, but is gradually taken back or is less exposed, as if this aspect would involve a magical appearance followed by an invisible disappearance.

The idea of an appearance accompanied by a disappearance is suggested by Derrida as the condition of the divisibility of the trait. At the same time that the trace or trait is seen, it opens a relation to something else, dividing itself from the moment of its first identification to a moment of its interruption with the need to refer to another thing. The inaccessibility of the trace refers to its never-ending position; in other words, a limit is never reached, because its meaning demands an endless line of signification. The trace is thus a threshold which apparently possesses its surroundings, but is better understood by its opening up feature.

The trace as a threshold marks its own state of divisibility, “by leaving itself, and starting from itself, it takes leave of itself, and establishes itself in no ideal identity” (55). The need for observing and seeing between the lines does take place in this aspect, but a feeling of discomfort occurs with its never-ending feature. Derrida seems to summarize the trace as an abyssal condition, suggesting for it a transcendental state that cannot show the possibility of achievement.

Derrida’s suggestion for the third aspect is *the rhetoric of the trait* (56). In this aspect, for the achievement of a possible understanding of the trace, speech is needed. The trace is “articulated” with “a sonorous and temporal wave” (56), which helps

compose its invisibility. The rhetoric of the trait works as a supplement for the trace itself, which is composed of images, words, memory, among others. To demonstrate how the rhetoric of the trait should be employed, Derrida calls the attention of the reader to the representation of self-portraits. In self-portraits, the same eye that sees itself at the moment of the drawing, “looking at itself seeing [...] also sees itself disappear”, in short, “this seeing eye sees itself blind” (57). Derrida, in this case, observes that the subject of the action becomes the object of his own and of the other’s gaze, as in self-portraits.

The self-portrait faces the eye of the other. The spectator becomes, in this approach, the “focal point [...] the center of what should be a mirror. The spectator replaces and then obscures the mirror, he makes one blind to the mirror” (62). Blindness, thus, becomes the product of an action that erases the eyes of the model in order to make the subject of the view see and represent his own image at work. In this sense, the issue of authority is questioned, since it is no longer a matter of seeing the subject and the signature of the author of the self-portrait, but, on the contrary, the spectator’s performance is the one that marks the representation of the subject. In brief, the spectator takes the place of the mirror and only through his/her eyes can the subject see himself/herself.

The eyes of the spectator, in the accounts of Derrida, are engaged in a type of performance of seeing and blinding. In the analyses of the examples provided in the book, the self-portraits are available at first to the view of the spectator. The spectator cannot assure who the model is or at whom the author is looking, nor if the subject is the reflection of a mirror or something else. Blinding is experienced by the spectator, who sees in the portrait of a blind man the disappearance of his own eyes.

The matter of the identification of the subject is, with the assumption above, dissociated from the signature of the same self-portrait. Identification becomes an indirect performance that involves rhetoric, which goes in a different direction, leaving the perceptive scope to attain inference and intuition. In this sense, the immediate act of the gaze is substituted by a more internal attempt at interpretation, which apparently produces a “reverberation of several voices” (64). The voices echo from the portrait’s figure and memory is engaged in the resonance of the voices. Identification is confused in the play of memory and voices and, with this collapse, a ruined state is left for consideration.

Ruin is the self-portrait itself. In this manner, the ruin or the self-portrait represents a face looking at the face of memory, the memory of its own self. The idea of comparing the self-portrait to a ruin can be better understood by relating the ruin to its remaining aspect. In this way, there is a fading away of the immediate gaze, and through a blurred scope the remains are needed to perform invisibility in the search for visibility. The remains are the pure expression of the trait/trace in its full structure, something that is not ready to be seen, not present in front of us, but rather, something that symbolizes experience. Ruin demonstrates after all that it is memory itself, opened “like an eye, [...] that lets you see without showing you anything at all, anything of the all” (69). The ruin nevertheless impairs seeing totality with the immediate gaze, and, moreover represents the disappearance of an object and a desperate attempt to reconstitute it.

Besides the attribution of ruin as the expression of reminiscence, another reference can be considered for the idea of ruin, that is, destruction. The blind person experiences self-punishment through blindness. Ruin, in this sense, would be the

representation of a self-destruction that bears sufferings of castration and pain, but also seems to inscribe in the blind another form of seeing. A certain “logic of punishment overlaps and recovers the logic of acquittal or repayment” (102), as if the blind would receive compensation for the failure of sight. Blindness turns out to be “the price to pay for anyone who must finally open some eyes, his own or another’s in order to recover a natural sight or gain access to a spiritual light” (104). The blind man, as mentioned earlier, is the chosen one because he is called on to witness his own experience of another type of perception. Narrative substitutes the exercise of the physical view and restores sight to the blind. The self-ruin once again becomes the recalling of memory.

To illustrate blindness as self-sacrifice and also self-restoration, Derrida describes the drawings and writings on Samson. Samson is clearly the example of a chosen figure. First, God announces his birth to a barren woman, then he is made powerful because of his hair. Later, he fails to keep the secret of his powerful hair and is made captive. The captive Samson suffers from all types of sacrifices up to the cutting of his hair and his fall into weakness. Weakness is both physical because his strength was concentrated on his hair, and spiritual because once he has his eyes gouged out he feels he has been abandoned by providence. In Samson’s story, in the “logic of the *sacrificial supplement*, there is always recompense for ruin [...] in short, a *hypothec*¹¹ of the eyes and a *premium upon blindness*” (109). Blindness is for Samson self-restoration, the form in which he has to see the inner spiritual light that may lead him to the salvation of his own self, and more than that, of his own people.

¹¹ Derrida opts for the use of obsolete English for *hypothec*, which marks the relationship of this term with hypothesis.

In this manner, Derrida makes a direct reference that Milton has, in his Samson, his self-portrait as a blind poet, also chosen by God, a blind man that “regains, [...] guards and regards, retains and recoups, and compensates for what his eyes of flesh have to renounce with a spiritual or inner light [...] for blindness seems to illuminate the ‘inward eyes’” (109). Blindness is for Milton, as it is for Samson, the granting of self-restoration, in which the sacrificed eyes, or lost sight, becomes a compensation, furnishing the blind man with the talent for visionary prophecy.

The inner vision granted as a gift to the blind is better explained by Derrida in this citation:

Each time a divine punishment is cast down upon sight in order to signify the mystery of election, the blind become witnesses to the faith. An inner conversion at first seems to transfigure light itself. Conversion of the inside, conversion on the inside: in order to enlighten the spiritual sky on the inside, the divine light creates darkness in the earthly sky on the outside. This veil between two lights is the experience of bedazzlement. (112)

In such accounts, the experience of the blind is better summarized by Milton’s phrase “darkness visible” (Milton, 1996: 8). In the dark, the blind man is able to experience visibility, and, through this aspect, the double conversion is effected: a conversion of the self into his own self and another conversion of the self that makes him feel the divine in him. The conversion of the self into his own self goes on a “downward path to wisdom”, and the inner conversion is the experience of the (in)sight. Conversion, as the experience of the inner light, brings forth a moment of revelation and at that moment, the prophetic vision is the outcome, the purest expression of visibility out of darkness

When Derrida mentions conversion he refers to St. Augustine’s *Confessions* (1996). In *Confessions*, for Derrida, there is the testimony of a discourse “in the form of a

self-portrait” (119) that attests the need of the raising up one’s invisible eyes to meet the light of the divine eyes. A conversion would symbolize the condemnation of physical sight that could lead one to sin and the restoration of the divine vision in oneself. In such “allegorical conversion [...] a relation of resemblance between the human eye and this divine eye” (119) would occur and the corporeal view would be replaced by the divine view, which would be available for the choice to direct one’s vision to it. In this sense, St. Augustine’s conversion would be an attempt of the gaze to be directed to the view of the Father and receive from it a moment of revelation.

Revelation could be read as an “unveiling that renders visible, the truth of truth: light that shows itself, as and by itself” (122-23). Re-velation is the double act of veiling and unveiling, in which the veiling act precedes the performance of an unveiling act. As the corporeal eyes are veiled with the darkening of one’s thoughts and tendency to concupiscence, ruin and sacrifice are regarded in this act. The unveiling moment reveals the ruin and sacrifice again through memory, but this time the divine light is brought to illuminate the view and make the best performances of it.

The veiling of the sight is also discussed with respect to tears. Derrida cites St. Augustine and Nietzsche, these two figures who wept and from their tears a comprehensible assumption is emphasized, that is, “if tears come to the eyes, if they well up in them, and if they can also veil sight, perhaps they reveal, in the very course of this experience, [...] an essence of the eye” (126). The eyes of men would, contrary to the eyes of the other animals, be destined not only to see, but also to weep. The possibility of weeping veils sight but concomitantly unveils it, revealing its essence, proving its own difference in relation to other species. In short, “tears and not sight are the essence of the

eye” (126), an essence that is proper to man, and because of this, an essence that finally produces difference.

The difference (*différance*) or trait that the human eyes possess because of their capacity for producing tears is the choice Derrida uses to conclude his hypotheses of sight. Derrida reinforces his conclusions on the specification of the *abocular* hypothesis, in which, the eyes do not function alone in the perception of sight. The eyes are everywhere in one’s perception; they are dissociated from the pure expression of the external through the ocular sense, and so, they are not only conditioned to sight. Derrida recalls his analyses of the drawings and the narrative of the drawings and points out that one can see with just one eye, while another can see with the eyes gouged out, and in other examples the blind can have tears and at the same time exercise their view. In other words, the eyes can be deprived of their physical exercise of sight but do not stop seeing. The wholeness of the eyes that see and weep is the manifestation, according to Hegel, of the soul from the inside to the outside.

Derrida finishes his analysis once again with Milton and his Samson. Derrida makes a reference to another English poet of the 17th century, Andrew Marvell, who was Milton’s first assistant and dedicated his poem “Eyes and Tears” to Milton. Marvell acknowledged that Milton’s blindness was a divine gift and that through it he had gained a powerful internal light that guided his writings and his prophetic vision. Through the lines of “Eyes and Tears”, “Marvell believed he knew that in losing his sight man does not lose his eyes. On the contrary. Only then does man begin to *think* the eyes” (128). In this manner, Milton’s eyes were not like any other eyes that any other animal could have, but were whole instruments of seeing and weeping. In the oscillation between these two

roles, the eyes could perceive a message, apply to it the exercise of memory and bring forth the expression of its difference.

In the two hypotheses of blindnesses, Derrida uses the notions of Memoirs, Self-Portraits, and Augustine's *Confessions*. These three options illustrate the three perspectives of the powerlessness of sight that is finally concluded in Milton's blindness. The *aperspective* recalls the need to reach the traces of the memories of the great "dead-eyed" figures and in this way set the duel between the visible and the invisible. The second perspective, the withdrawal or *retrait* of the trait, suggests the description of the self-portrait, in the attempt to see the subject see the object that is the subject itself. In this perspective, ruin is the aporetic condition of an interminable experience. The confusion or interlacing of gazes is subsumed in the paradoxical moment of the identification of the subject as an object for the eyes of the spectator, but also within the eyes of the same subject. And, finally, in *Confessions* the possibility of conversion that is brought to light as a moment of revelation, the rhetoric of the trait is mixed with the rhetoric of blindness and both work as supplements for each other.

Milton is thus deprived of his physical sight but illuminated by the divine light in his inner view. The two blindnesses that Derrida suggests in his hypotheses of sight culminate in Milton's experience. The transcendental blindness intervenes and supplements the sacrificial one to the moment of supernatural revelation. Milton's "darkness visible" becomes the expression of these two blindnesses at the moment of their revelation. He would experience the sacrificial, having been deprived of his physical sight in an *abocular*, darkening condition, and he would have the transcendental proximity of visibility through divine/self revelation. These two blindnesses are

experienced by Milton's characters in *Paradise Lost* and their revelation shows the possibility of negotiating these Derridean hypotheses on sight with Milton's perspective of erasing the literal and inserting the figural "I" in the scope of (in)sight.

3 – John Milton’s life, contexts, and *oeuvre*

In the analysis of a literary work, the historical, political, and even social contexts from which the text was written should be taken into account. Biographical accounts, if carefully observed, can provide useful points of connection between the work and the writer’s life. Although John Milton’s life and intellectual contexts have been exhaustively examined in many biographies, it is still important to emphasize biographical records that may have influenced his views on vision emphasized in his works. Milton’s blindness will serve as a symptom that might have caused a shift in his views and considerations on vision. Thus, this Chapter will work as an introduction to show the importance of the visual metaphors in Milton’s texts. It will be helpful to outline the visual metaphors in Milton’s other writings, because the statistics of their ordering prove that special attention was given to the issue of vision. For a better evaluation of the visual elements in his works, the visual metaphors are divided into four categories and their typological classification will ascertain the line of research that will establish the “darkness visible” perspective as Milton’s final stance towards vision, and associate it with Derrida’s position on the same issue. This analysis will focus first on some accounts on Milton’s life and contexts and later in the presence of the visual metaphors on his major writings.

John Milton, born in 1608, was the son of a professional scrivener, John Milton Sr., and his wife Sara. The elder John Milton was a musician and composer who settled a comfortable life on his offspring. Milton, the eldest son, had been since his childhood promised to the religious life. His education was based on his ecclesiastical destiny and was also reflected in his writings. At first, he studied at St. Paul’s School, and for

university education he went to Cambridge, where he took his MA in 1632. After university, his further studies were still supported financially by his father. Due to his family's support, Milton was able to dedicate himself to programs of study based on the classics. In Milton's self-education plans, the intention of taking a trip to the continent was of major importance. Despite the difficult moments of his life caused by the death of his mother and the death of his Cambridge friend, Edward King, he did not give up his plans to go to Italy.

In Italy, Milton was acquainted with Galileo's new discoveries on the telescope, a device powerful enough to view the moon with the possibility of having a different vision of the world's structures. Galileo's device encouraged Milton to see new ways of describing his own and the world's different experiences. In addition, his visit to a Catholic country strengthened his education and religious concerns. He put a great value on all the experience he gained in Italy, especially the enhancement of his mental development. It was during this visit that "he harmonized the different impulses of his own mind" and "settled his relations with the world" (Tillyard, 1966: 77). Hence, this journey represented to Milton's career a change of direction, reflected directly in his choice of giving up the religious life.

His return from Italy was marked by the loss of another of his friends. The death of his childhood friend, Charles Diodati, took Milton back to another tragic incident of his past, the death of his friend Edward King. Back to England, Milton found himself back at his past routine in Horton, and saw his country going through a politically and religiously turbulent moment.

The extreme political and religious agitation in England was characterized by the persecution of Charles I as a despot and the attempts to establish Parliament in the country. Milton, joined the struggle against royal dominance and supported the discourse of Episcopacy. From 1644-1645, Milton started suffering the failure of his sight. In the same period, he had his first collection published, the *1645 Poems*. Milton recognized this collection as being “the work of his left hand”¹², declaring his immaturity and eagerness for a mature career still yet to come. Milton, after the *1645 Poems* publication, postponed his poetic career and wrote about political and religious matters. In 1648, with the end of the Civil War and the condemnation of Charles I to death, Milton continued his dedication to his prose works.

In 1649, after the death of Charles I and the establishment of Cromwell’s Rump Parliament, Milton was invited to become the Secretary of Foreign Tongues. In the period between 1640-1660, Milton dedicated himself to the production of a large amount of treatises and pamphlets, and kept on writing notes on a book that he had started earlier, listing subjects that would serve as the basis for the greatest writing of his life. In his treatises, Milton’s concerns were around issues that involved serious discussions on divorce, royal supremacy, freedom of the press, and education.

In the same period, Milton suffered from a serious implication of the failure of his eyesight, which in 1652 culminated in complete blindness. Although the visual impairment would supposedly disturb Milton’s career, he insisted that his eyes after the blindness appeared clearer and brighter and he even promised his readers a poem that

¹² The references to Milton’s major works are taken from Orgel, Stephen and Jonathan Goldberg, eds, *The Oxford Authors John Milton*, 1991, and will be cited parenthetically throughout this chapter. The criterion used for the division of Milton’s works also followed this edition (xv).

would be “exemplary of a nation” (xv). Even being blind and in his fifties, political turbulence again affected Milton’s life. Cromwell’s parliament was dissolved and monarchy was re-established in England. Milton’s involvement with the struggles against monarchy resulted in his prison. After all the political instability and confusion, he was pardoned and retired to Chalfont St. Giles, where he completed his greatest work, *Paradise Lost*, which was published in 1667. After it, two other poems *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* were published together in 1671.

Paradise Lost is the work that represents the fulfillment of Milton’s career. The central theme of the epic, the Fall, seemed to be relevant to Milton’s own falling state. His falls can be symbolized by the evil failure of his eyesight and by his failing political struggle that meant to him another type of imprisonment. Yet, his personal closure led him to a greater good, in which he was able to attain his personal inward peace in his “paradise within” (Milton, 1996: 311). The lines of *Paradise Lost* go beyond the scope of the literal to a constant intermingling of the figurative and the literal eye. The varieties of visual experiences affect the reading of the epic and the dominant sensations of visual elements may be some indication of Milton’s own visual experience while dictating the lines of his greatest work. For his experience, the accomplishment of an (in)stance can be compared to the attainment of an inward paradise, which would represent a condition of disregarding the physical/visible aspect of the world and reaching an inner maturation that will be read in the visual metaphors present in his other major works.

3.1 – Milton’s use of visual metaphors in his major works

The visual metaphors employed by Milton in his major works will be selected for the further interpretation of this research and will obey four sets of categories. The typological classification is based on Derrida's categories of the powerlessness of sight mentioned in his account of *Memoirs of the Blind* (1993), and it will help the ordering of these elements according to Milton's views. The sets of categories¹³ are classified as: literal vision, sublime sight, dissemination¹⁴, and blindness/wisdom vision. The literal vision and sublime sight will be paralleled to Derrida's hypothesis of the *aperspective* aspect of the trait/trace. Derrida's second category is the *withdrawal of the trait/trace*, which will correspond to the dissemination category of this approach. His last category is the *rhetoric of the trait/trace* and will be associated with the blindness/wisdom vision.

In the first set of categories, the *aperspective* aspect of the trait/trace, the literal vision will be related to the words that emphasize the exercise of physical sight. They carry out the selection of the expressions of vision or the physical effects of one's eyes. Sublime sight will denote the view of an exalted sense that mixes reality and fiction. As mentioned previously, the sublime sight parallels the Kantian notion of the aesthetics of the sublime, which surpasses the beautiful, and transcends the standard reference of the senses. In these two categories, the presentation of the visible apparently signifies the exercise of the physical, but the absent implications of the act of seeing become invisible and cannot be accomplished in its immediate activity. The *aperspective* aspect of he

¹³ Although Derrida's hypotheses serve for the basis of the typological classification of the visual metaphors, the terms that will guide this selection will be literal vision, sublime sight, dissemination, and blindness/wisdom vision.

¹⁴ The "dissemination" category will be based on Derrida's use of this word in his theories as a sign that leads signification to a chain of other possibilities. In his approach to this term, Derrida condenses at least four senses in this invented word: dissemination, deschematization, de-'Shemitizing', and derouting or diverting from a path (the word *chemin* meaning path or road) (Derrida 1988: 103).

trace, in these categories, marks the invisibility of the visible, because the visibility of the present scene cannot be seen in all of its dimensions.

The dissemination category will focus on the “meaning” of the sign, its traces, which indicate to what other path(s) the word may point. It parallels Derrida’s *withdrawal of the trait/trace* in its condition of divisibility. The trace becomes a threshold and opens a relation to something else, dividing itself from the moment of its first indication to an endless line of signification. The visual metaphors to fit this category will be selected by their index aspect, verbs employed in the imperative form, verbs such as *see, look, witness, and view*.

Derrida’s last category, the *rhetoric of the trait/trace*, will be articulated with the visual metaphors that present the aspect of a blindness/inner vision, associated with the physical impairment of sight. This condition will open up the possibility of inward illumination, reflection, and conclusion of the experiences of reading. The analysis of Milton’s visual metaphors in his major works will demonstrate the elaboration of his self-portrait, which, in this last set of categories will culminate in Derrida’s hypotheses of two types of blindnesses, transcendental and sacrificial, as focused on in chapter 2. The experience of these blindnesses will mirror the inward meditation and stimulate the exercise of the (in)sight, and the erasure of the physical aspect of the eye.

The study of these four categories of the visual metaphors in association with Derrida’s aspects on the powerlessness of sight, in the view of this thesis concludes that Milton’s “darkness visible” perspective is the outcome of the maturation process that he went through in his career as a writer and a reader. The four expressions of the visual act are summarized in the oxymoron “darkness visible”. The exercise of the physical eyes

will be erased, withdrawn, and reincorporated inwardly, attaining the rhetorical¹⁵ exercise of the (in)sight. Milton's and Derrida's blindnesses will compose the association of rhetoric and sight through a "darkness visible" perspective.

To arrive at the "darkness visible" perspective, the following analysis will obey a selection of Milton's major works that start with his *Poems* published in 1645. Then, it will proceed to Milton's English Poems, added in 1673. In the publication of 1673, some uncollected works will be included. After that, the Latin poems will be the focus of the interpretation. The analysis will progress on to the study of Milton's Prose Works. To conclude, Milton's major poems, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* will be the main topic. The next chapter will be dedicated to the examination of the visual references in *Paradise Lost*.

3.1.1 – *Poems 1645*

In spite of being the first set of publications of Milton's career, representing the early period of his writings, the four visual categories are included in his first collection. Poems like "L'Allegro", "Il Penseroso", and "Lycidas" anticipate that Milton's viewpoints are of great concern in the issue of vision. The use of physical eyes dominates these poems, but the references to the other categories also display a painstaking observation of the use of reason and the expression of inner virtue. The 137 visual metaphors of this publication are not large in number, but show that they may be the means that will give access to their use and provide a first move in the direction of the darkness from which vision will be attained.

¹⁵ Rhetoric will be associated with Milton's and Derrida's art of writing.

In “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity”, there are 18 references to the visual metaphors that can be read as part of the literal vision, sublime sight, and dissemination groups. The references can be associated with the physical indication of the view that calls the readers to see, watch, and look for the coming of “the son of heaven’s eternal king” (3)¹⁶. Yet, they also contrast physical and sublime sight and indicate other paths of signification. The Maker sends “meek-eyed Peace” (4) to Nature at the same time that kings are described with “awful eye” (5) of their envious state that tried to prevent the birth of the Savior and question the sovereignty of the Father and His Son in relation to pagan deities. Other references are made highlighting the physical state of vision, including the sublime eyes of the Maker, and adding the possibility of the stars to fix their own “gaze / Bending one way their precious influence” (5) and guide the coming of the Son of God to influence the destiny of all.

Like “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity”, “The Passion” refers to the coming of the Savior, highlighting the joyful moment of His birth and showing the sorrowful outcome of His passage on Earth. In the 56 lines of this poem, there are six direct references to vision, including one to “See see the chariot, and those rushing wheels, / That whirled the prophet up” (14). Although the use of literal sight is perceived in this poem, especially when the poem’s persona through his eye “hath found that sad sepulchral rock” (15) that assured the death of the Savior, the references are more related to signs that indicate meanings based on visions mentioned in the Bible.

¹⁶ The selection of the visual metaphors that will be quoted concentrates in the passages that, in a sense, encompass the scope of this thesis. This work delineates the number of the visual elements in the works analyzed; however, the interpretation of all of them goes beyond the purpose of this thesis. Therefore, only a very small part of the visual metaphors will be presented and commented for the composition of the statistics of their occurrence in Milton’s works.

The material implication of the power of vision is also used in another compilation that was published together with the 1645 collection, the Sonnets, one to ten. Out of the 140 lines of all the ten Sonnets, the references to visual metaphors appear only ten times, and all their occurrences reflect the use of the literal eye. In Sonnet 1, the hearing of the nightingale's song reveals the coming of the night and the visual expression compares the end of the day to the action of closing "the eye of the day" (30). Although the figurative is emphasized, the visual function is purely physical. The same figuration of the visual expression takes place in Sonnet 2 where "the gates of his eyes and ears" (31) correspond to the closure of one's eyes and ears to the disdainful attitude of the other. In this sonnet, the category blindness/wisdom vision is also present, because the "noble spirit" (31) requires the need to use the (in)sight. In Sonnet 4, again, the figurative language reflects the physical state of the eye, especially because it simply describes the beauty of the eye of the loved one, the same that dazzles because of its radiance and throws "darts" with "such fierce fire" (33) that pierces the heart of the other.

In Sonnet 5, like the other sonnets mentioned, the sweetness of her "lovely eyes" (33) finds its place in the eyes of the lover. However figural the visual aspects may be, the literal expression of the view is purely physical. In Sonnet 7, Milton celebrates his twenty-third birthday and makes allusions to the "blossom" that "shew'th" the "semblance" of an "inward ripeness" that may be the "great task-master's eye" (34-35). The references of the visual aspects of this sonnet may deepen the representation of an inward experience, even though the physical vision of a future phase of Milton's life is still the main subject of such lines. In Sonnets 9 and 10, the visual elements refer to the verb "see" and in both cases they simply direct the exact meaning of the verb. Finally,

although the features of sublime sight, dissemination, and inward vision are apparently mentioned in Sonnets 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9 and 10, the main line of reference to them is the category of the physical description of the exercise of the eyes.

The same accounts of the Sonnets in terms of the physical use of the eyes can be perceived in “Arcades”. In the 109 lines of “Arcades”, there are 11 references regarding the use of the visual metaphors. Added to the physicality inherent in sight, the dissemination category of the visual words is also present in the use of the verbs “look”, “see”, and “show”, which point out to other signs of signification.

A more elaborate reflection upon the visual metaphors and their function and categories can be read in Milton’s larger poems published in the early phase of his career. Milton’s companion poems, “L’Allegro” and “Il Penseroso”, dialogue between themselves and complete each other in terms of visual expressions. “L’Allegro” praises light and mirth. In cheerful mood, the persona dismisses melancholy and makes the visual elements of the poem highlight the expression of mirth, implying that his acts direct his eye that “hath caught new pleasures” from the “watch-tower in the skies”, welcoming the beauty of morning and celebrating “Such sights as youthful poets dream” (23-25). There are nine occurrences of visual elements and they refer to the physical condition of seeing as searching for physical pleasure, but the implication of mental comfort also suggests the use of the other two categories, dissemination and blindness/wisdom vision.

“Il Penseroso”, on the other hand, has 18 references to visual words. The number of visual metaphors in this poem is the double of those in “L’Allegro”. Mirth is replaced by melancholy, which guides the lonely and pensive attitudes of Penseroso. Melancholy

makes Pensive turn himself to his intrinsic environment in which his thoughts about life take place, and through which, he intends “To hit the sense of human sight” (26). The physical sight is incorporated into a more absorptive condition that goes beyond the scope of the corporeal and involves inward wisdom. Night and “the wandering moon” (27) are the background of the melancholy thought. The persona, as in “L’Allegro”, is “seen in some high lonely tower” (27). Yet, the eyes of Pensive do not take a high position to seek pleasure; on the contrary, it is where he “may oft outwatch the Bear,” with “[...] The spirit of Plato to unfold/What worlds, or what vast regions hold/The immortal mind” (27-28). Nevertheless, loneliness favors inward reflection, establishing a moment of silence in which the inner voice and sight are exercised.

Mirth and melancholy meet in “Lycidas”, the elegy Milton wrote for his friend Edward King. “Lycidas” is the synthesis of the twin poems and intervenes “in both, asking and trying to answer some existentially rhetorical questions” (Sá, 2005: 96) they raise. As for the visual elements, their use seems to balance the occurrence in the twin poems. They occur 13 times and bring to view the four categories of the visual aspects mentioned previously. The visual words of “Lycidas” describe the usage of the literal sight, refer to different signs in the dissemination category, exercise the sublime sight, and call attention to the need to attain an inward vision. The first visual reference mentions that “Under the opening eyelids of the morn” the dead Lycidas “shall now no more be seen” (40). In this first passage, three categories are already mentioned. The waking moment of the morning implies the condition of the physical eyes. The idea that he is no longer seen indicates the assurance of the loss of a dear friend and the lament for such an occasion, in which “the blind Fury” (41) cuts the threads of “the thin-spun life”

(41). The dissemination category is suggested in this reference to the “blind Fury”, which opens another realm of signification. *Fury*, “Atropos, the Fate who cuts the thread of life” (755), is from Greek mythology and the reference to this figure as a blind one shows the indignity of the persona, as this blind figure deprives the young and joyful possessor of “pure eyes” (41) of life.

A thoughtful concern about “the blind Fury” also affected Milton in his great plans for his career. The same interruption of the life of the young Lycidas could happen to him. Milton’s view, imbued with the mirthful possibility of attaining immortality through his writings, also suggested the fearful aspect of having his life interrupted by tragedy, and finally, marked the synthesis of the twin poems in “Lycidas”. The visual metaphors help highlight Milton’s inner anxieties and physical view of the world, which the final lines of “Lycidas” confirm. The last visual evocation is to the “saints above” to “wipe the tears for ever from his eyes” (44). The tears may represent Milton’s veiling eyes and his evocation for cleansing them in the grief for the loss of a friend, also be symbols of Lycidas’s sorrowfulness at having his life cut short so early. The reference of the other two categories, sublime sight and blindness/wisdom vision, is summarized in this last passage. To use Derrida’s words for such an interpretation, the tears stand for the wholeness of the eyes that see and weep. In the manifestation of tears, the soul from the inside is brought to the outside and expresses itself from within.

Unlike “Lycidas”, which expresses the four categories of the visual metaphors, “Comus” presents just two of them. Despite being the largest work of Milton’s youth, with 1022 lines, the 52 references only encompass the literal expression of the eye. From the “nymph that gazed upon” Comus’s “clustering locks” (46) to the fear of the Lady in

her lost condition who, in great need of protection, begs the Lord to “eye” her “blest providence” at her “trial” (53), and many other occasions, the visual references are regarded to the physical performance of sight.

Even at the climax of the poem, when Comus’s temptation of the Lady seems to have no remedy, the visual metaphors are directed at the expression of the corporeal exercise of the eyes. The Lady’s assurance of Providence’s protection is based on the guarantee that “heaven sees good” (62), in the blessedness of the closure of her immaculate body. However, Comus’s disregard of this claim to chastity invites her to “see, here be all the pleasures / That fancy can beget on youthful thoughts” (62), and in a sense, surrenders her closure to the openness of the pleasure of the body. Comus’s words and eyes are charming, but the Lady has seen in him the strategies of temptation and she keeps on trusting in her judgment and in the scenes that appear before her own eyes. The last of the visual references is with the coming of the “Attendant Spirit” who “epiloguizes” and returns to his place “where day never shuts his eye” (70). This final allusion to the eyes may be associated with the eternal vigilance of the eyes of God, represented in the play by the Spirit. This constant surveillance is through the physical aspect of the eyes of Providence looking down on earth and resembles Michel Foucault’s accounts of panopticism.

Panopticism, for Foucault, is the surveillance of a sovereign eye from an elevated position for the purpose of placing its super-vision on the creatures under it. Foucault concentrates his critique on the dominance of an ocular and vigilant power that tends to control the discipline of the figures under its eyes, and through it, to regulate their actions. The restraint and controlled attitudes of the Lady, with the presence of the

Attendant Spirit, can be compared to regulations imposed by the superior gaze on its creatures, who have their bodily eyes' scope limited because of the immanent feeling and fear of the vigilant control.

The 1645 edition of Milton's poem already demonstrates that a certain oscillation in the use of visual metaphors occurs in them. Nevertheless, the physical aspect of sight is emphasized even with the presence, in this collection, of two different views, "both the Cheerful and the Meditative Man" (Tillyard, 1961: 12) of "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso". The early phase of Milton's career shows, with the analysis of the visual metaphors, that he concentrates his vision between mirth and thoughtfulness, but exercises his vision still through its physical condition.

3.1.2 – English Poems Added in 1673

Although the works discussed below were published in 1673, their writing varies from 1625 to 1655. Hence, these works involve two phases of Milton's life, the earlier age in which he had the fullest capacity of his physical eyes, and the other, after 1652, in which his sight was impaired. The visual allusions in the earlier phase differ from the other works after his blindness. From Milton's blindness onward, his writings begin to reflect a different viewpoint, probably caused by the doubts about the new condition of his life, his blindness. There are 23 visual references in the main poems of this publication that will now be discussed.

In "On the Death of a Fair Infant Dying of a Cough", Milton makes just two references to visual metaphors and they simply "show" the sorrowful instant of the death

of his sister's baby. They also work as a type of consolation, showing "the mother of so sweet a child / Her false imagined loss" because she must see and "Think what a present" to God she has sent (75). The consolation of this mother should be effective through the exercise of sublime sight, in which visual effects would bring her hope to see, in the loss of her baby, the deliverance of a gift to the hands of God.

Even though "On the Death of a Fair Infant" and "At a Vacation Exercise in the College" were said to be written in the same year, 1628, they differ deeply in the approach towards the use of the visual elements. In "At a Vacation", the visual metaphors occur nine times. Their meanings go beyond the dimension of the physical vision and extend to a higher rank, which may be compared to the accounts of sight interpreted in "Lycidas". The comparison of this poem to "Lycidas" is due to the presence of the four visual categories. Sight in this poem is more than the pure act of seeing; it involves the "passing through the spheres of watchful fire" to foresee through a "prospective glass [...] / what future days should bring to pass" (76-77). Milton, in his oration before the summer vacation at Cambridge, is already able to predict his future. He seems to know his path when making an analogy to the Ptolemaic universe. In the Ptolemaic cosmos, the light of the stars symbolized by the watchful fire represents the eternal (778). By this analogy, that notable moment for Milton, being the host of that oration before the eyes of many, is the prelude to the eternity of his writings or his name. The visual metaphors envisage the perspective of change in his career that was yet to come.

Contrary to "At a Vacation Exercise in the College" the compilation of Sonnets 11 to 19, seems to define the act of the physical condition of the eyes, with just two exceptions, Sonnets 16 and 19. In Sonnets 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, and 18 altogether there

are only four allusions to visual words. All four, represented by the verbs “stare”, “see”, “look”, and “show”, have their denotative meaning exposed, reinforcing their occurrence as simple references of the literal use of sight. Sonnets 16 and 19, on the other hand, works written after Milton’s complete blindness, demonstrate his uneasiness because of the failure of his literal eyesight.

In Sonnet 16, the visual metaphors are not in direct references; on the contrary, the mentioning of light and dark are directly related to the loss of Milton’s physical sight. An analogy to Milton’s blindness can be made with the consideration of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 15. In comparison with Shakespeare’s Sonnet, not only does the first sentence coincide with Milton’s “When I consider how my light is spent” (81), but also because of Shakespeare’s suggestion of bringing the days of youth before one’s eyes “and wear their brave state out of memory” (Shakespeare, 1975: 1193). In Milton’s consideration of how his “light is spent” (81) can be perceived his nostalgic reference, bringing back the memories of his youth to support his blind eyes, as well as his seeing out of a future darkness. The category dissemination is directly referred in this analogy to Shakespeare’s recalling of the traces of past memories. According to Derrida, dissemination emerges from the play of traces from the past, intersects with the present, and opens the possibilities of a future. The signs of Milton’s blind state are represented in the events of his past/present and begin the preparation for their signification in a future context.

Besides the comparison with Shakespeare’s citation, another point can be concluded with respect to vision in Milton’s Sonnet 16. It is his first use of his blindness/wisdom vision in the inward meaning it represents, especially when he proclaims these words: “this dark world and wide / [...] / Lodged with me useless, though

my soul more bent / To serve therewith my maker” (81). His confidence that his state is determined by the hand of God involves his soul and makes him a chosen figure. In Derrida’s views on blindness, blindness is as a “sign of being chosen, a sign that one must know how to recognize in oneself, the privilege of a destination, an assigned mission” (Derrida, 1993: 33). Milton, even under his fallen condition, could see the signs of his mission and wisdom.

Sonnet 19 also provides the clear reference to Milton’s blindness, but now describing the impairment of seeing his spouse physically and internally. There are three visual metaphors in this sonnet and they all refer to the ambiguous sentiment of not seeing the other physically and the distance from the feelings of the heart. The sentence that best depicts Milton’s double difficulty in reaching the image of his spouse is “her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight” (82). Sublime sight is exercised in this passage, however the “yet” conjunction suggests that his blindness is not only literary in the failure of his eyesight, but also through his fancied sight; in this sense, he could barely feel her physical and spiritual love.

After the compilation of the Sonnets, the uncollected works of Milton published together with the 1673 edition make very little reference to visual metaphors, except for the poem “To Mr. Cyriack Skinner Upon his Blindness”. In this poem, out of its 14 lines, there are five visual metaphors. Similar to Sonnets 16 and 19, this poem was also written in 1655, and deals with the difficult process of becoming blind. The first sentence of the poem alludes to the advent of his complete blindness, which was a process that had taken around three years. The visual words refer to the physical impairment of vision, but they already report a type of contrast between the outward and the inward view. The last line

of the poem prepares the conclusion of what Milton lacked up to that moment in his career to achieve greatness, his physical sight, yet “Content though blind, had I no better guide” (86), he seems to have found a new scope for his writings, his inner vision. The gradual process from the erasing of the literal eye to the insertion of the figural “I” is demonstrated in this poem.

The analysis of this last poem best describes his instability and questions on vision. Milton’s 1673 publication circumscribes the phase of his life in which the course of his blindness was in process. The physical impairment of his eyes made way for a more elaborate concern with the exercise of vision. His writings after his complete blindness demonstrate Milton’s anxieties because of the unfamiliar direction his life was taking; nevertheless, they anticipate the beginning of his consideration of his inward reflection.

3.1.3 – The Latin Poems

Milton’s Latin Poems were published partly in the 1645 volume and the rest in the 1673 edition. The writing period of these works went from 1623 to 1645. As mentioned previously, this period was the one which the exercise of Milton’s literal sight was still active. Although the physical eye seems to command these writings, all four categories of visual metaphors can be perceived in these works and the abundance of such metaphors, as many as 82 references, also deserves special attention in this analysis. One part of Milton’s Latin Poems was subdivided to a Book of Elegies, which will be the starting point in the interpretation of the presence of the visual metaphors in the elegies and the

other Latin poems. The other part of his Latin writings was selections compiled in *A Book of Sylvae*. There are seven elegies to be considered in the first part of this interpretation. In the second part, the analysis will focus on “On the Fifth of November”, “To My Father”, “To Salzilli”, “Manso”, and “Damon’s Epitaph”.

Elegy 1 was written in 1626, at a period that Milton was far from Cambridge and living in his father’s house. At that time Milton was seventeen years old and the ten visual references in this elegy are all related to his youthful view of the world. Milton depicts to his friend, Charles Diodati, his routine, his viewpoint at that moment of his life, and his surroundings. His eyes were able to see by reading the lives of the characters of classic tragedies. There were some occasions in which he would leave off reading to see the people of his neighborhood. Although the references pertaining to sight are merely physical, there is a shift of scope. The physical eyes that read and live the experiences of the characters of the tragedies also see and live the experiences of real people. There is a mixture of Milton’s vision in the references, as his life mixes the two worlds, the fictional and the real. The two categories of the visual metaphors, physical and sublime sight, intersect in these two different realms.

Elegy 2 was also written in 1626, and in terms of visual references, it has just one, to open the need to understand sublime sight. The transcendence of death is regarded in the death of the Cambridge University beadle. Death, which “shows no favour even to his own office” (93), is personified. The death of the parish official can be associated with the death of Lycidas, in which Milton questions the cruelty of death and mourns through the lines of this elegy this event.

In Elegy 3 another death, that of the Bishop of Winchester, assails Milton, who seeks consolation in the lines of his poems. Visual metaphors appear five times in this elegy. As in Elegy 1, they mean the direct use of sight, but also describe the vision that intermingles the dream-like world and reality. The physical actions of the eyes are interrupted when “night and sleep had closed” (97) them. In his dream, Milton gazes at the Bishop of Winchester and sees the hands of Heaven’s hosts inviting him to become part of the Father’s kingdom. The literal eye in his dream is replaced by his sublime sight. Sublime sight, in these elegies, seems to bring comfort to Milton’s heart after the occurrence of losses and despair. In this search for consolation, Milton’s visual metaphors demonstrate that he tries to escape reality through his writings.

In Elegy 4, Milton confesses his search for comfort through writing. He writes to his tutor, Thomas Young, and laments the distance that separates them. There are five references to visual elements, and all five imply the distance between their physical eyes. Nevertheless, they also refer to the dissemination category. The first visual aspect refers to Young’s plain view “of the yellow sands of Germany” (99), reinforcing the distance between them. At the end, Milton expresses his hopes for having Young back to England “to enjoy happier times, and once more see” his “native home” (105). The appealing aspect of the visual expressions attempts to show how Milton condemns the need to leave one’s native country because of financial need and a better social situation. Milton’s visual words and his views on Young’s misfortunate mission convey more serious matters that mainly criticize the political turbulence affecting the English in that period.

In Elegy 5, as in Elegies 1 and 3, the intermingling of the physical eyes with sublime sight takes place. In the eight visual elements, Milton goes to the sources of inspiration with the coming of Spring, as if Spring stood for the changes of Nature to provide better weather, landscape, and view of the world for the writing of poetry. Before his eyes, Milton can see “the Castalian spring and [...] the fountain of Pirene” (105). These references are associated with inspiration and it seems that Milton’s physical eyes could achieve the symbols for the stimulation of his mind. By saying that his “soul perceives all that is done on Olympus, and the dark secrets of Tartarus escape not” his “sight” (105), Milton refers to the sublime. The dimension of Milton’s vision in this elegy surpasses the limits of transcendence up to the moment in which he is able to call Phoebus to “Look [...] a willing love” (109) that awaited him. The literal vision exceeds its limits, while the physical visibility is overcome by its metaphysical aspect and is exemplified by the sublime sight category.

Elegy 6 is another writing that Milton dedicated to his friend Charles Diodati. It is written as a response to his friend, who attempted to write verses himself on the judgment of Milton. Milton, in the manner of Elegy 5, reports to his friend his experience of inspiration through his devotion to the gods and assures his friend that “Truly the bard is sacred to the gods” (117) and from them should receive a large amount of stimuli. The three visual references of this elegy help stimulate accessibility to the gods. The “eyes and hands” of Thalia, muse of lyric poetry, and the wise Tiresias were with him “when the light of his eyes was gone” (115). With these gods, Diodati could encounter the right path to wisdom. These experiences with the gods indicate the predominance of sublime sight, as previously analyzed in the other elegies.

In Elegy 7, the words again mix the real and the imaginary realms. The persona attributes to Cupid no power in enchanting and opening the hearts of lovers. Milton at the age of seventeen, probably having the persona representing the inner anxieties of a young adult, had not yet had the chance of falling in love. It is after this confession that Cupid hears such challenging words and decides to respond to this calumny. The visual elements, numbering ten, are involved in the quarrel between the persona and Cupid. Cupid revenges the words used against him, making the gaze of the persona lose itself in the eyes of the others up to the meeting with “the eyelids, and now to the mouth of the maiden” (121). The persistent desire of being among the gods is reflected in the exercise of his sublime sight. In the meeting of the maiden, the physical vision is also exercised, but it seems that it is also involved in the realm of the sublime.

The presence of the four visual categories is raised in the elegies, but the mixture of the real with the imaginary seems to suggest a different aspect to Milton’s writings. The anxieties of the young Milton can be summarized in his use of these visual metaphors. The enthusiastic move to the dimension of the gods is the main feature of these elegies and contributes to highlight the changing of perspective in his career.

In the second part of the Latin poems, the first work to be analyzed is “On the Fifth of November”. Similar to the Elegies, this poem was written when Milton was at the age of seventeen. There are 18 visual references in Satan’s attempt to destroy the blissful seat of English Protestantism. Satan, in this enterprise, tries to corrupt as well as instigate the Pope to prepare a gunpowder engine to overcome Protestantism. Satan’s eyes could not cope with the view of a “land blest with riches as festal peace, and the fields fat with the gifts of Ceres [...] worshipping the sacred majesty of one true God”

(125). Most of the visual references are related to Satan's "distressful sight" in his "wanderings over the world" (127). The visual metaphors of this poem, such as "Blind fools", "distorted eyes", "eyes in" a "savage face [...] that never grow drowsy [...] gazing far" (131-33), show the failure of the physical eyes to perceive and to corrupt the other. Distortion would, perhaps, be the best word to summarize the visual references in this writing. Distortion refers to a blurring in the physical vision that may cause a misguided interpretation (*OED*), which can be exemplified by Satan's view. In this poem, the risks of the immediacy of the exercise of the physical sight is emphasized. In addition, the dissemination category can also be applied to this text, as Satan's attempt involves other aspects and symbols of the religious realm.

"To My Father", contrary to "On the Fifth of November", describes a much lighter atmosphere, in which Milton praises his father for all the financial support he has provided him. The seven visual elements may not simply be interpreted in relation to gratitude. The visual metaphors incite poetical reverence and contribute to show that the best inheritance his father could give him is learning. The investment in the acquisition of knowledge helped Milton "avoid the gaze of profane eyes" (141) and enjoy his "leisure by the Aonian stream" with "a happy companion by Apollo's side" (139). In the visual references, although the physical aspect seems to be a determinant of their meaning, the placement of a view together with that of the gods demonstrates the importance of education in helping the attainment of sublime sight.

"To Salzilli" and "Manso" are poems dedicated to the writers who marked Milton's visit to Italy. There are six references to visual words in both poems and they vary from physical to sublime sight. In "To Salzilli", they describe the views of Italy, the

land; in “Manso”, the four references to visual metaphors are related to the sublime sight category. With an attempt to give thanks for all the courtesy extended by these Italian hosts, the lines of this poem transcend the limits of the physical condition. The first reference is that Manso is seen by the Patron of the poets for his geniality, for which he is granted the honor of immortality. The second reference is to the statue of Tasso, the poet whom Manso patronized. In the passage, people are able to “see the poet smiling from the wrought bronze” (145), as if he, Tasso, as a statue, agreed with the words of praise fully devoted to Manso. The other references contribute to the warm expression of admiration to such Italian figures, whose generous acts were manifested in the writings.

Sublime sight is also expressed in “Damon’s Epitaph”. The nine references are attempts to go beyond the physical limits of human suffering. The death of a dear friend and companion makes the persona compare their friendship to that of shepherds. The visual words contribute to the expression of sadness for such a loss, and also demonstrate a troubled view of the world before the persona’s eyes. The references encompass the climactic moment of suffering. The persona with “the eyes stern” (55) feels drops of tears reflecting the deep sorrow for his grief. The passage in which the visual metaphors help the understanding of suffering is when he imagines the moment of their farewell, as if they were together: “Surely had I stayed I might at last have touched the hand, and closed the eyes, of him who was peacefully dying, might have said, ‘farewell, remember me when you go to the stars’” (57). The seeing of the deceased, the scene of the farewell, and the need to remember the loss of loved ones appeal to the use of the physical eyes at the same time that they surpass the limits of corporeal feelings. The eyes experience the painful moment of loss as well as mirror the difficult aspect of life.

The collection of Latin Poems seems also to work as an epilogue to the phase of Milton's life in which the physical vigor of the eyes is still present. Although sublime sight overcomes the physical in most of the writings analyzed, a type of immaturity for the sublime can be perceived. Milton's sublime vision in this phase traces his attempt at greatness, but also shows his doubtful mind questioning how to achieve it. The writings compiled in the Latin collection demonstrate his search for practice, as if the practice of writing would help him master his view to provide enough background for greatness. The last Latin Poem of this collection, acknowledged to have been written when Milton was 15 or 16, seems to summarize his ideals in this selection. In "Elegiac Verses", sloth is condemned. In laziness "you will never find such pleasures [...] when shameful slumber closes your weary eyes" (164). In short, the Miltonic writings of this period were attempts at freeing himself from laziness, opening his eyes to the magnificence of the sublime through practice. The visual metaphors reflect the need to exercise the eyes in the act of reading to enlarge his knowledge and of writing to achieve greatness.

3.1.4 – Prose Works

Milton's poetical career is interrupted when he begins his prose works. The poems analyzed in the previous collection show a mind still in its early moments of maturation. The writings of the young Milton from these prose works onwards broaden

even more his scope on issues that involved serious discussions of the political, social, and religious contexts of his time. The critical views of the anti-episcopal discourse, divorce, education, freedom of the press, and royal supremacy will be the basis for the interpretation of the visual metaphors of these prose works. The visual references, 387 in this collection, will help demonstrate that vision, analyzed in these writings, has a major role in denouncing the hidden aspects beneath these great systems and they will prepare the grounds for the highest view of Milton's works shown in the lines of *Paradise Lost*.

In the analysis of the major prose works, *The Reason of Church Government – Book 2 – The Preface*, the first famous treatise published and signed by Milton, will be the starting point. The 13 visual metaphors in this work already show that a certain shift begins to occur in Milton's writings, especially in his approach to vision. The physical aspect intermingles with sublime sight and with the blindness/wisdom vision. Nevertheless, all three categories are so mixed that they cannot be easily separated into the three distinct approaches. *The Reason of Church Government* is a tract that defends Presbyterianism as the most valid form of church organization and system of administration. In this defense, the mixture of the visual elements establishes the same mixture in the different dimensions of the social, political and religious realms. At the same time that the words refer to the Scripture, they change their view to the social and political spheres. Another turn is from the words of the Bible to the words of the pagan myths. The focus on sight accompanies the focus on different thoughts, and the categories of physical, sublime, and blindness/wisdom vision intermingle with each other, highlighting the importance of visual elements in the discussion of various religious aspects.

The arguments used in this section of the tract are in general acknowledged as autobiographical accounts. The constant repetition of verbs and expressions linked to prediction, such as foreseeing, foresight, help in an autobiographical approach, since they envisage the view of the writer predicting a different future for his writings, as in the passages below:

[...] that mysterious book of Revelation which the great evangelist was bid to eat, as it had been some eye-brightening electuary of knowledge and foresight, [...]

But this I foresee, that should the church be brought under heavy oppression, and God have given me ability the while to reason against that man that should be the author of so foul a deed;

[...] I foresee what stories I should hear within myself all my life after, of discourage and reproach. (166-67)

Vision is reflected in the writings that denounce a church system that tries to guide the lives of its believers in a manner different from what God may have commanded. In these passages, Milton seems to feel that he is the one prepared by the talents given by Providence to help provide a different view of the religious structure to others. In his visual rhetorical defense, the different approaches to sight illustrate his thoughts on the religious government and suggest the ideals of foreseeing the greatness that may have been his aim for the future.

As in *The Reason of Church Government*, in *An Apology for Smectymnuus*, Milton exceeds in his critical view of episcopacy. In the 23 references to visual elements, there is an indignant view toward the belief of others. What seems clear to the eyes of Milton in terms of Scripture seems blurred to the eyes of the other. The references try to describe the different views upon religious beliefs with a combination of the physical eyes with the blindness/wisdom vision. The following sentence, "I shall be thought too

much a party in mine own cause, and therein to see least; the other, that I shall be put unwillingly to molest the public view” (174), shows the view he advocates for his own purpose, as he confesses when he says that the involvement in his own party is so intense that he may see least. There is in this approach the first hint that will be developed in his other prose works, but more so in *Paradise Lost*, which is, the condemnation of guidance supported by blind passion.

Once more, individual interests seem to take control of Milton’s writing in *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, but the scope surpasses the surroundings of private concerns to invade the public sphere. In the 84 references to the visual metaphors, the four categories can be identified. The physical refers to the instance of the meeting of the couple and the chance for error of the bodily eyes at this first contact. The dissemination category leads to the other symbols related to marriage and can be associated with sublime sight and the involvement of biblical comparisons. Sublime sight refers to the constant allusions to the eyes of God and Christ and to the writings of the Bible, as if they were the best guides for decisions on divorce. Finally, the blindness/wisdom vision may be compared to the humanistic concern with the words of the Bible, seeing in them and through them the hands of man to restrain the applications of the laws of divorce for the purpose of establishing the control of the church and the state over marriage.

Since the number of references is large, each category may be exemplified separately. As for the physical view, marriage could be seen in “the prime scope” as “the gift of bodily conjunction” that may be maintained because it is clear that a union that fits under a “candid view both of church and magistrate” (184-85) benefits society. Milton’s denouncing of marriage as a visible representation to fit the codes of behavior of an ideal

society suggests Althusser's thought on ideology depicted previously, as a set of rules that the individuals must accept. The individual's attitude is established with respect to a series of acts imposed by the laws of these great structures.

The dissemination category supplements the other categories. With the conclusions that a marriage may be an error, the physical aspect of such a partnership opens the possibilities for different meanings to emerge. The analysis of the visual words guides the meanings to other nets of significance that divorce may represent. Divorce can be considered a type of release from a condition that goes "against sympathy or natural order [...] to show that such an indignity" of maintaining wedlock under serious circumstances of the suffering of the couple "cannot be offered to man" (198). There are several attempts to call the attention of the reader to witness the effects that a distressful marriage may cause. To epitomize such attempts, the references counterpoint exactly the lines of Scripture, as if by doing so, his argument would be strengthened by the words of the Bible.

Sublime sight is emphasized to provide more of a basis to the argumentative demonstration of the tract because it grants God, Christ, and other figures of the Bible a visible condition. First, there is the allusion to the beginning of the marital state, when "God saw it was not good that man should be left alone" (189) in Paradise and decided to promote a cheerful companion to him. Second, a final assurance that marriage is truly a creation of God, because only He could set a "covenant between man and man [...]. So of marriage he is the author and the witness" (200). Third, the same God loves "not to see the disparity of several cattle at the plough" (200), and this is the evidence that the condition settled by the eyes of God could be unsettled if His very same eyes see

disagreement in it. And finally, it is “Certainly [...] the manner of God, whose pure eyes cannot behold [...] worse inconveniences” (205) for His loved ones. The strength represented by the vision of God and Christ on marriage and divorce is an attempt to authorize the argument that supports the wrong view of marriage as the institution that should fit society and not the relationship between the couple.

The blindness/wisdom vision can be better highlighted when emotion is set apart for a while and the true benefits of divorce for human kind are pointed out. Apart from Milton’s personal interest in divorce, there are passages in his tract that are reasonable and plausibly reveal the inner wisdom that might arise when analyzing the controversial issues of the topic. Milton’s dissecting the words of the Bible related to marriage and divorce highlights the recognition that figurative language may be the stratagem found by those religious men who acknowledged themselves as pure interpreters of the Bible to restrict human actions and it serves as the best advice provided by this tract. In his attempts to help the public read with more critical eyes and understand other aspects hidden behind words, Milton makes his defense by discussing the validity of men’s words, which try to symbolize God’s own. To conclude his careful observation on the words of the Scripture, Milton calls on the readers to see, “therefore, that neither Scripture nor reason hath laid this unjust austerity upon divorce”, constructing it as a “letter-bound servility of the canon doctors” that “lay unnecessary burdens upon all men, to make a fair show in the fleshly observance of matrimony” (221), ignoring love and respect to maintain the bad image of society. Milton’s appealing words initiate the process of warning that reading may be a blind act.

Of Education, like the other tracts *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* and *An Apology for Smectymnuus*, refers to an individual aspect that reaches public proportions, yet it possesses a much lighter and hopeful tone. The need for knowledge is the focus of the 21 references to visual elements and they are the tools for this process. The words “observe”, “observing”, and “observation” appear more than five times and their repetition helps the analysis of the visual metaphors of this work. The physical eyes are incorporated into the inner sight. Observation involves careful attention, which seems the central thought of this work. The first observation provided in the text is that “learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents” (227). In this matter, the ruins allude to the Fall, which implicitly means that the chance of repairing a fault is an indirect reference to the search for wholeness or perfection through knowledge. In *Paradise Lost*, the pedagogical lesson *Of Education* is emphasized. Milton’s observation plays on the comparison of knowledge with visibility. In this sense, visibility is accomplished only if the invisible/unknown things, through learning, can be understood. Thus, learning consists of “reading and observing with elegant maxims [...] under vigilant eyes” the principles “to enlarge experience” (228-35) and consequently to acquire knowledge. The visual references show that the physical condition opens the eyes to a more internal and wiser perspective, the blindness/wisdom vision.

Areopagitica, to a certain extent, works as a complement to the issues pointed out in *Of Education*, especially in the approach to individual knowledge, but with a much broader scope and with a view embedded in a more experienced maturity. “*Areopagitica* looks at once backwards and afterwards” (Tillyard, 1966: 136) and this sliding attitude demonstrates the oscillation between the literal and the figural eyes, exemplified by the

physical and the blindness/wisdom vision categories. Vision is physical, but it is also a form to express one's mind. In the 90 references to visual metaphors, pure physical sight is questioned and initiates a process of seeing that should proceed in darkness. The "darkness visible" perspective is indirectly mentioned in all the references to a physical vision that is impaired and demands a development from the physical to the inner sight. In addition, the bridge that connects past, present, and future experiences directs the references more toward the blindness/wisdom vision, based perhaps on the first signs of failure of Milton's own sight. Another reason for the supremacy of the blindness/wisdom vision of this treatise may be the impediment of the free expression restrained by the State, limiting the external scope and opening the expression of the inner one.

In this treatise books must be looked upon with "a vigilant eye", because they are "as active as" the "soul" (239) which they contain. Because books are granted the condition of living bodies, the view on them turns out to be through sublime sight. In a single paragraph, the word "vision" is repeated three times, based on the words of God and showing how men may assure themselves the freedom to read whatever comes to their hands and judge through their own sight if the content may be good or not.

Vision helps support the main line of thought in this tract, which is the defense of free will. In the perspective of human's free will, personal reason and individual choice guide Milton's sight. The inward vision is represented by the blindness/wisdom category and is illustrated in this passage: "The light which we have gained was given us not to be ever staring on, but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge" (264). Milton's use of the verb to stare can be compared to Heidegger's opposition to the epistemological role of vision as mentioned in chapter 1. According to Heidegger, the

fixed staring gaze granted force to space and forgot to acknowledge the importance of temporality in Western metaphysics. Milton's choice of the visual metaphor "staring" with a disregard of onward things, privileging presence with the denigration of further learning, suggests that Heidegger's thought on the issue of vision was anticipated by *Areopagitica*. In *Areopagitica*, the achievement of external knowledge through the freedom of the press enhances one's inner view, and, in this way, the possibility of individual hope and learning may mirror a better development of the public sphere.

The affliction of rules that try to control man's freedom is not only the main issue of *Areopagitica* but also of the treatises Milton wrote against monarchy. The application of civil laws to all, regardless of rank, is one of the main topics of his two major anti-monarchical treatises, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* and *Eikonoklastes*. The examination of the visual metaphors will be made based on *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, which to a certain extent, includes those of *Eikonoklastes*. In the 53 references, the blindness/wisdom vision surpasses the occurrence of the other categories. This tract activates, from its first paragraph, the presence of visual metaphors to support the point that physical sight should be replaced by the blindness/wisdom vision with the exercise of (in)sight. "If men within themselves be governed by reason, and not generally give up their understanding to a double tyranny of custom from without and blind affections within, they would discern better" and have "more scope or more indulgence" (273-74) on their rights than under the tyranny of a monarch.

Indeed, the greatest appeal of the visual metaphors of this pamphlet is to the exercise of men's reason through their inner view. The references argue that if men "desert their own reason" and prefer to shut "their eyes, to think they see best with other

men's" eyes (284), the relation between subjects will never be put into balance. The search for personal (in)sight should be considered and the contributions of the inward gaze may lead men to a better evaluation of the systems of power that attempt to deprive them of their own public view of liberty and rights.

The *Second Defence of the English People*, in a sense, is a consequence of the anti-monarchical stance taken by the English people in relation to the death of their king. The prosecution and death of Charles I was seen by some other nations as an "English Parricide"; in other words, the English murdered one that was meant to be like a father for them. As a secretary of foreign tongues, Milton was supposed to answer for his nation against the writings that attacked his country and himself as a blind writer. The failure of his eyesight was considered an impairment of his view of the circumstances. The direct criticism upon blindness seems to have provoked in Milton a type of revolting inspiration that may have encouraged his words.

Written in 1654, *Second Defence*, is one the greatest works right after Milton's total blindness. Blindness is reflected in its 78 visual metaphors. Sublime sight can also be classified in the command of the eyes, but details suggest a mixture with the blindness/wisdom vision, which is illustrated when the blind Milton compares his state to other great chosen figures of the Greek culture, such as Homer and Tiresias, and to some other biblical names. Blindness, instead of helplessness, represented for Milton a chance for immortality because it would provide in the "shadows the light of the divine countenance" that would make those deprived of physical sight to "be at once the weakest and the strongest, at the same time blind and most keen of vision" (317). Milton's comparing his blind condition to other blind figures can be associated with the

Derridean accounts of the lineage of great blind writers. Derrida suggests that blindness works as a “sign of being chosen, a sign that one must know how to recognize in oneself the privilege of a destination, an assigned mission: in the night, by the night itself” (1993: 33). The visual metaphors highlighting the blindness/wisdom vision help reinforce the need for the cancellation of the physical eyes and the establishment of (in)sight. Milton concludes the use of the visual words of this tract by saying that he does “possess the same spirit, the same strength, but not the same eyes” (314). In this sense, although blind and in darkness he still has an assigned mission or duty, which is to defend the right to liberty and the choice of the people of his nation.

Duty and interest for posterity also mark the joining of the personal view with the public sphere in *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*. This tract is the last of a sequence of eight other pamphlets written during the turbulent moments of the shifting of the political administration in England in the seventeenth century. The 25 visual references show the predominance of the blindness/wisdom vision. The blind condition of seeing through an inward perspective seems to be involved with the other categories. Despite the profound arguments in this tract, in the end a certain feeling of hopelessness in the establishment of a free Commonwealth seems to take control of the words. Milton realizes that despite his duty to “forewarn” his country “in time”, he is sorry because he fears that “the effects of wisdom are so little seen among” (353) the English, who may lose some of the conquests they made earlier, and consequently return to a condition of seeing blindly through the scope of other types of leadership, depriving them of the condition of exercising their own choice.

Although *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* is one of the last prose works published in Milton's lifetime, to conclude the examination of the visual metaphors in his major prose writings, the final analysis to be made will be of *Christian Doctrine*. Milton's theological treatise, the product of a long period of his life dedicated to the study of Scripture, was published posthumously. This analysis uses excerpts from the full-length version¹⁷. In its limited version, only 21 visual references can be pointed out. All four categories are present in this tract, but sublime sight and the blindness/wisdom vision are the most frequent. Sublime sight is used in the attempt to set religion apart from God, in which Milton transcends his view and calls on God as live "witness" to prove that "with feelings of universal brotherhood and good will that" he "makes this account public" (725). The anticipation of matters of great controversy is made with the support of visual elements. The use of visual words, such as "seeing", "witnessing", and "observing" appeal, to the reader to employ a different perspective in the interpretation of this tract. Moreover, the invocation for an individual interpretation of the Bible argues that "No visible church", nor "any magistrate, has the right to impose its own interpretations upon the consciences of man as matters of legal obligation, thus demanding implicit faith" (732-33). The need to exercise inner strength is regarded in the last quotation that it is in the blindness/wisdom vision category. The exercise of (in)sight expresses inward reason that prevents the individual from being guided by implicit faith.

Therefore, the interpretation of the visual metaphors of Milton's prose works show the change of his scope from the one he had at the beginning of his career. The mixture of the categories, varying from the physical, dissemination, and the sublime to

¹⁷ The visual metaphors were extracted from a brief sample of this treatise published in Orgel, Stephen and Jonathan Goldberg, eds. *The Oxford Authors John Milton*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

the blindness/wisdom vision demonstrates that a process of maturity has taken place in his prose. The constant repetition of the issues of free will, the search for personal reason, individual choice, and the avoidance of seeing with other men's eyes invoke the need to close the physical eyes in order to see the effects of a life that is in the "darkness" but "clothed in light" (317). The prose works, together with Milton's blindness, are responsible for the opening up of the inward sight to reason and knowledge, putting the individual in a condition to exercise sight through the "darkness visible" perspective, with the elimination of the physical prospect and manifestation of the (in)stance.

3.1.5 – Milton's Major Poems – *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*

Vision in these two poems published after *Paradise Lost* reflects Milton's approach to this issue as similar to that in his epic. The process that his sight went through culminated in *Paradise Lost*. The analyses of his choice for visual metaphors up to *Paradise Lost* seem to follow a visual path, from physical visibility to the expression of his (in)sight. According to Derrida's book, *Memoirs of the Blind*, Milton's process "towards this other legacy that is passed down in darkness. Opening eyes [...] but only in order to cancel them" (1993: x), in the view of this thesis, represents the exercise of a "darkness visible" perspective. In *Paradise Regained* and in *Samson Agonistes*, the "darkness visible" perspective supplements its employment from *Paradise Lost* and suggests the recovery of paradise or inner strength through the exercise of the blindness/wisdom vision. In this perspective, the physical sight is blurred by darkness with the disregard of its bodily expression. Thus, visibility for the Son and for Samson, is

attained through the seeing from the inside, from the blindness/wisdom vision, which activates reason and prepares sight for a better interpretation of the various prospects of life.

In *Paradise Regained*, in the 139 visual references, physical sight is all directed at temptation, the attempt to deceive the eyes of the seer with superficial images. The other three visual categories are presented in this brief epic as supplements to defeat the risks of the physical eyes. The analysis will follow the separation of these visual categories according to their presentation in the four books of this poem.

In the First Book, the visual references start with the physical condition. John the Baptist's seeing of the Lord confirms the divinely promised coming of the Savior. The scene that "Baptist soon / Descried, divinely warned, and witness bore"¹⁸ (1.25-26) is the scene that opens up the tempter's eyes as well as the poems' lines. Satan surveys the baptism scene and right afterward goes to his council to inform them of his view. The need to tempt that figure who could be the representation of God on Earth begins with vision. The development of the poem follows sequences of visual expressions that coincide with the events taking place in this work. The poem ends with the same reference to this opening scene. However, at the end, when the Lord "frustrated the conquest" of the tempter, "he unobserved / Home to his mother's house private return" (1.609-39). The beginning and the end of the poem refer directly to the exercise of vision.

All temptations begin with a physical allusion and end with an inward illumination. The sublime and dissemination categories reinforce the activities

¹⁸ The texts of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* are from Orgel and Goldberg's edition of the Oxford Authors, pages 619-715. The quotations of these two poems will follow the number of their books and/or lines in this edition.

incorporated by the physical and blindness/wisdom aspects of vision. In the First Book, as already mentioned, the physical eyes are open to the realm of enticement. God's foresight and foreknowledge anticipate the victory of His Son over Satan and His words to Gabriel represent the formal assurance of it. The eyes of God are ready to see that the enterprise of His Son through the wilderness will ensure that he is able "to show" himself "worthy of his birth divine / And high prediction", and "henceforth" (1.140-42) ready to be exposed to Satan's view.

The word "expose", according to the dictionary definitions, seems to work as a guideline for what will become of the poem in relation to its approach to vision. The first meaning of expose, "to deprive of shelter, protection, or care", states the physical and uncaring conditions in which God, by taking His Son out of His "blissful seat" (Milton, 1996: 6), puts Him into the wilderness, without food and protection. In the unprotected environment, the second meaning of "expose" is reinforced, because it is "to subject to risk from a harmful action or condition and to submit or make accessible to a particular action or influence", which opens the possibility of temptation to be before the eyes of the Savior. Finally, "expose" means "to cause to be visible or open to view" (*OED*), which is the putting of the Son under the inspection of Satan.

In the Son's exposure, in all of the senses, vision is circumscribed. Yet, under the physical surveillance and ocular temptation of Satan, the Savior concludes the First Book, acknowledging His figure as the one who is God's visible representative, ready "to vanquish by wisdom hellish wiles" (1.175). The Son, God's "living oracle" (1.460), perceives Satan's evil scope; yet, he neither forbids nor commands him to proceed, but simply accepts the conduction of his acts.

The beginning of the Second Book demonstrates the fears of the Lord's disciples and Mary for not seeing him for a while. His physical disappearance causes doubt and a resentful apprehension that God would hide His Son from their view and "retire / After appearance, and again prolong" (2.40-41) their greatest expectation for his presence with them. While the disciples and Mary demonstrate their concern about the Lord's vanishing, Satan goes back to his council to declare that he had found the Son, "viewed him, tasted him" (2.131) and realized that the task of making him undergo temptation was more difficult than with Adam and Eve. In the council, the suggestions to tempt the Lord are all related to the physical exhibition of tempting symbols, like women. Nevertheless, Satan in advance proclaims that "beauty stands / In the admiration only of weak minds" and that "Therefore with manlier objects" they must try the Son's "constancy, with such as have more show / Of worth, of honour, glory, and popular praise" (2.220-27). The physical attempts involve another dimension with Satan's words and parallel the dissemination category. To abstain from the use of beauty in favor of honor, glory, and praise, reveals other realms of signification.

Physical sight after this moment in the epic is surrounded by the other categories. The first reference is to sublime sight. In a dream, the Savior sees food and the possibility of having his hunger satisfied, but replies by acknowledging that he himself could command what is needed to satisfy his bodily needs. The physical attitude is replaced by the establishment of competition, and an argument between the Son and Satan is guided by the visual metaphors. Satan sees that what he offers might be suspect and pretends to despise material objects to attack the possibility of the viewing of empires and all the wealth they possess. Money, fame, and power are brought to the sight of the Lord. He,

after such views, declares that to “Witness those ancient empires of the earth / [...] Golden in show” but ill in reason to “wise and virtuous” men who aspire not “to guide nations in the way of truth” but are subjected “to anarchy within” (2.435-73), is not an exalted advantage. On the contrary, the Lord concludes that a royal doctrine that does not worship God and is governed by the inner light humankind carries, may attain wealth and empire, but is not guided by reason and truth. In this sense, Satan’s appeal to physical attraction is once more overcome by the inner power of sight.

In the Third Book, there are the same accounts on the tempting aspects of vision. Satan changes his strategies and flies high with the Son to broaden the scope of their view. The prospect becomes so wide open that the view of “Huge cities and high towered” places, which “well might seem the seats of mightiest monarchs” (3.261-62) cannot be represented in its borders. The vision is of the Roman Empire, with all of its wealth and power. The dissemination category aids the intervention of Satan in the Lord’s sight. Satan’s eyes guide the Savior’s, as:

Turning with easy eye thou may’st behold.
[...] see, though from far
His thousands, in what martial equipage [...]
See how in warlike muster they appear. (3.293-308)

Yet, the Lord perceives Satan’s maneuvers to make him see other possibilities of power. The narrator’s description of the Savior’s larger view is summarized in this short sentence: “He looked and saw what numbers numberless” (3.310), and demonstrates that the “number numberless” view changes the dimension of the scope, apparently enormous, but referred to as nothing when numberless is considered.

The Savior’s words close the book. The words argue again that all seeing is worth nothing when it simply reflects the shallowness of the images. “Much ostentation vain of

fleshly arms / And fragile arms” put before the Savior’s eyes could be “Plausible to the world” but to him “worth naught” (3.387-93). The views of the idols of war, the idolatry of weapons and power, the belief in the worship of other gods, are the last visual condemnation of the Lord’s words in Book 3. With these words, Satan’s visual temptation fails to accomplish his purpose.

In the last Book, Satan’s argument is more and more concentrated on the physical performance of vision. Satan flies up together with the “saviour to the western side”, from whence they could see “Statutes and trophies, and triumphal arcs / Gardens and groves presented to” their eyes in such a dimension that they had their “vision multiplied through air, or glass / Of telescope” (4.25-42). Under the Savior’s eyes there is glorious Rome, but “this grandeur and majestic show / Of luxury though called magnificence” does not tempt the Savior’s eyes and, even less so his mind (4.110-12). Greatness and the luxurious environment of Rome seem nothing more than attractions that accord with the human weakness of searching for power rather than knowledge and wisdom.

Satan, wondering that his offers do not affect the inward purpose of the Savior on Earth, seeks now a higher enterprise, which is Greece with all of its philosophical tradition and approach to wisdom. The visual metaphors of the dissemination category appear as helpful tools to display Greece to the eyes of the Lord. Satan urges the Savior to “behold / Where on the Aegean shore a city stands / Built nobly, pure the air, and light the soil / Athens the eye of Greece, mother of arts / And eloquence, native of famous wits” (4.237-41). The involving atmosphere of the locus of intelligence and knowledge gives the impression that Satan’s aim may be reached. Nevertheless, the Savior contradicts Satan’s expectations and concludes that his wisdom does not rely on dogmas

or systems of knowledge that are set on “Conjectures, fancies, built on nothing firm” (4.292), but instead it is a light received from within called true virtue. The dissemination category opens the possibility for the Savior to exercise his deconstructive stance, calling for the hidden aspects of philosophy.

Hopeless of his success, Satan’s arguments leave the dimension of words and views, and invade the realm of pain and suffering. Images of terror are placed before the Savior’s eyes in a terrible storm to cause fear and weary suffering, which also brings painful experience not only to the eyes but to the other senses of the Lord. Satan wishes that through the experience of physical and mental distress he could affect the Lord’s virtue. Yet, the Lord, fully assured in his wisdom vision, can see the darkening portents, and the signs of deceit and ill ambition of Satan. Virtue and confidence in the inward light are the elements that ensure the successful triumph of the Savior over Satan. Throughout the analysis of the visual metaphors, it can be perceived that the outward visual actions are all subjected to the Savior’s inward reflection. In this sense, the outcome of the regained or recovered paradise may be alluded to the exercise of the (in)sight faculty in the darkening wilderness of the human mind. *Paradise Regained* is thus the reinforcement of the need to reach, through a “darkness visible” perspective, the inward illumination that every one has, before trusting in the illusions of the immediate act of seeing.

Samson Agonistes, like *Paradise Regained*, is another reinforcement of *Paradise Lost*’s “darkness visible” perspective. Nevertheless, the approach to this perspective is performed by a figure who, although being given life by divine power, does not have the perfection of the Lord. The Savior of *Paradise Regained* is the material representation of

God on Earth, as the possessor of all virtue, valor, and wisdom. Samson, on the other hand, even having divine power in his hair, needs to undergo suffering and loss to recognize his inward strength. The strength of Samson's hair reveals a type of externality that may help the understanding of his fallen condition. Suffering is the bridge through which external attitudes lead the way to reason.

The visual expressions of this play aid in the establishment of the bridge, from which blindness represents a type of opening. The bridge can be compared to the link between the two types of blindness conceptualized by Derrida. Sacrificial blindness stands for the elimination of the physical eyes, which coincides with Samson's having his eyes gouged out. Transcendental blindness corresponds to Samson's initial contact to his inner self. The way through the inner expression of the mind is found after experiencing a deep feeling of distress, a consequence of the loss of the physical eyesight. In the 122 visual metaphors, the four categories can be distinguished. The physical is totally directed to the impairment in the use of the eyes. The dissemination category seems to be blended with the physical, especially because Samson, the protagonist, is blind. In his blindness, he exercises the other signs of sight, first as a failure, an expression of weakness, and afterwards as the possibility of reaching power. Sublime sight is referred to in the eyes of God and their vigilance of Samson. The blindness/wisdom vision works as a type of concluding element for life in the message of Samson as hero and Milton, according to Derrida, as a blind man with the power of a visionary.

In the Argument of the play, the anticipation of Samson's deed against the Philistines, in a feast where he is supposed to "play or show his strength" (672), already indicates that the visual elements may perform an important role in this work. A play that

describes a show or an exhibition before the eyes of an audience displays that the physical exercise of the eyes will be required. Ironically, the performer of the act is blind and is unable to see his own spectacle or the image of the others.

The visual words are reflected in Samson's soliloquy at the beginning of the play and they reveal his despondency at the loss of his sight and his captive condition. The lament on his losses shows the sorrow he feels for himself and adds the misfortune of being betrayed by his wife and consequently his betrayal of his God. "Eyeless in Gaza" (41), he is able to see that an "impotence of mind, in a body strong" (52), caused his fall. Physical strength is worth nothing if wisdom does not command his actions. In spite of his conclusion that wise actions should guide one's life better than physical vitality, Samson suffers more with the loss of his sight. He complains how his "dark, dark, dark" (80) state will condemn himself "To live a life half dead, a living death" (100). Blindness, at first, appears to him as the fullest expression of suffering he will have to cope with.

After Samson's first speech, the dissemination category is represented. The Chorus of Danites come to Samson's prison and show their shock when they "See how he lies at random, carelessly diffused" (118), a scene they can barely believe, with a tremendous "change beyond report, thought, or belief" (118). Their disbelief in Samson's image is also attributed to a physical misrepresentation of their eyes. Even though at first they could not believe their physical sight, they finally agree to the change of view. They see the former "Irresistible Samson" (126) now in a "bondage or lost sight", living in a "Prison within prison" (152-53), confined to spend his life in darkness. The physical and dissemination categories are the basis of the approach to vision in this first part of the play. As the play develops, the visits of Samson's father, Dalila, and the giant of Gath,

gradually show the self-revelation of Samson's mind, and the other categories, sublime sight and blindness/wisdom vision, follow this process.

Samson, embedded in hopelessness, begs not for the restoration of his physical sight, but rather for the discovery of a "secret passage" to his "inmost mind", where he will be able to exercise his (in)sight, "void of corporal sense" (610-16). The passage can be compared to a bridge that leads to a process of interiorization as mentioned previously with the references to the Derridean blindnesses. In this passage, after the visit of his father, Samson initiates his inward process of searching for light. In the view of this thesis, in this inward attempt, Samson's act goes on a "downward path to wisdom" (Shattuck 1996), through a "darkness visible" perspective. According to Derrida's words from *Memoirs of the Blind*, the blind Samson is first enclosed in the *abocular* hypothesis of blindness, and his process toward inner light goes from the sacrificial to transcendental blindnesses. In transcendental blindness, the sublime sight and the blindness/wisdom categories command the interpretation of the visual metaphors.

Sublime sight is exercised in the visit of Dalila. Dalila fixes her eyes on Samson and receives in return his hatred and scorn. Despite his eyeless state, Samson could feel the presence of Dalila. He has the view of the others to describe her as well as the hearing of her disdainful words. Samson is amazed at "How cunningly the sorceress displays / Her own transgressions" (819-20). Samson considers her visit a temptation, trying to allure him once again with her false views. Regardless of his frailty, he is able to see her attempts to seduce him, but even so, he continues his gradual search.

The last visit to Samson can be considered another temptation. A giant of Gath appears to look down on him and challenge him, who was once invincible, but is now

weak. The giant exercises the superiority of his physical sight to despise Samson's power and "to see of whom such noise" (1088) of strength has been boasted. Samson replies by challenging the giant to a duel, and he claims that "The way to know" should not be "to see but taste" (1091). Samson and the giant's duel can be associated with Derrida's dream on the duel of the blind men. The blind seem to possess keen eyes that cannot see but pervade the seeing of the other. In the Derridean reference, Samson's sense toward the blindness/wisdom vision takes place with these words. Action counts more than the superficiality of the physical impression. Samson's defiance of the giant stimulates his inward emotions and his confidence in his inward gaze.

The coming of the Philistines' officer to invite Samson to the spectacle at their feast works as the final stimulus for the completion of his duty. Samson attains his "conscience and internal peace" (1334) and through them he sees with his blindness/wisdom vision. In this matter, his inner sight is active and ready to defeat the inactiveness of his physical eye. The climax of the accomplishment of Samson's inward view is thus reached with the physical vision of the complete destruction of himself and his enemies, suggesting the complete erasure of the physical eyes in the accomplishment of an inward light. The final visual metaphors summarize Samson's achievement. They report how a man "blind of sight, / Despised and thought extinguished quite, / With inward eyes illuminated" (1687-89) by his wisdom brought about peace and consolation for himself and his people. Blindness, instead of being limitation of the body, provides a full accomplishment of the sense of seeing, represented by its "darkness visible" aspect.

These final works are the best examples of the "darkness visible" in Milton's writings, more specifically, in *Paradise Lost*. Both works describe the Lord's exposure

and Samson's exhibition of inward feelings and doubts. Yet, the successful outcome of both narratives provide a message that may have been left by Milton to his successors as well as to future generations, which is a parallel with Derrida's poststructuralist (in)stance. The traces of the Miltonic and the Derridean blindnesses are about the risks of the immediacy of sight and suggest the need for the elimination of the physical eye and the reinforcement of the figural "I", a movement that will be discussed in the following chapter.

4 – The visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost*

4.1 – Milton's and Derrida's blindnesses

The purpose of this research on the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost* is to demonstrate that Milton's phrase "darkness visible" and other lines of *Paradise Lost*, to a certain extent, adumbrated the poststructuralist stance on vision, that is, the need to mistrust the immediacy of physical sight and to search for a deeper reflection upon the superficiality of images¹⁹. The poststructuralists perspective particularly that of Jacques

¹⁹ The references to *Paradise Lost* are taken from Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1996, and will be cited parenthetically throughout this chapter with the number of the book first, followed by the number of the line(s), (1.63).

Derrida in his book *Memoirs of the Blind* (1993) and in his theories is compatible, in the view of this thesis, with Milton's "darkness visible" perspective. As an informed reading, this working thesis will prove that the dialectics of traditional philosophy on the issue of vision/blindness in Milton's epic should be placed "under erasure", with the cancellation of the literal eye and the insertion of the figural "I" in the scope of interpretation. The methodology of this text will provide a critical guide for the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost*, which will be negotiated with the Derridean questions on the contemporary philosophical problematic on sight.

Milton's epic *Paradise Lost* is an early modern text that encompasses the features of prior classics for being a narrative poem of heroic action and having an encyclopedic quality, dealing with matters that discuss the basis of the religious, philosophical, and political assumptions that have been shaping Western thought since Plato²⁰. Like Plato, Milton championed the traditional philosophy that is basically structured on a type of encyclopedic notion that aims to conceive written texts that contain master conceptions of truth.

However, ambivalence in *Paradise Lost*, especially in the oscillation between the use of figural and literal vision, helps show that a type of threshold is open whose reference leaves stabilized concepts for a more debatable perspective. *Paradise Lost* is itself a written debate, which can be shown by an analysis of its textual structures. This analysis may uncover questions on the metaphysical conceptions that constitute Western philosophy and, in a sense, attack the symbolic order of the *logos*. The line of thought of

²⁰ Because my reading of John Milton's *oeuvre* is done in a context based more on the questions of human affairs, internal transformations of society in Western Europe, and the emergence and dominance of empiricism, my approach will prefer the denomination of Early Modern period characteristics rather than his Renaissance ones.

traditional philosophy is characterized by the orderly distinctions of binary oppositions. Questions on the concept of stabilized antinomies, on fixed points of reference, mark the main locus of discussion of logocentrism.

Logocentrism is a term coined by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, who refers to traditional philosophy as based on the “metaphysics of presence”. Logocentrism demonstrates how the structures of binary oppositions work as determinate forms that serve as the basis of Western philosophical thought. Logocentric assumptions claim that defined truths reside beyond the presence of a signified in such a way as to assure signifiers with the limited meanings they convey. Derrida puts the limited operation of signifiers and signifieds in the logocentric ideas “under erasure”, particularly since this operation attempts to frame the principles with absolute truth.

In *Writing and Difference* (1978), Derrida propounds his arguments against the matrix of the “metaphysics of presence”, which

is the determination of Being as *presence* in all senses of this word. It could be shown that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence - *eidos*, *arché*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *alétheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth. (279-80)

Derrida argues against the danger of a stabilized system of signs as structures that bear the essence of presence and operate with a transcendent meaning of the I/eye.

The tendency in logocentrism of the conceptualization of a center, which marks the I/eye and denotes the privilege of this sign over a marginal one, confounds the possibilities of the negotiation of meanings in their various (con)texts. Derrida explains that such a privilege fails. He sets forth his view, which denies the limitation or fixed separation of both signifier and signified and the prevalence of a center. In his claim, a

signifier may be either interior or exterior to other signifiers, according to their relation to the signified. The combination of these two possibilities of signification, the decentralization of the signified, the intermingling of the signifier and signified in a play of signification, and the consequent movement to the margin open up the possibility of abstaining from absolute truths and negotiating meanings with the matters of *différance*.

The act of articulating meanings within their (con)texts is emphasized in Derrida's theories. Terms like *différance*, *supplement*, *pharmakon*, *trace*, and others, as discussed in the previous chapter, provide the implications of de-stabilized meanings. They do not have a unique signification; instead, their meanings oscillate between assertions and subversions, marking the problematic state of a fixed present concept or signified. These words summarize the "undecidability of signs" and imply the impossibility of a single, unified, monocular view of interpretation. Derrida points out that interpretation should embrace the idea of comprehending "with disbelief, with a dubious knowledge" (Rapaport, 1983: 43-44), as if interpretation corresponded to the exposure of a reading to an experience of aporia. The sign should be incorporated into a moment of un-veiling its hidden meanings, and in this procedure, reading would be taken to the realm of darkness²¹.

The interpretation of the sign, according to Derrida, should perform an act that "must proceed in the night" and escape "the field of vision" (1993: 45). For the accounts related to the experience of darkness in order to attain visibility, Derrida's book *Memoirs*

²¹ Darkness would correspond to the blindness of a reader. The first experience of a reading act is blindness. After the initial contact, the reader starts his/her direct exposure to an "understanding" moment according to his/her views.

of the Blind shows the articulations of two types of blindnesses: the transcendental and the sacrificial. These two blindnesses intervene and repeat each other. The transcendental and the sacrificial blindnesses, already focused on previously, are indeed two ways of interpretation and rhetoric that proliferate meaning in the powerless aspect of the literal, and consequently, decentralize the essence of the physical eye, leading interpretation to the realm of “darkness visible”.

The phrase “darkness visible” appears in the first Book of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. The “darkness visible” perspective is a type of experience that leads one to a state of blindness. There is the undecidability of these two elements, darkness and visibility. In this phrase, these two opposing concepts are conflated and there is no evidence of the privilege of one over the other; on the contrary, their meanings cannot be approached independently. This phrase partakes of opposing discourses simultaneously, and, as for Derrida, it is by articulating the meanings of these discourses that an ideal attempt of signification may be embraced.

“Darkness visible” guides the direction of the ambivalence of the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost*, for it implies the experience of the loss of an external and physically visible paradise and the accomplishment of seeing through darkness the unveiling of a “paradise within” (12.311). According to the *OED*, a paradise is an enclosed park, an intermediate place or state that reflects the outside, the external. “Paradise within” is an oxymoron and in its combination of (in)congruous²² elements, the

²² Although the word incongruous may commonly be understood by its negative significations as lacking congruity, not harmonious, and incompatible, I have opted for its in-congruous form. The prefix *in* does not produce a derivative word with a negative form; instead, it is in its adjective function and means: directed or bound inward.

external is brought into the internal; in other words, visibility out of darkness is through the mere experience of blindness.

The visual metaphors in *Paradise Lost*, the constant references to eyes, vision, and sight, confirm that an attempt to use a different perspective on a familiar story takes place in this epic. However, the significance of the visual metaphors is not simply the possibility of seeing or approaching a story differently. In *Paradise Lost*, the presence of visual metaphors (de)stabilize the wordplay between the literal and the figural sight and, at these two poles, a sliding movement takes place. This movement tends to establish, according to Derrida, a communication between two opposing values, the literal and the figural. Instead of a limit or a slash between these two opposing concepts, the lines of *Paradise Lost* invite the readers to experience vision and blindness, to leave the literal and attain the figural, and, at the same time, to see with figural sight the risks of physical sight.

As in Derrida's writings, Milton's rhetoric in *Paradise Lost* "violates the relationship between word (signifier) and meaning (signified)" (Rapaport, 1983: 12). *Paradise Lost* shows that Milton was not the poet that emphasized presence or the idealization of the present represented by speech; on the contrary, he invented various types of comparisons in his metaphors that lead to an endless path of interpretations. Hence, the "ideal" presence applied to the signifier and signified in the logocentric conception is banished in *Paradise Lost*; moreover, it becomes even harder to be reached when interpretation is focused on the visual metaphors of this epic.

The term metaphor, in a brief and general definition, comes from the Greek *metapherein* (to transfer) and means a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of

object or idea used in place of another to suggest a likeness between them (*OED*). A more elaborate concept of metaphor, however, may be used for the approach of this thesis, that is: “metaphor is the language event in which the *proper* sense of a word or a phrase *dies*, in order that an *improper*, often surprising as well as unpredicted, sense might *rise* from that death into life” (Shoaf, 1993: 47). In other words, metaphor renews language and reinforces the need of the application of a different form of perception.

The visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost* are mirrored in the events of a sacred text and they open it into thoughts, discussions, and doubt. Milton takes the most common myth ever told, Creation, out of its short lines and mystery and infuses it with a great version/vision, using special effects. He employs a different perspective on the events of the Old Testament. Through his indirect sight (by the time he wrote the epic, Milton was completely blind), the story of creation is furnished with a different scenario and with epic dimensions. The metaphors of the epic demonstrate a renewal or a rebirth of the Old Testament story.

The articulation of the visual metaphors in *Paradise Lost* requires a dimension in which perception must be exercised. The elevation of the reading to the realm of external and internal senses gives life to the lines of the poem. Sight, for the sake of reading or interpretation, should be exposed to blindness in an attempt to erase the act from the outside and invite the exercise of the inner vision. The “darkness visible” metaphor and Derrida’s blindnesses can be read, according to my view, as being articulated in the lines of *Paradise Lost*, and in such articulation, sight is absorbed into a blinding state and (in)sight is activated; hence, out of darkness, visibility is achieved.

The two blindnesses, the sacrificial and the transcendental, are articulated from the moment of the view up to the judgment of the act. Sacrificial blindness stands for the act of seeing, whereas, transcendental blindness implies the reflection upon sight. Sacrificial blindness is also called by Derrida the *abocular* hypothesis. The term *abocular* “comes from *ab oculis*: not from or by but without the eyes” (Derrida, 1993: 2). The cancellation of the physical eyes is needed in order to open the pure representation of the traces. Loss and fall are exemplified in the removal of the physical aspect of the eyes. A rupture is experienced in the loss and in the fallen state. The rupture is the passage needed to reach the mind and soul. In this apprehension through the mind and senses, the signifier and signified relationship is broken. The sacrificial blindness is in *Paradise Lost*, the breaking of the bonds of signifier and signified, and from the fissure that is opened, the signs turn out to be no longer mere signs, only copies of signs. The play of signification leaves open the scope of the sign and sets the trace as the available facet of meaning.

Transcendental blindness is the triggering of the trace in the game of meanings. According to Kantian philosophy, the transcendental lies in the notion of experience as determined by the mind's makeup, extending beyond the limits of ordinary experience and knowledge. As for the dictionary definition, the word transcendental comes from the verb *transcendere* that means to climb across, to transcend, from *trans-* + *scandere* ‘to climb’ (*OED*). However, the term transcendental, for the Derridean blindness, seems to go in an opposite direction from the definitions provided by Kant and the dictionary. Transcendental blindness is not a movement going from either the internal to the external realm or from the bottom to the top; on the contrary, it is a reversal of its meaning.

Transcendental blindness is supplemented by sacrificial blindness. The sacrifice, loss, fall, or death of the physical eye culminates in the transcendental or reversed direction with the rebirth of the gift that the individual mind possesses, the power of reason and choice.

The experience of the Derridean blindnesses, the movement from the outward vision toward (in)sight, in a “downward path to wisdom” (Shattuck, 1996: 71) is mastered by an inward process of self-formation and inner reflection. In *Paradise Lost*, the same blinding attempt takes place in the experience of the eye/I as a lost paradise that is interiorized through a “darkness visible” perspective into an inward act to its recovery as a “paradise within”. In the movement from external to internal sight, a careful reading, the chance of pondering the risks of the immediacy of the physical vision, and a concomitant “submission to external interpretative authority” (Rumrich, 1990: 257) provide the ground for the institution of a more aware reader. The reader, in this manner, experiences a type of reasoning process through which, he/she can exercise his/her choices in the public sphere in a more rational way and not simply place himself or herself in a condition of outward acceptance of and conformity with pre-existing principles.

According to the words of the head curator of the exhibition, in the preface of *Memoirs of the Blind*, from which the Derridean hypotheses of blindnesses come:

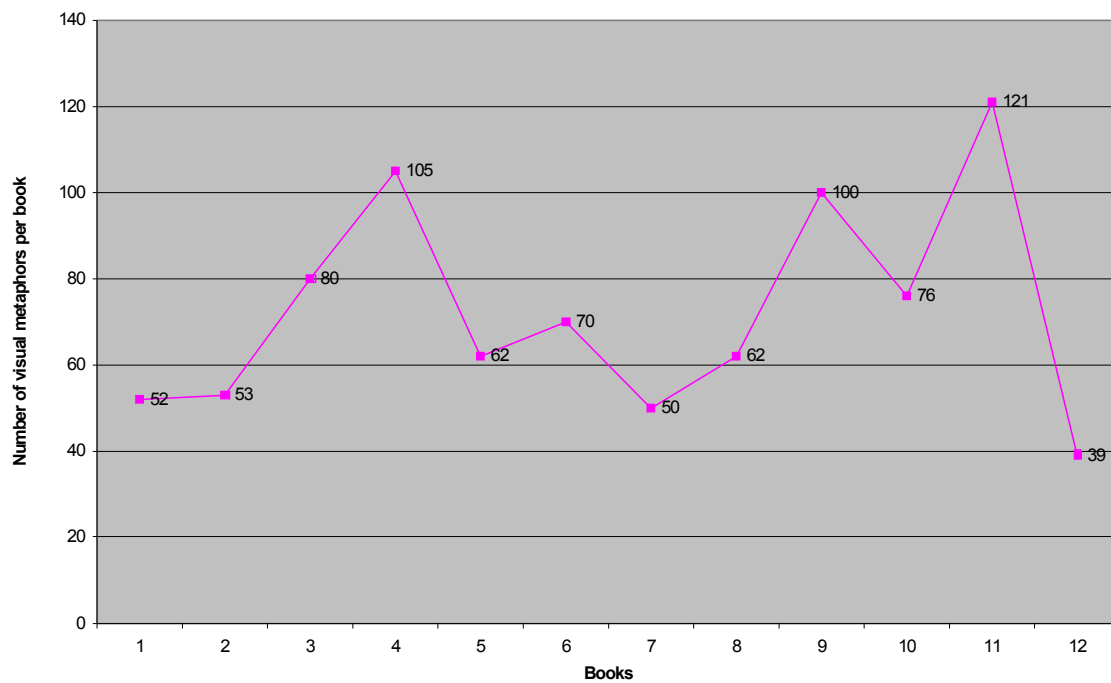
Jacques Derrida’s reflection goes to the heart of the phenomena of vision, from blindness to evidence ... It thus will have seen it to interrupt the legacy of a monocular vision in order to lead us by the hand toward this other legacy that is passed down in darkness. Opening eyes, then, yes – but in order to cancel them. (1993: vii-x)

Nevertheless, Milton's and Derrida's blindness can be a seeing experience in another dimension, in the scope of reflection, in the articulation with the outer and the inner worlds. Through blindness, Milton and Derrida take us by the hand to see how the eyes can be opened to the fallacies of the world.

4.2 – The display of visual metaphors in the lines of *Paradise Lost*

The analysis of the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost* will be displayed according to the number of their references per book, as in the following graph. The vertical axis of the graph represents the number of times the visual metaphors occur per book, while the horizontal axis stands for the books. The books are separated by a relational information within the visual elements they possess. The separation brings about a more thorough understanding of the process of signification in question. Books 1 and 2 are grouped together in a subchapter; first, because of the correspondence in numbers of the presence of the visual metaphors, and second, due to the experience of blindness out of the internal and external darkness of Hell and the fallen angels' minds. Books 3 and 4 are set alone in different subchapters, because the visual references reach their second and third highest points in the narrative, without mentioning their direct relation to the need to find visibility out of darkness. Books 5 to 8 are placed together in the following subchapter, mainly for their similar role in the epic, that is, Raphael's description of creation before Adam's and Eve's eyes. Besides, it is in these four books that the number of visual metaphors has a more constant order. Book 9 deserves an independent subchapter, since it represents the climax of the epic, man's Fall. The final three books are put together in

the last subchapter, since they represent the largest variation of the visual elements and help conclude the oscillation and relationship between the “darkness visible” perspective and the accomplishment of a “paradise within”, culminating in the erasure of the physical eye and the reaffirmation of the figural “I” in the dark realm of interpretation.



4.2.1 – Books 1 and 2

Paradise Lost, following the classical tradition of epics, starts *in medias res*, “into the midst of things, presenting Satan, with his angels, now fallen into Hell – described here not in the Centre [...] , but in a place of utter darkness, fitliest called Chaos” (5). These words, presented in the argument of Book 1, announce that a natural movement back and forth in the reading of the poem will be maintained. The sequence of visual

metaphors begins in Hell, where vision turns out to be impaired by the dark environment. The reading may proceed from the middle to the beginning and later from the beginning towards the end. The middle, as the starting point, is “a place of utter darkness, [...] Chaos”, and from it, Milton foreshadows that not a “Centre” is to be established, but rather a movement towards the margins.

The displacement and the disestablishment of a center may serve to indicate that the concept of presence is already put in a problematic position. The understanding of the present will be conditioned by the comprehension of the past and consequently the future events of the epic. “Milton’s readers start in hell, without any established narrative sympathies, and, having been plunged in confusion, they may quite possibly leave it in the same state” (Rumrich 260). The position of the narrative in the middle of things suggests that a precedent may have occurred, and that future references will be needed, but their assured moment is still suspended. The suspension of established limits brings about confusion and plays with the movements of signification.

In the first lines of the poem, the persona²³ evokes the Heavenly Muse to illumine what is dark in him and provides a brief preview of the whole events of the epic. The (pre)view suggests the coming of events of great dimensions with a probable broadening of the scope of the reading. However, right after the wide, illuminated (pre)view of the epic enterprise, the description of Hell through Satan’s “baleful eyes” (1.56) reduces the scope and prepares the reading for an experience of “no light, but rather darkness visible” (1.63), with great despair that will serve “only to discover sights of woe” (1.64). In an

²³ The use of persona will reflect the moments in which, in the argument of this thesis, Milton lets his words be the representation of his own voice and view. Yet, the employment of narrator will symbolize the voice that provides the description of the sequence of events throughout the narrative.

“utter darkness” (1.73), the fallen angels experience the dreadful expulsion from Paradise and the loss of the presence of God.

The Fall hurls the fallen angels (and the reader) into the middle of Chaos. The definitions of the word chaos also help to denote a contradiction in Milton’s use of it. Chaos, on the one hand, can mean total disorder and confusion, but on the other hand, it is the amorphous void supposed to have existed before the creation of the universe (*OED*). Milton plays with the word chaos and with his own beliefs. As a monist, Milton believed in the orthodox view that creation came entirely from the hands of God, from Chaos to Heaven and Earth and their creatures. Chaos, in this sense, should no longer exist once God has created Heaven, Hell and the angels. Thus, the word chaos shows that confusion and disorder are needed for the aporetic experience that flourishes from the view of conflicting instances in the minds of the fallen angels, of Milton, and of the reader as well.

The conflict of words and vision can be read as the first reference to blindness. The feeling of despair from loss and the dark environment describe the suffering from blindness as a fall: in its first stage, a failure, a punishment, and a miserable state of weakness. The fallen angels can no longer see light and their blindness corresponds to a “prison ordained / In utter darkness, [...] / As far removed from God and light of Heaven” (1.71-73). Nevertheless, the first references for all the woes of darkness are followed by the moment of awakening of the fallen angels after the fall of great proportions, physically and mentally speaking. In this manner, blindness, after the sorrowful distress of a fall, can also bring a type of recovery, as an awakening experience.

The possibilities of recovering after the tormented fall can be summarized by Beelzebub's words when he answers Satan's appeal for his peers:

Too well I see and rue the dire event
That, with sad overthrow and foul defeat,
Hath lost us Heaven, and all this mighty host
In horrible destruction laid thus low,
As far as Gods and Heavenly essences
Can perish: for the mind and spirits remains
Invincible and vigour soon returns,
Though all our glory extinct, and happy state
Here swallowed up in endless misery.
But what if he our Conqueror [...]
Have left us this our spirit and strength entire
Strongly to suffer and support our pains, [...]
To undergo eternal punishment. (1.134-155)

Although the mind and spirit can still show their inner vigor, the fallen angel fears the ire of God once again upon their destinies. The same uncertainties arise from the suffering caused by blindness. The failure and sacrifice of the physical power can be recovered through inner strength; however, the feeling of doubt and the fear of the unexpected may discourage such an attempt.

Satan recognizes in Beelzebub's words his weakness and anxiety about the events to come. Even so, Satan insists on the need of revenge to regain Heaven and overcome their calamity. Satan's feelings are depicted by the narrator in such a profound way that they are compared to the subterranean powers of a volcano. The "thundering Aetna, whose combustible / And fuelled entrails" (1.233-34) conceive fire, resembles Satan's inner desire to escape from the prison of darkness to restore his freedom. Freedom and the choice for a different perspective of life are seen in Satan's "eyes / That sparkling blazed" (1.193-94). Satan strives within his rhetoric to wake up his peers with the intention of freeing their view from the restraint of the external power.

Still, in his rhetoric, Satan points out how their mind could possess the strength they need for the enterprise to regain Heaven, because the mind carries in itself the choices for “its own place, and in itself / Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven” (1.254-255). The appeal to the trust in their inner power is emphatically posed when Satan says to his peers to “awake, arise, or be for ever fallen” (1.330) creatures.

Satan’s appealing words reach the inner feelings of the fallen angels that were previously “with looks downcast and damp” (1.522-23) but then appeared armed for battle, ready to fight from darkness to light. Satan, with “his experienced eye” could enjoy “the whole battalion views [...] / Darkened so, yet shone / Above them all the Archangel; [...] / Waiting revenge: cruel his eye, but cast/Signs of remorse and passion, to behold / The fellows of his crime” (1.568-606). Although feelings of doubt and remorse seem to blur Satan’s eyes, his ambitious trait, long under the bondage of his weak state, emerges to fight against submission of the mind and other forms of restraint.

The visual metaphors of Book 1, numbering 52 references, show that there is an oscillation between two points of signification. The sentence “darkness visible” marks these two extremes. Darkness is outside and inside the words of this book. It is outside in the whole description of Hell as the setting of the fall. It is inside as well, because the reader has access to the mixture of doubt, hopelessness, and fear that confuse the choices of the fallen angels. Even Satan, although motivated to regain his seat among the angels in Heaven, feels remorse and passion.

The oscillation of the visual metaphors between darkness and visibility parallels Derrida’s blindnesses. Darkness corresponds to sacrificial blindness, because its meaning involves a loss that is represented by a sacrifice. The fall stands for the loss of the

presence of God for the fallen angels and, at the same time, deprives the angels of the light of heaven, as they would be exposed to the darkening realm of blindness. Visibility, on the other hand, symbolizes the awakening after the fall and is similar to transcendental blindness. Out of darkness, the angels' inward attempt may symbolize the possibility of attaining light once again. The fallen angels' traces recall the inner capacity of their minds that open their (in)sight and motivate their struggle to conquer Heaven. In the angels' recovery attempt, outward frailties can be overcome by their inward resistance to submission. The position of these two extremes does not lead this thesis to the two possibilities of signification; on the contrary, it is exactly in the oscillation of these two possibilities that the experience of blindness takes place.

Blindness is marked by the speech of the fallen angels in the infernal consultation of Book 2 and in its 53 references of visual metaphors. In the palace of all devils, Pandemonium, the fallen angels together argue the pros and cons of their enterprise to regain their position as heavenly creatures. Satan is the first to speak, and his words, moved by strong motivation, hardly attempt to persuade his peers to pursue the war against Heaven. His motivation is replete with vanity, pride, and envy, and through these feelings, Satan's words try to blind the reason of his peers. Satan, at the end of his speech, calls for their union, because it is their agreement that will guarantee their victory. Although Satan sounds hopeful, he knows that the forces of Hell are no match for God. Even so, he subjects his peers to blindness, and he himself experiences blindness, because his insatiable mind can only see through the lens of revenge.

The traces of Satan seem to be inserted in every demon's mind in Hell. Every speaker that engages in the debate bears Satan inside of him. At the same time that

Milton creates and personifies different demonic characters, he invites the reader to see in each of them Satan himself. The names of the devils are the first allusion to the same traces of Satan. Moloch means king and his appearance in the Bible is in the Acts (vii, 43); Belial is commonly used as a synonym of Satan and this sense is derived from II Cor., vi, 15, where Belial (or Beliar) as the prince of darkness is contrasted with Christ as the prince of light; Mammon is the name of a devil that represents riches and in Matthew 6: 24, Mammon (material wealth and possessions) is given the power of a god in the sentence "You cannot serve God and Mammon"; and finally, Beelzebub or Baalzebûb, occurs in the Old Testament in IV (II) Kings as the Philistine god of Accaron (Ekron), and his name is commonly translated as "the lord of the flies", and in the New Testament, it is used merely as another name for Satan (Catholic Encyclopedia, 2006). Therefore, the different views of the different devils play on the similarities among their inner thoughts and, in this sense, their speeches supplement and multiply the voices of each other, as if various "Satans" would be embodied in the character of Satan.

Milton makes Satan's view play on the other demons' intelligence. Satan can see all along that the fallen angels are no match for God, but he thinks that it is better if they decide that for themselves. Satan guides them to see not with their own eyes, but with his, and in this way, they will choose and not blame him if their ideas are incorrect. Satan plants his ideas in the minds of his peers, which makes him the leader that will conduct their heroic deed.

The visual metaphors of each devil's speech help the reading of various "Satans" springing from Satan's mind. Moloch's "look denounced / Desperate revenge" (2.106-07) and for him the fallen creatures should go "Against the Torturer" to make him experience

the “Infernal thunder, and, for lighting, see / Black fire and horror shot with equal rage / Among his Angels” (2.64-68). Like Satan, Moloch is eager for revenge, through which they will try to inflict on God and his angels the pains of black terror similar to the one they feel in Hell. Moloch’s position displays his blindness, mainly because he is so motivated by Satan’s own stimulus that he cannot see beyond the scope of revenge the risks of their attempt.

Belial’s speech is the opposite of Moloch’s. Belial starts his complaints by calling his peers’ attention to the previous speech, saying that Moloch “grounds his courage on despair / And utter dissolution as the scope / Of all his aim after some dire revenge” (2.126-28). He argues against the possibility of revenge, especially because they could not overcome the power of God’s army. Belial is emphatic when recalls that they would not be able to deceive God, “whose eye / Views all things at one view” (2.189-90). Belial does not defend the attempt of open war; instead, he suggests that they had better remain in Hell where resignation may guide their lives and demonstrate to God their repentance, and, in this sense, their “horror will grow mild” and their “darkness light” (2.220). The feeling of doubt in their fearful state shows Belial’s reticence in their attempt at war. His words reinforce Satan’s blindness and eagerness to avoid seeing the evidence of their defiance of God. Satan knows that they cannot overcome God’s power, but even so he defends the option for a type of attack against Him.

Mammon’s discourse supplements Belial’s. For Mammon, Belial is right in suggesting that the angels remain in Hell, but not wait for God’s forgiveness; on the contrary, he proposes to establish in Hell their land and make the best out of it. In this manner, they would not be bound by the framed structure of the Heavenly limits.

Besides, they would not need to be under the submission of a tyrannical Lord. In Hell, they could pursue their own life without the boundaries of Heaven, “though in this vast recess, / Free and to none accountable, preferring / Hard liberty before the easy yoke / Of servile pomp”, in such place, their greatness appear “Then most conspicuous” (2.254-58) and submission is replaced by the power of ruling themselves through their evil mind. At the end of Mammon’s speech, with the dismissal of the idea of war, he implies that Hell may become their “settled state / Of order” (2.279-80), and with these words, he fails with his concept of liberty. His reasonable words, which question servitude, open up the possibility of another state of order, with the possible replacement of one ruler by another within the limits of a different place. Satan’s manipulative rhetoric is reflected in Mammon’s fear of submission, and blindness is now in the eyes of Mammon, who cannot see the simple exchange of states.

Satan feels at the end of his peers’ speeches an aporetic moment established in the minds of all fallen angels. Doubt and confusion are perceived in their eyes before Satan starts speaking. His rhetoric is precise and goes directly to the issues proposed by the speeches. For fear of revenge and the risks of facing a powerful enemy, he asks his peers: “What if we find / Some easier enterprise” (2.344-45). In such an attempt, instead of having the power of God as their direct enemy, he suggests a play on God’s new creature, Man. In the matter of repentance, Satan asks his peers once again: “what peace will be given / To us enslaved” (2.332-33). Satan reinforces the idea that in Hell they are deprived of God’s sight and their repentance may not be seen by He who inflicted the arbitrary punishment upon them. As for submission, Satan brings to his peers’ minds the possibility of reinforcing their party, seducing man to join them in their repossession of

Heaven. Satan's sensitivity makes him shift his discourse, which in the beginning of the consultation, argued for war and now plays on the words of the other. Satan manipulates his peers, and through his manipulations, they close their eyes to the evidence of his strategic view.

Beelzebub, also moved by Satan's power, concludes the choice of the counsel with the attempt against man. With Beelzebub's words, "joy / Sparkled in all their eyes" (2.387-88), and for the dangerous enterprise, Satan offers himself and is praised as a god. From the bowels of Hell, agreement and a choice blind the eyes of the fallen angels, who elect Satan's eyes to see in their place, while they await in Hell the chance of seeing light with their own eyes again.

Satan, in his enterprise, experiences different sights and "At last appear / Hell-bounds" (2.643-44) that wall up his vision. Before the gates of Hell, the images of Sin and Death in their forms, terribly described, do not scare Satan; on the contrary, he keeps his eyes wide open before them, ready to fight to continue his plan. Satan, placed in a circumspect realm and bound by obstacles stronger than himself, appeals to negotiation and soothes his words for the accomplishment of his choice.

On the other side, within the openness for negotiation, is Sin, sprung from Satan's head and so another representation of his own creation. Like the other demons in their speeches, Sin incorporates Satan's words and accepts them as the demands of a father. Sin recalls her birth to Satan and reinforces its symbolism as a "sign / Portentous" (2.760-61), a "sign that excites wonder and amazement before that which is beautiful, but also possibly monstrous, since portentous is an adjective that can be used to describe one's awe before either magnificence or terrible things" (Rapaport, 1983: 26). Satan, although

fearless of his view, demonstrates his state of doubt before Sin. Milton seems to play with Satan's doubtful condition and with his phrase "sign portentous". A dubious experience followed by an unstable concept may refer to an attempt to negotiate meaning, by crossing the borders of stable conceptions and going beyond the fixed order of the logocentric perspective.

Milton's sentence for Sin, recalls the Derridean reference to the words *pharmakon*, *supplement*, *hymen*, in their everlasting undecidability between "neither/nor, that is, simultaneously either/or" (Derrida, 1981: xvii). Like the oscillation between the (n)either/(n)or spheres in Derrida's views of these words, Milton's "sign portentous" seems to break the bonds of single unities of signification and provides room for negotiation of meanings within different (con)texts.

In the following negotiation of meaning, Sin and Death at the end of Book 2 are a type of hymen for Satan. Their hideous forms veil the exit of Hell; yet, they also represent the openness to the deep abyss of Chaos. Satan crosses the threshold of Hell and experiences darkness, blindness, and confusion. Satan's crossing of limits may be associated with the experience of reading, in which language and its forms can veil and unveil meanings. Like Satan's venture, the experience of reading may involve a crossing of borders of signification and a fall into a profound chain of meanings that may bring darkness, blindness, and confusion to one's eyes in the first and superficial attempt at interpretation. Nevertheless, it may symbolize a waking attempt for searching through the darkening and confusing realm of signification for more visibility.

The blind state at the beginning of Book 1 when Satan sees himself in Chaos and tries to wake up after the fall is repeated when he falls into the profound abyss of Chaos

in the end of Book 2. The inner strength that helps his recovery after the fall comes again in the dark abyss of Chaos when “the sacred influence / Of light appears” (2.1034-35). All the darkness of Satan’s experiences is replaced by the visibility of a “pendent World, in bigness as a star” (1.1052). In seeing light in dark surroundings, darkness becomes visible, and blindness brings the restoration of sight.

4.2.2 – Book 3

The end of Book 2, with Satan’s departure from Hell and his arrival on Earth, suggests that all the darkness involved in the surroundings of Hell may be erased and the reading seems to be turned to another side with a direct exposure to light. In Hell, the reader experiences darkness from without, because of the setting itself, and darkness from within, with the access to the minds of the fallen angels. The loss of their seat in Heaven and of the light of God also demonstrate the outside and the inside aspects. The outside loss involves the physical aspect of descending to Hell and enduring the woes of that place. The inside loss is due to the fallen angels’ deprivation of the light of God in themselves, so the light of virtue and goodness no longer shine in their inward selves. The experiences of the outward and inward losses reflect aspects of sacrificial blindness. Yet, the search for light that stands for the restoration of a fallen state opens a passage for another type of blindness, the transcendental, in which, there is an attempt to depart from the outer realm of darkness to reach the light within.

In Book 3 the 80 visual references seem to encompass the two views that leave darkness in the attempt to violate boundaries. For Satan, the light from within is

symbolized by all the negative features that spring from his mind to motivate his revenge against God's new creation and his aspiration to God's power. As for the persona – who in the first lines of the poem seems to represent the blind poet himself – light is the purest expression from within, and through it, there occurs the erasure of the literal eye, “that roll in vain” (3.23), and insertion of the figural “I” in its “shine inward [...]” that sees and tells “of things invisible to mortal sight” (3.52-55). These two opposing views will not go hand in hand for the rest of the epic, with a clear separation of their two poles; on the contrary, it will be in the oscillation and the intermingling of both and the consequent crossing of the limits of their signification that the reading of this thesis will proceed through the metaphorical “darkness visible” perspective.

In the passage from darkness to visibility, the narrator announces the presence of God and His Son seeing the venture of Satan against the newly created world. The recurrences of the visual metaphors invite the reader to ascend higher to God's throne and see from above the movement of Satan's enterprise, as follows:

Now has the Almighty Father from above,
From the pure empyrean where he sits
High throned above all height, bent down his eye,
His own works and their works at once view;
[...] on his right
The radiant image of his glory sat,
His only son; on Earth he first beheld
Our two first parents, [...]
[...] he then surveyed
Hell and the gulf between, and Satan there
Coasting the wall of Heaven on this side Night, [...]
Him God beholding from his prospect high,
Wherein past, present, future, he beholds,
Thus to his only Son foreseeing spake. (3.56-79)

The eight visual references, underlined here to reinforce their recurrence, out of the 23 lines of this passage, set God and His Son in an elevated position of surveillance.

The presence of an authoritative and superior gaze that controls creatures' acts and maintains them under constant surveillance from above can be compared to Jeremy Bentham's prison, the panopticon. The implications of Bentham's panopticon are discussed by the French philosopher Michel Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1991). Panopticism, for Foucault, is the presence of a sovereign eye from an elevated position with the role of determining vigilance over all under its super-vision. Foucault concentrates his critique on the dominance of an ocular and vigilant power that tends to control the discipline of the figures under its eyes, and through it, to regulate their actions. Foucault argues that we live nowadays in a society of total surveillance and claims that in such a society, the superior eye of the great systems like religion, politics, army and others, through the (inter)faces of their ideologies, attempt to restrain the people that subject themselves to these systems.

On the one hand, Milton's God in Book 3 occupies an elevated position, as if placed in the highest place of the panopticon, and from it viewing the actions of his creation. Milton demonstrates God's sovereign eyes as well as his omniscience and omnipresence. On the other hand, Milton's God does not intervene in the actions of his creatures, and in this sense, the subject's passivity implied by Foucault in panopticism, does not take place in *Paradise Lost*. Milton's God, even occupying the highest position of the panopticon as the superior eye, is also placed in the bondage He designed for humankind, free will. Free-will and the option for choosing their destinies are in the hands of God's creatures themselves, as God points out in the lines below:

[...] They, therefore, as to right belonged,
So were created, nor can justly accuse
Their Maker, or their making, or their fate,
As if Predestination overruled

Their will, disposed by absolute decree
 Or high foreknowledge; they themselves decreed
 Their own revolt not, I: if I foreknew,
 Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,
 [...] They trespass, authors to themselves in all
 Both what they judge and what they choose; (3.111-23)

Milton uses, in these lines, the voice of God to empower his words, and with that he reinforces his idea that the individual, although circumscribed within a range of controlling structures, should exercise his/her choice and command his/her destiny. In this cause, Milton draws the attention of his reader to the necessity of overcoming the blindness that affects persons that deny their reason and rely on the eyes' guidance of the other with the structures hidden behind them, restraining their actions for the fear that the eyes have been constantly watching their deviations from the code of behavior imposed by those eyes.

To strengthen Milton's deconstructive attempt to break the imposition of the invisible and omniscient power of God's eye upon his creatures in *Paradise Lost*, which permits them to fall and try to overcome the woes of their fall with their own view, another implication of the Foucaultian panopticism is erased by the rhetoric of Milton's God. In panopticism, Foucault condemns and reinforces the risks of the imperial gaze, especially because of its one-way direction feature. In this sense, passivity is the product of the acceptance of the super-vision with a total disregard for an active reciprocal gaze. Milton's God suggests that his one-way view will descend to meet the eyes of his creatures. The invisibility of God's eyes is made visible in the figure of His incarnated Son. Through the Son, the Father "will place within them" (Adam, Eve, and His other creatures) "as a guide" (3.194) and for those who will not want to see the light of God within themselves will remain blind and "be blinded more" (3.200). The Son is the light

of God, and the light is the representation of the eyes and the word of God placed in one's inner self. Milton's rhetoric in God's speech shows that the divine eye and word are within human beings and the exercise of their (in)sight is the act of seeing God's light. In this reciprocal act, they may ponder the events of their lives. The search for God's eyes in one's own self is the chance of experiencing the divine light from the absence of God himself, and for it, one has to pass through a downward path that goes from darkness to visibility.

Satan's view also goes from darkness to visibility at his arrival on earth. However, his visibility does not proceed from the absence of God's presence and a pure expression of Satan's inner self; on the contrary, the view of God's presence in his creation emphasizes the distance of Satan's eyes from God's side. When Satan's "eye discovers unaware / The goodly prospect" (3.547-48) of the newly created world, his hellish motivation flourishes more and the aspiration of all that sight and magnitude dazzles his physical eyes in such a fierce way that "at sight of all this World beheld so fair" Satan's "Spirit malign" becomes "much more envy seized" (3.553-54). Satan is blinded by all the external expression of God's power and disregards any possibility of seeing with his own eyes. Satan transgresses his own views as he attempts to attain God's power and take possession of God's sight.

The desire of taking God's position encourages Satan even more in his attempt against man. At the gates of "Paradise, the happy seat of Man" (3.632), Satan, with his shape changed, tells Uriel about his "Unspeakable desire to see and know" (3.662) God's wondrous works. The eyes of Uriel could not perceive Satan's false attitudes, although Uriel "held / The sharpest-sighted Spirit of all in Heaven" (3.690-91). In these lines,

Milton reinforces the necessity of not trusting in the physical aspect of sight. The invisible dangers of the superficiality of vision are suggested by the “unspeakable desire” unseen to Uriel in Satan’s attempt.

Lacking immediate trust in the physical aspects of vision demonstrated in the passage above between Satan and Uriel, the poem’s words reinforce the notion that “Milton prized reason and distrusted ungoverned passion” (Rumrich 255). Satan’s attempt, immersed in his own passion and in his ungoverned desire for conquest and to power, is the best proof of the recoil of the self before outward appearance and temptation that meet one’s physical eyes. The lack of vision is blindness itself, in its physical and transcendental aspect, and demonstrates Satan’s lack of containment with the withdrawal of his view. In this manner, Satan trespasses the limits of his own self as well as the boundaries of his external and internal sight. Again, the crossing of the limits of Hell and his arrival on Earth do not prevent Satan from the very same losses that assailed him when he leaves Hell. Blindness from without and blindness from within demonstrate Satan’s losses that go with him on his attempt against man.

4.2.3 – Book 4

Satan’s losses continue tempting him at the beginning of Book 4. The traces of his memories “of what he was, what is, and what must be” (4.25) or become of him keep on affecting his view of his enterprise. In his despair, “horror and doubt distract / His troubled thoughts, and from the bottom stir / The Hell within him, for within Hell” (4.18-20) continue assailing his mind wherever he goes to. Even the changing of places from

Hell to Earth does not alter his inward and outward distress. When he sees the beauty and order of the Earth, his “bitter memory” (4.24) is recalled fiercely, and his former state comes to his mind to reinforce the differences in his shape and condition. With the views of the new world, he contrasts his deformed shape and realizes his fallen and weak being. Satan’s thoughts turn inwardly and outwardly up to the moment when he comes to the conclusion that he blames God for his fall. Satan’s inconsistency in blaming God reflects his doubtful experience of losing God’s light as well as the reference of God in his being. In this sense, Satan’s losses represent his detachment from his only referent, rather, from order itself, which symbolizes God, and, because of it, he experiences disorder and confusion.

The order experienced by Satan in Heaven is all gone and he suffers from the disorder of his state. His disordered mind cannot cope with seeing God’s order represented by the new world. Satan’s “disorder bursts out in blindness” and through it the blind Satan “does not know what to make of the order brought forth with the heavy change” (Sá, 1996: 165) before his sight²⁴. As he realizes he cannot bear the view of God’s newly formed world, Satan dismisses the possibility of redemption and gives his farewell to order in the last lines of his soliloquy of remorse:

So farewell hope, and with hope, farewell fear,
Farewell remorse! All good to me is lost;
Evil, be thou my Good: by thee at least
Divided empire with Heaven’s King I hold,

²⁴ The citation from Professor Sá’s master’s thesis is not applied to the blind Satan as referred to in my thesis. His reference is to “Blind” as “the fury that slits Lycidas’s life” (1996: 165). However, the same approach can be perceived in Satan’s fury, which affects his eyes and makes him blind. Although the citation is not directed to the character of Satan, I used it because it suits Satan’s view, which may be compared to the one in *Lycidas*.

By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign. (4.108-12)

The distance of God brings forth the distance of order and Satan assumes his role as the major transgressor of *Paradise Lost* in these lines. Satan's blindness and disorder disfigure his form and he becomes an invisible figure.

Invisibility lies in the lack of vision of his own acts and the expression of his inner thoughts. Guided by his fury for revenge and aspiration to attain God's power, Satan turns out to be the "Artificer of fraud" (4.121). Ready for mockery and falsehood, Satan loses his eyes and so searches for the eyes and for his self in the other. His becoming invisible is confirmed by the visual metaphors employed in his character. "Unobserved, unseen" (4.130), he invades paradise and through his various forms he disfigures his own and becomes again blind from without and from within, with his various representations. Milton employs in Satan's character, as he does in Book 2, a wide variety of forms, having their origin from the same evil mind.

The aspect of Satan's invisibility is manifest in his own blindness. Blindness and invisibility, in Satan's case, can bring disempowerment, but they can also bring freedom and mobility. Satan is blind because he willfully avoids seeing and confronting his weakness with reference to all the order of the new world and God's new creation. Satan's inability to see what he wishes not to see, to a certain extent, forces him to be restricted to a life of effective invisibility to himself. His blindness from within and his invisibility for the outside may drive his revenge, and although he thinks he freely wanders unseen to undermine his enemies, he cannot make significant changes in himself and his devilish world. Instead of being the figure that symbolizes the expression of punishment by the imposition of restraints, his limitless state is the most effective

punishment for him. In this sense, “Satan languishes indefinitely as a decentered being, without an ontological home that would secure his identity through limitation” (Stulting, 1999: 116-17). The 105 visual metaphors of Book 4 demonstrate the ineffectiveness of Satan’s limitless state in the expression of his eyes, which are not able to see for themselves and establish a range of scope and insight, causing his total blindness and invisibility.

The failure of Satan’s sight corresponds to a lack of insight. Under the aspect of seeing “undelighted all delight, all kind / Of living creatures, new to sight and strange” (4.286-87), Satan suffers from the absence of a referent once he is freed from the presence of God and imprisoned in his own view. In the new world, with the perfection of order showed by the characters of Adam and Eve and the other creatures, Satan’s limitless view does not find a co-partner. He is alone, amidst perfection. In his limitless view, he can only see God around him with all the representations of goodness. His invisibility is thus marked by the idea that the world before him is filled with creatures who are literally unable to see his real nature.

The visual metaphors display Satan’s resistance in accepting what he sees in Eden, especially in the most present expression of goodness and virtue in the loving words between Adam and Eve:

O Hell! What do mine eyes with grief behold? [...]
Sight hateful, sight tormenting! Thus these two,
Imparadised in one another’s arms,
The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill
Of bliss on bliss, while I to Hell am thrust,
Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,
Among our other torments not the least,
Still unfulfilled, with pain of longing pines! (4.358-511)

In such view, once again Satan's distress lies on the matters of order. Satan sees Adam and Eve "Imparadised in one another's arms" and this view shows the limitation and beauty of their love, as if they would be able to have their paradise completed in one another. Satan's anxiety may be reflected in Milton's use of the word (Im)paradised, mainly because it seems to suggest the couple's fulfillment inwardly and outwardly, whereas, Satan's Heaven is lost in the specified condition of unfulfillment in his inward and outward hell.

The refusal of accepting the images before his eyes gives Satan, at the same turbulent moment he faces at the beginning of Book 4, fears of remorse and pain for his rebellious condition. After being caught by the Angels, the visual words the narrator uses to depict Satan's state reveal the desolation in his eyes:

Abashed the Devil stood,
And felt how awful goodness is, and saw
Virtue in her shape how lovely, saw, and pined
His loss, but chiefly to find here observed
His lustre visibly impaired, yet seemed
Undaunted. (4.846-51)

Even though Satan demonstrates his disturbance at the sights of the new world, he remains firmly involved in his enterprise. In Satan's last dialogue with Gabriel, he ironically defies Gabriel, calling him a "Proud liminary Cherub" (4.971). Satan's irony displays his disdain and resistance against the limited condition of the creatures of God. In this matter, "although he suffers anxiety at the absence of limits" for himself, "Satan resists secure boundaries, because that would define, and hence, contain him" (Stulting 118). Satan's resistance to closure on the one hand proves Milton's own resisting character before the impositions of those who believed they carried the power of God in them and tried to hide their intended purpose. On the other hand, Satan demonstrates his

weakness and fails to deal with the freedom and lack of restraints of his character. Milton shows in the visual attempts of Satan that he should question the immediacy of the images before his eyes, but he should also ponder and reflect on them, using reason to decide which path to follow.

At the end of Book 4, despite the chances Satan has to see the other side of his fallen condition and from those views analyze the distress of his losses and search for his own light, he resists light and flees from Paradise “Murmuring, and with him” flees “the shades of Night” (4.1015). Thus, Milton’s “darkness visible” perspective, which would demand a moment of reflection of the images presented to his/her eyes before an interpretation of them are made, is not implied by Satan’s character. In Satan’s case, his inner motivation for revenge blinds his eyes and he can only see through the lenses of aspiration for God’s world. Satan leaves Paradise and with him goes the “shades of Night”, which show the darkness from within in the purest expression of his inability to see, and from without with the shades of Night surrounding him. With Satan’s and the shades of Night’s departure from Paradise, light is established in Eden, and from this moment on, an attempt to open the eyes of Adam and Eve to the dangers of the temptation before their sight takes place.

4.2.4 – Books 5 to 8

From Book 5 to Book 8, the retelling of the stories of creation is all immersed in the light of God. The 62 visual references are represented in the first temptation of Eve in Book 5 and this fact brings forth the need to open the eyes of the two human creatures to

the risks of external beauty and seduction. The light of God is represented by the presence of Raphael in Eden and his efforts to convey the goodness of God are attempts to make Him visible to Adam and Eve. Raphael is the archangel that “serves as a messenger between Heaven and Earth” (The Milton Reading Room, 2005), and as Derrida suggests when he analyses the drawings on Tobit’s healing of blindness, Raphael represents the “visible signs of the invisible” (Derrida, 1993: 29). In this sense, Raphael stands for the visible aspect of the invisibility of God’s acts.

Although the lesson of Raphael seems to be covered over by the aspects of faith in God, the demonstration of the necessity of reasoning is the major use of his speech. Reason is showed as the power of comprehending or inferring from the aspects of life, or rather, a proper exercise of the mind after the first expression of the senses. Raphael also appeals to faith and all the representation of God’s benevolence. Yet, faith involves a stance toward some claim that is not, at least immediately, demonstrable by sense. And, since God’s creatures are bearers of free-will, they can either choose to “stand or fall” (5.540). Thus faith is a kind of attitude of trust or assent. As such, it is simply implied by Raphael to involve an act of will or a commitment on the part of the two as believers. The matters of reason and faith are employed in the series of the visual metaphors in these four books. In Raphael’s usage of visual elements, he admonishes Adam and Eve about the presence of an evil spirit with them in Eden and that the vehicle with which the devilish machine may use to tempt them will be their own eyes. He therefore calls for the need to respect their “inward reason” rather than their “outward compulsion” (Guss, 1991: 1158). As pointed out before in Derrida’s approach toward blindness and visibility,

Raphael's role is to help Adam and Eve open their eyes in order to cancel them, and from reason, exercise their choice.

The visual metaphors in the description of Eve's dream already show Satan's inducement of Adam and Eve to transgress through their eyes. In her dream, Eve reaches the tempting view of "The Earth outstretched immense, a prospect wide / And various" (5.88-89) ready to be at her hands if she opts for transgression. Adam, feeling the power of the senses toward temptation already warns Eve when he claims for the matters "of all external things, / Which the five watchful senses represent" (5.103-04) forming different imaginations that may put at risk the exercise of reason. The reference to "watchful senses" calls attention to the vigilant aspect that the senses bear. Yet, even with their vigilant feature, without the expression of reason, they fail.

Raphael's dialogue with Adam comes to reinforce the dangers of the external expression of the senses. Raphael starts saying that man does need food to satisfy "every lower faculty / Of sense [...] hear, see, smell, touch, taste" (5.410-11); however, he concludes that man's "proper substance" (5.493) is reason, and that through it, one may receive more than the corporeal nourishment from all "her being, / Discursive, or intuitive" (5.487-88). "Here, then, free thought and speech follow from an inward truth and Spirit" (Guss 1158). Raphael's lesson opens the eyes of Adam to prepare him to see for the first time a different expression, which while in his pre-lapsarian state he cannot conclude as being evil, and from this experience Adam may reasonably try to evaluate the effects of a new presence in his and Eve's lives. Adam and Eve will be requested to exercise their insight and out of darkness they may be able to see light.

Raphael's task proceeds and he questions how he can "relate / To human sense the invisible exploits / Of warring Spirits" (5.564-66), without Adam's knowledge of evil. The visual elements help Raphael's task. God's presentation of His anointed Son before the eyes of the other angels and His affirmation that who disobeys that "blessed vision, falls / Into utter darkness" (5.613-14) marks the beginning of Adam's first acquaintance with transgression. The invisible signs of Satan's rebellion against God demonstrate how Adam has to see beyond the scope of his own present being and refer to actions that will supplement his comprehension of reason and choice. The opening of Adam's eyes result in the erasing of their physical state and their preparation for the understanding of presence out of absence.

In this sense, Adam needs to grasp the meaning of the rebellion of the angels through darkness. In Book 6 there are 70 visual metaphors and their reference starts out of darkness with the "battailous aspect" (6.81) of war brought to the view of Adam. The image of Abdiel "returned not lost" (6.25) shows that visibility can spring out of the dark environment of a war. Abdiel's words and his description of a pre-fallen state take the scene and establish again the need for reason and denigration of the detestable act of blind servitude. Abdiel accuses Satan of commanding "legions under darkness" (6.142) and under their darkening view, they "serve the unwise" (6.179). Abdiel claims that Satan's "resemblance of the Highest" (6.114) almost seduced him completely if reason did not prevail in his evaluation of blindly serving a pre-fallen king. Abdiel's avoidance of falling works for Adam as an example of "spiritual trial" and "social action" against "outward conformity" (Guss 1159) within Satan's envious motivation. In this matter, Raphael warns Adam indirectly about the caution one needs to have before the risks of

blind admiration. Adam is called on in every passage of Raphael's report to exercise his human inner view from darkness.

The dark face of war is shown to Adam. The beginning of the battle reflects the dark scene of the war that is only broken by the flames and "the lightning-glimpse" (6.642) of the explosions. Adam, formerly an exclusive viewer of light (even with the coming of the night, he had the moon and the stars to bring illumination), sees in Raphael's retelling of the war in Heaven, darkness out of darkness represented by the choices for transgression. Transgression is introduced to Adam's eyes as the symbol of the darkened aspect of life.

In spite of the negativity brought to the eyes of Adam, represented by the darkness of Satan's transgressive attitude, Adam's view is displaced from the presence of the acts. Adam is thus invited, according to Derrida's words from his book *Dissemination*, to search for comprehension in "the absolute invisibility of the origin of the visible" (167) evil. In this account, beyond the presence of evil in Adam's life, "a structure of replacements" will have to be introduced to guarantee his interpretation of Satan's transgression. The present war Adam hears about will work as a supplement that will be replaced by "the absent origin, and all the differences, within the system of presence" and they "will be the reducible effect of what remains" (167). Adam will be exposed to the play of traces that will remain under his (in)sight. Derrida's exercise of *différance* can be compared to Adam's experience. Adam's present life in Eden would be related to no less than all the past events of creation and a constitution of his future would be based on a past that may have modified his present and future. Raphael's lesson is

quite a didactic display of how one should perceive the present out of its absent play of significations.

Raphael's lesson at the end of Book 6 is concluded by his description of the Son's fight against the rebellious angels in his chariot, and his victory, reinforced by his force proved to be,

Distinct with eyes, and from the living wheels,
Distinct alike with multitude of eyes;
One spirit in them ruled, and every eye
Glared lightning and shot forth pernicious fire
Among accurs'd, that withered all their strength
And of their wonted vigour left them drained,
Exhausted, spiritless, afflicted, fallen. (6.846-52)

The Son goes to combat with a chariot that has eyes according to Raphael's description. This allusion to the powerful effect of the Son's eyes, represented by his personified chariot, shows that through the eyes the angels commanded their revolt, and through the same eyes the arrows of the Son's gaze fiercely demand their ruin. It seems that the fall of the angels is caused by the strength of the gaze of the Son. Once again, the faculty of physical sight is questioned and put "under erasure", displaying its risks and the consequent fall due to its negligent use.

The end of Book 6 is marked by the two positions before Adam's eyes, the transgressor image of Satan and the rise of the savior figure of God's Son. The visual metaphors help separate these two opposing figures. Satan is portrayed by Adam as the picture of incessant intellectual activity without the ability to think morally, who was once a powerful angel in Heaven called "bringer of light", but blinded to God's grace, forever unable to reconcile his past with his eternal punishment. On the other side, God's Son is placed as the one who represents the visibility of God's acts against the terrible

attempt to corrupt His order. Two contrasting sides are shown to Adam, and of these two, he is supposed to find reason in the “oscillation between assertions and subversions of principle” (Herman, 1998: 285). The contrast between darkness and visibility comes to terms with the images of Satan and the Son and, from the oscillation provided by these two positions, Raphael finalizes his accounts of the fall of the angels and God’s desire to create a new world.

Book 7, with its 50 visual metaphors, starts with Adam’s request to learn the whole story of the creation of Eden and Raphael’s acceptance of continuing with his retelling performance. Raphael begins tracing the two figures of Satan and the Son to compose the frame of his story. God sends the Son to set boundaries on Chaos and create the Earth, the stars and other planets, following the account in Genesis. The Son is the embodiment of God’s pure light, but, unlike the biblical version of Genesis, through which the accounts of creation come only by the hand of God, in Milton’s version and vision, God commands the Son to proceed with the order of creating the new world. “By having the Son shape the world, Milton also poses an important contrast between the two sons of God, one who creates (the Son) and the other who destroys (Satan)” (The Milton Reading Room, 2005). In the narrative of creation, the Son and Satan are thus products presented to Adam in a way to help him see and ponder the two limits of God’s power, creation and destruction.

In such accounts, Adam is exposed to two poles of signification, and Raphael emphatically poses that Adam may accept to receive:

[...] knowledge within bounds; beyond abstain
To ask, not let thine own inventions hope
Things not revealed, which the invisible King,
Only omniscient, hath suppressed in night,

To none communicable in Earth or Heaven.
Enough is left besides to search and know;
But knowledge is as food, and needs no less
Her temperance over appetite to know
In measure what the mind may well contain,
Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns
Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind. [7.120-30]

In Raphael's words, Adam is directed to fix his view on God's side. The allegorical description of God's creation through the revelation of light out of darkness and the reinforcement of goodness from it, mark Adam's aporetic position in the lines of choices.

Adam's aporetic experience is strengthened by the retelling of his own creation. Visibility is thus established before Adam's eyes, because he is the seer of that newly created world. Although the past fades and the present is exposed to Adam's view, his traces also show his acquaintance with the fact that his creation results from a loss, a failure in God's own system of goodness. The fall of Satan and his legion opened a fissure in God's order, and in this way, Adam's dubious stance is reinforced in Book 8.

In the 62 visual references of Book 8, Adam praises Raphael's story and acknowledges God's strength, since he can "behold" God's "goodly frame, this World, / Of Heaven and Earth consisting, and compute / Their magnitudes" (8.15-17). Yet, the inquiries of Raphael continue, especially about the motions of the other bodies that compose the Earth. The visual metaphors used in this part of the Book register Adam's search for more explanation, as if his eyes needed to see more to satisfy his curiosity and prove wrong his question on the rupture of God's order. Unlike Adam, Eve disregards the need for knowledge and imperceptibly leaves. Adam, sightless of Eve's departure, stays fixed on the possibilities of getting to know more from Raphael's experience. Eve, at this

part of the narrative, becomes more and more invisible and Adam's eyes turn out to be the central focus of the story.

Raphael perceives Adam's shift and alerts him again to the risks of the insatiable nature of the physical body, as follows:

[...] Be lowly wise;
Think only what concerns thee and thy being;
Dream not of other worlds, what creatures there
Live, in what state, condition, or degree,
Contented that thus far hath been revealed
Not of Earth only, but of highest Heaven. (8.173-78)

With these words Adam is put once more in a dubious condition. First, he receives the story of creation brought before his eyes, in a wide range view of the whole world. To attain this view, his mental activity is required to see beyond the scope of his poorly prepared traces, and transcend from his "little" being to broader dimensions of Heaven and Hell. Second, he is told to be humbly wise, to close his eyes to the grandeur of Earth, to limit his aspiration to knowledge within his own state of being.

Adam recoils before Raphael's imposition of a limited scope of knowledge, and places himself on the same level of the angel, as he needs to exercise his views about the story of his own creation. The visual metaphors from this moment on show the creation of Adam, which corresponds to his own image placed before his own eyes. Adam's view of his apparition in Paradise demands a reduction of the great vision of the whole creation presented to him by Raphael, which represents the framing of his and Eve's body into a single vision. A conformist behavior takes control of the narrative, as if Adam had assimilated his insignificance in relation to God's greatness. The more Adam expresses the views of his own form and origin, the more he blinds himself to his signification. Adam becomes simply the expansion of God's acts, and, his scope, opposing to the traces

of the memories of the whole story told by Raphael, is reduced to fit his own matter and limited site.

Like Satan, Adam becomes blind, but Adam's blindness does not spring from the exercise of envy and ambition; on the contrary, Adam surrenders his eyes to the magnificence of God's presence incorporated in Eve's beauty. Adam's acceptance of his limited condition is due to the presence of Eve beside him. With Eve, Adam experiences fulfillment and completeness, and the visual words confirm his state:

Mine eyes he closed, but open left the cell
Of fancy, my internal sight; by which,
Abstract as in a trance, methought I saw,
Though sleeping where I lay, and saw the Shape
Still glorious before whom awake I stood, [...]
Grace was in all her steps, Heaven in her eye,
In every gesture dignity and love.
[...] 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. (8.460-553)

The closure of Adam's eyes to the process of creating Eve is maintained even after her presence before him. Eve symbolizes for Adam his reason, his choice, and his view.

In the passage above, when Eve becomes a presence to Adam, Adam proves his dependent state. He can stand without the sight of Eve close to him only because he counts on the presence of Raphael with him. Adam incorporates, in this case, his humanly need for companionship and care. The presence of the other reinforces Adam's own presence and his need to find his personal fulfillment in the other. Adam, as the being that is the image and resemblance of God in his inward and outward world, also

possesses a fissure within. The fissure in God's world is represented by his two creations according to *Paradise Lost*'s lines, the Son and Satan. The crack is from within, provided that the interpretation of these two creations is regarded as the fruits of God's womb, symbolized by His world. The inner lacuna that humans possess demand to be filled. The other, for Adam, represents his wholeness. Nevertheless, it seems that in this matter, Milton's writings, especially *Paradise Lost* in its call for reason, may suggest that the gap in the inner self of man should be filled through knowledge that stands for reason and wisdom. Knowledge would be the need one must approach to find one's fulfillment from within and become more aware of the passive state most humans tend to develop in themselves.

Adam's passivity before Eve's power foreshadows the events to come, already implying the dangers of the external seduction in denigration of an inward expression. The end of the words of Raphael reinforces the caution Adam has to have to avoid the outward guidance of passion. Raphael denounces Eve's figure as "An outside; fair, no doubt, and worthy well / Thy cherishing, thy honouring, and thy love – Not thy subjection" (8.568-70). In this matter, Raphael admonishes Adam anew to "Stand fast; to stand or fall / Free in thine own arbitrament it lies. / Perfect within, no outward aid require" (8.640-42). Thus, Raphael's lesson is completed and with it, Adam learns about the capacity of his own inner sight to give positive praise of the other, but not give into negative subjection to the other's view. Milton's warning lesson is finally expressed in Raphael's words. In this sense, Milton condemns the dangerous attitude one may bear by trusting the physical eyes and subjecting oneself to outward conformity and seduction without pondering one's choices. Furthermore, the implication of an unaware reliance on

the eyes of the other might cause one to disregard one's own mind and reason and hence, blindness from within and blindness from without may lead down the passive path to submission. Milton's phrase "darkness visible" would conclude these Books displaying the dangers of visibility, if an inward reflection did not take place before the images presented to one's eyes. The need for wholeness found in the other's presence may express the risks to the external in completing the internal self, and as for Milton, the process of wholeness may go the other way around.

4.2.5 - Book 9

The problematic instance posed by the previous Books is summed up in Book 9, in which the losses and the envious state of Satan are fulfilled in the shallowness of Adam and Eve. In this matter, their falls will be mixed with their different types of blindness. The 100 visual metaphors support the two conditions of their behavior. Satan's eyes cannot cope with what they see: all the brightness of his former state now lost in the view of the new, magnificent creation of the man. Besides, the distress of his losses is strengthened by the fact that man's creation has substituted Satan's. Satan is the example of the two sides of blindnesses, the external and internal ones, as previously discussed. Yet, there stands Adam with his need to see in the other the completion of his self-formation, and Eve is still invisible to her own eyes. Adam and Eve also experience blindness, but their blindness is demonstrated by an inner lack that controls their outer dependence.

Satan's external blindness is the first to be alluded to at the beginning of Book 9 with the coming of night and darkness to set his reappearance in Paradise. The internal blindness is soon suggested in his words when he mentions that out of "Light above light, for thee alone, / [...] the more I see / Pleasures about me, so much more I feel / Torment within me" (9.105-21). Unlike Adam, Satan refuses the presence of the other around him. His determinacy is all in the limitations of his limitless self. His self-wholeness is reinforced by his need for revenge, not to have God's light again and His heavenly seat or reign together in a contrary kingdom, but to have God's position and replace Him. Satan's aspirations go beyond the boundaries of reason because he disregards the power of an omnipotent and omnipresent God. His blindnesses lie exactly in his lack of reason, from the outside, because he is unable to see the force and order of God; and, from within, because he cannot measure the selfishness and negligence beneath his acts.

Unlike Satan's blindnesses, which burst from within and blur his outward performance, Adam and Eve's blindness come from their external need to fill their internal void. Although Eve's words at the beginning of her dialogue with Adam apparently sound reasonable, since they call for a division of labor that later could culminate in their mutual "Looks intervene and smiles" that mark their sharing "Casual discourse" (9.222-23) on their work day, her need to search for an outward and different experience seems her major choice. Eve contradicts her own character in the speech placed at the beginning of Book 9. In Book 4 she defines her being as one that would "follow straight, invisibly" (4.476) her companion's guidance, that her "gentle hand / Seized" and she "yielded, and from that time see / How beauty is excelled by manly grace / And wisdom, which alone is truly fair" (4.488-91). How may Eve seek the other

or different choices, once she has already implied her wholeness in the character of her companion? In her fickleness, she (mis)reads her own being and makes it worse when she feels superior overhearing Adam's praise. At first Eve establishes her invisible and dependent state and afterwards portrays herself as a self-sufficient figure able to wander around Paradise and able to avoid external seduction due to her superior erect sight in relation to the other creatures. Eve's shallowness is based on the incertitude that causes her blindness.

To complicate Eve's unstable condition before her own eyes even more, she assumes in her speech that she is "the weaker" (9.383). Eve, in all her efforts to acknowledge herself capable of controlling her sight and resisting external seduction, concludes her words by accepting her weaker condition in relation to Adam. Adam's inconstancy is also marked by Eve's. At first Adam displays his free state when he says to Raphael that in his relationship to Eve, "Harmony to behold in wedded pair / More grateful than harmonious sound to the ear. / Yet these subject not" (8.605-07). Adam refuses subjection to Eve and reinforces his inward strength. Nevertheless, in his dialogue with Eve in Book 9, he fails to accomplish what he is warned of by Raphael and subjects himself to Eve's persuasive and flattering words, permitting her to leave his companion.

Although Adam says that he denies her leaving in fear only of the foe's temptation, his words work as a confession that his wholeness is found in her. First, he insists that his virtue is fulfilled by Eve's and with her beside him his outward power is complete:

I from the influence of thy looks receive
Access in every virtue – in thy sight
More wise, more watchful, stronger, if need were
Of outward strength. (9.809-12)

Second, Adam's sight turns out to be supplemented by Eve's presence, and these words confirm Adam's outward dependence. In Adam's last speech before Eve's leaving, he acknowledges that his former nature with a "single imperfection" (8.423) due to loneliness has accomplished perfection with the vision of his companion. Finally, Adam's confession is summarized when he assumes that "Within himself / The danger lies, yet lies within his power" (9.348-49). In short, Adam, going against Raphael's warning, understands his weakness in his comparison to Eve. His (in)sight already previews that although he realizes his power to choose, he may fail by the image of the one he has received as his complement.

The narrator's words also seem to sympathize with Adam's internal turmoil caused by Eve's request for leaving. The imagery formed by the description of Adam and Eve's farewell encourages the reader to observe Adam's inability to overcome his passion and exercise his reason. Eve's leaving "long with ardent look his eye pursued / Delighted, but desiring more her stay" (9.397-98) displays Adam's lack of sense. The visual metaphors clearly reveal his state, unable to impede Eve from leaving and at the same time delighted following her look leaving him. The feeling of sympathy for Adam in the narrator's words shifts as soon as the narrator starts portraying Eve's innocence wandering around Paradise under the "Half-spied" (9.426) eye of Satan. In Satan's view, the narrator announces that Satan turned "The eye of Eve to mark his play" (9.528). It seems that the alternation of scopes, as well as the narrator's suggestion of Satan's play, works as an invitation for a play with the eyes that will reach its climax with the Fall.

The visual metaphors play with the eyes of the readers, and their employment in different directions foreshadows that Eve's temptation will be a product affecting first her

eyes and then her other senses. The view of a talking serpent confirms the play. Satan, in his serpent shape, appeals to the power of his image before Eve's eyes and also to the power of his words. Satan's words turn from the simple aural perception to a visual experience. The visual field is opened before Eve and she cannot escape such a view. Satan flatters Eve, and the more he invites her to experience her eyes, the more the reader feels Eve's opening them. There is a gradual tension in this temptation passage, as if Satan's visual words would be used to induce Eve to leave all her past traces or memories and rely only on her eyes.

In his first attempt, Satan's speech places Eve in the most distinguished position of God's creatures. Satan's words may suggest that an elevation of Eve's being needs to take place to provide him with a better gap to initiate his luring strategy:

Fairest resemblance of thy Maker fair,
Thee all things living gaze on, all things thine
By gift, and thy celestial beauty adore,
With ravishment beheld, there best beheld
Where universally admired. But here,
In this closure wild, these beasts among,
Beholders rude, and shallow to discern
Half what in thee is fair, one man except,
Who sees thee? (and what is one?) who shouldst be seen
A Goddess among Gods, adored and served
By Angels numberless, thy daily train? (9.538-48)

The seven visual words, here underlined, demonstrate Satan's ruse to start the effect through the eyes. Other words in this passage such as "resemblance", "adore", and "discern" also establish an entrance to bodily perception through the eyes. Resemblance implies a similarity in appearance and in this sense evokes the use of the eyes. The verb adore indicates the placement of someone or something before one's eyes for

contemplation. And the verb to discern expresses the need to use the eyes in the attempt to perform an act of choosing (*OED*).

Satan's second attempt is also a visible enterprise. However, Satan supplements his words with an ambitious scope. The description of a fruit that if eaten broadens one's view and brings to sight knowledge of "all things visible in Heaven, / On Earth, or Middle, all things fair and good" (9.604-05) amaze Eve, who in the magnitude of her vision, accepts the guidance of the tempter. Eve's eyes reach the apple and it is at this very moment that the reader can perceive Eve's scope being expanded. Satan's sensitiveness is activated when Eve sees the tree and his visual words veil Eve's eyes, which are filled with the illusions of the acquisition of knowledge and power through a mere plucking and eating of the fruit.

Eve's sight turns out to be blurred, so that she can only see through the words of Satan. Satan's strategy toward Eve resembles Derrida's denouncing of a figure that subjects its eyes and ears to the hidden structures of the great systems and becomes like "longeared asses" with the eyes downcast and the "finely turned ears" ready for "obeying the best master and the best of leaders" (1988: 34-35). As for Derrida, "the ear is not only an auditory organ; it is also a visible organ of the body" (50), and in this sense, Eve's blindness is twice exercised by her two organs in the inability to see for herself and hear her inner voice. The mixture of Eve's two senses encompasses her whole body, which becomes totally vulnerable to the Fall. Eve's full deliverance to the fruit is an absorption of the corporeal senses that become known through the eyes and invade her bodily necessities:

Fixed on the fruit she gazed, which to behold
Might tempt alone, and in her ears the sound

Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregn'd
With reason, to her seeming, and with truth.
Meanwhile the hour of noon drew on, and wak'd
An eager appetite, rais'd by the smell
So savory of that fruit, which with desire,
Inclinable now grown to touch or taste,
Solicited her longing eye. (9.735-43)

It is possible to associate Eve's and Satan's completion on the other with Derrida's assumptions. In such Derridean perspective, it is Eve's blind eye and inner deaf ear that signify Satan's wholeness. Satan's signature or self may derive from the attitude of his addressee; in this case Eve, who signs with her ear, an organ of perceiving difference.

Thus Eve's fall becomes a product of Eve's letting "the serpent do her thinking for her" allowing "his erection of a false tradition and false construction of the divine word to stand unopposed" (Rumrich 262). In this matter, Eve erases her view and chooses Satan's to guide hers, not because she follows Satan's tendency to disobedience, but because she lacks the traces of signification and trusts in her insight only on the mere condition of divine prohibition. Eve's reason is reduced to the scope of the prohibition of the eating of the fruit, which is easily overcome by the broader dimensions of Satan's proposals to her.

Unlike Eve, Adam does not fall because he does not understand the risks of his act and disregards the traces of Raphael's story; on the contrary, he refuses his reason, or rather his eyes, in favor of his bonds to Eve, in the name of a sacrificial love and for the sake of the wholeness found in Eve's presence. Yet, Adam's and Eve's Fall occurs more as a corporeal failure than a reasonable one. With the satisfaction of their corporeal needs, Adam and Eve realize their fallen condition and

[...] Nor only tears
Rained at their eyes, but high winds worse within

Began to rise, high passions – anger, hate,
Mistrust, suspicion, discord – and shook sore
Their inward state of mind, calm region once
And full of peace, now tossed and turbulent. (9.1121-26)

Their tears may symbolize a blurring in their eyes as a type of shadow. High winds began to rise as if they would come to wipe away their tears, clean their eyes, and prepare their inner feelings to express themselves. The state of blindness after the Fall seems surmounted. Hence, Adam and Eve “Soon found their eyes how opened, and their minds / How darkened” (9.1053-54). The Fall turns out to be the un-veiling of their eyes.

The visual metaphors display the un-veiling of Adam’s and Eve’s eyes and Satan’s self-revelation in their Fall. They are the examples Milton might have thought of to illustrate the lesson mentioned above in Raphael’s teaching act. The sentence “darkness visible” helps determine this illustration. In Satan’s character, Milton attempts to show how Satan’s darkness becomes visible in a reduced view of darkness in itself. Satan is exposed to light and to opportunities to repent several times during his journey toward man, but in all of the chances he has, he keeps his blind state and avoids seeing the conspicuous images of God’s omnipotence before him. His reason is overcome by his envious motivation and, although he succeeds against man, he does not win God’s seat or God’s power. Satan accomplishes in Eve’s eyes and ears his self-revelation, thinking that with man’s Fall he may achieve his completeness, but his fleeing from the temptation scene reinforces his fears of the outcome of his action. In Satan’s case, Milton, on the one hand, displays a being that goes against the ghosts of external conformity through his undecidability, perseverance, and inner conflicts, but, on the other hand, a figure that fails in his tyrannical nature and inner conviction, which only satisfies his project for greatness.

As for Adam and Eve, Milton's lines in Book 9 reassure the risks of their search for bodily satisfaction. Adam and Eve cannot find fulfillment in their corporeal satiation; on the contrary, it is exactly in the experience of their Fall that they see within themselves their void. After the Fall, Adam and Eve become externally visible to themselves but still in the turbulence of an inward distress. Therefore, the need to find wholeness in the other is put "under erasure" and this idea falls together with Adam and Eve. In this sense, Milton proclaims his fears of an external blind submission and the dangers of such an outward conviction and initiates his claims to a process of internal visibility through a "downward path to wisdom".

4.2.6 - Books 10, 11, and 12

In Books 10, 11, and 12, Milton's lesson is settled and the visual metaphors used in these final lines of the epic support his words. It is in these three last Books that the oscillation in the usage of the visual metaphors helps prove their importance in Milton's approach towards vision. Book 10, with 76 visual references, starts with "the eye / Of God all-seeing" (10.5-6) man's Fall. The all-seeing eye of God is made visible once again in the epic and it is the Son's visibility of the father that announces to Adam and Eve the punishment of their Fall. The Son is referred to by the narrator as "the Sovran Presence" (10.144) before Adam's and Eve's eyes and suggests that his presence should be looked upon literally. The evocation of the literal eye in the first lines of this Book seems to posit the two opposing views to show how Milton's lesson concentrates on the variation that slides from the need to erase the use of the literal eye, indicated in Books 10 and 11, and

validate a deeper concern with the exercise of the figural eye, as placed at the end of Book 11 and in Book 12.

The presence of the Son before Adam's and Eve's eyes reveals their distress and shame. The first question that the Son asks refers to the nakedness visually suffered in their fallen state. The implication of their visual remorse is reinforced by the narrator's words in relation to their punishment scene. The narrator starts the process of leading the literal sight to pass through a process that may reach the level of the figurative sight when he anticipates that the clothes may cover "their outward only", but that their "inward nakedness, much more / Opprobrious" (10.220-22) might be for a while still exposed to view.

The narrator continues suggesting that the two opposing sides may lead towards the final view(s) of the epic. As soon as the visibility of God's Son is depicted leaving Paradise, the narrator shifts his words to "the gates of Hell" where appear "Sin and Death, / In counterview" (10.230-31). The contrast of the scenes seems to require the reader to abstain from the literal expression of Adam's and Eve's view to a counterview with Sin and Death. In addition, the use of the adverb of time "meanwhile" also appeals to the comparison or establishment of a parallel between these two opposing sides. Meanwhile, according to the *OED* definition can be used to compare two aspects of a situation. In this sense, in these final Books, there is a play with visual words that moves back and forth between these two poles of signification, and the reader's eyes follow the oscillation between them.

The (counter)view of Sin and Death meets Satan's view right after Eve's temptation. Another inversion is suggested in this passage with the narrator's depiction of Satan's view, as below:

He, after Eve seduced, unminded slunk
Into the wood fast by, and, changing shape
To observe the sequel, saw his guileful act
By Eve, though all unweeting, seconded
Upon her husband – saw their shame that sought
Vain covertures; but when he saw descend
The Son of God to judge them, terrified
He fled, not hoping to escape, but shun
The present, fearing guilty, what his wrath
Might suddenly inflict; (10.332-41)

The narrator's words once more establish the play of signification. First, Satan leaves "unminded" and this suggests his careless concealment. Then, Satan is placed to "observe" his act against man and see the shame of Adam and Eve and their attempt to cover their nakedness. Moreover, the view of Adam and Eve's nakedness and shame varies from the Son's to the reader's and ends with Satan's. Later, the view shifts drastically with Satan's view of the Son. The terrified Satan, who has so often been portrayed as a fearless figure, also changes his view, especially in this passage that stands for his most victorious moment, in which instead of performing a celebration, he shows he is still afraid of God's power. There is a disconnection in the ideas and the sudden inversions seem to reinforce the play of visual words, which strongly resist the closure of one single aspect of visual interpretation.

Another abrupt shift occurs from one line to another. The terrified Satan reverses himself and becomes again joyful at his conquest and at the meeting scene with his offspring, Sin and Death. Satan's offspring shows the paved bridge they prepare to link the Earth with Hell and Satan "at sight / Of that stupendious bridge his joy increased"

(10.350-51). The sight of a bridge that links the two worlds enlarges the scope of Satan's eyes. His magnificence becomes apparent and he returns to Hell triumphantly to announce his victory. In Hell, he returns to invisibility, but his invisible condition is a strategy to observe his empire and to mark his arrival with great power and glorious appearance. The same terrified Satan turns out, in a few short lines and views, to be the expression of greatness. The play with the eyes, reducing and enlarging their scope in rapid changes may represent an attempt to (de)stabilize a fixed or monocular stance.

The variation of sight(s) continues and the view of Satan's transformation into a serpent symbolizes the most intense reflection of the fall of physical perception and the reestablishment of blindness. Satan's peers stand "Sublime with expectation [...] to see / In triumph issuing forth their glorious Chief; / They saw, but other sight instead – a crowd / Of ugly serpents; horror on them fell, / And horrid sympathy, for what they saw" (10.536-40). The visible image of their leader blurs, darkness fills and veils their eyes and their bodies. Thus, the fallen angels start and end the epic in darkness. After a temporary dreadful achievement "so oft they fell / Into the same illusion" (10.570-71) and blind they all keep themselves, darkness from without still in Hell even after the success of Satan, and from within represented by their snaky punishment. The end of the references to Hell and its creatures seems to present the final view of the devils, as another change of vision occurs and the reading goes back to Paradise. In Paradise the view of "the hellish pair" (10.585), Sin and Death, leaves the scene open and suggests that although the devilish machine of Satan is brought to its apparent end in punishment, Satan's traces will go on affecting God's view and causing suffering to His creation.

The parallel images of Sin and Death and Adam and Eve bring back the oscillation between the literal and figural sight. Like Adam and Eve's duty to conceive a race, Milton suggests that Sin and Death will also conceive the offspring that will follow man hand in hand. Sin and Death's first production is "Discord" (10.707) and its first prey is Adam. In Adam's soliloquy of discord, doubt, and distress, the process of erasing the literal sight takes place in the most meaningful way. The visual metaphors are also erased in his speech, as if Adam would be able to attain peace of mind not through his eyes, but through his words. Questions on existence and his Fall come to his mouth and the elimination of the figure of the eye demonstrates that the turmoil occurs not only externally but also internally. The expressions of his inner rhetoric plunge him into darkness and the weak state of blindness:

Be it so, for I submit; his doom is fair
That I dust I am, and shall to dust return.
[...] But I shall die a living death?
[...] Can he make deathless death? [...]
O Conscience, into what abyss of fears
And horrors hast thou driven me; out of which
I find no way, from deep to deeper plunged. (10.769-844)

Adam's blindness and crisis display his shallow state until at the sight of Eve and her soft words of repentance he finds his wholeness.

The last product of the hellish pair, Discord, despite the turbulence caused in Adam's inner self, fails before the presence of human agreement and reason. The traces and the sliding movement from literal to figural sight, from darkness to visibility, from blindness to evidence, help reinforce the major concentration of Milton's lesson, that is, a search for an inner light, reason, which may guide one through the best path to choose. However, the leaving of the pair also implies that the search for and the accomplishment

of reason may occur through a “darkness visible” perspective. But it may also culminate in a deep expression of eternal darkness presented by the last scene of the devils.

The “darkness visible” attempt to search for the best choice follows the narrative throughout Book 11, where the use of 121 visual metaphors also achieves its highest point. In the argument, Milton anticipates the claim for the need of the eyes to follow Book 11. In the first lines, the visual words refer to the literal exercise of the eyes, yet shifts do take place similarly to those of Book 10. The physical and the figural use of the eyes are suggested from the beginning of Book 11 and the oscillation between these two scopes of sight become more evident. The Son’s sight placed before the eyes of God starts the play. When the Son utters the words: “See, Father, what firstfruits on Earth are sprung / From thy implanted grace” (11.22-23), he beseeches the Father to try to overcome darkness and see the visibility of Adam and Eve. The Son intercedes in favor of Adam and Eve and begs the Father to see from their dark fault their inward repentance.

Darkness and light can also be seen in Adam’s first words. Adam sees “in the east / Darkness ere day’s mid-course, and morning light” (11.203-04) and announces “New laws to be observed” (11.228). The presence of Michael before Adam’s and Eve’s sight as “A glorious apparition” (11.211) also highlights the variation from the literal and the figurative visual words. According to the article “Saint Michael the Archangel”, Michael is one of the principal angels and he represents “the war-cry of the good angels in the battle fought in heaven against Satan”. Michael’s name is regarded as the angel that fights against Satan; he is a rescuer “of the souls of the faithful from the power of the enemy”; and he is the angel responsible “to call away from the Earth and bring men’s souls to judgment” (The Catholic Encyclopedia, 2006). Michael carries the responsibility

of showing to Adam's eyes in *Paradise Lost* all the abovementioned references of his duties. First, he fights against the presence of evil still in Adam's and Eve's inward thoughts and views. Second, as a rescuer of souls, it is in his charge to demonstrate to Adam and Eve that their repentance may rescue them from their punishment. Finally, Michael calls them away from Paradise and after presenting their judgment opens their lives to inward and outward redemption. The three steps of Michael's acts correspond to a process that ranges from darkness to visibility.

Milton's lesson is incorporated in Michael's words. Milton's use of typological elements marking the echoes of the Old Testament display the foundation for the teachings and events found in the New Testament. Like the Bible, Michael's exposition of the Old Testament figures and their parallel in the New one is a progressive revelation. Yet, Michael's revelation to Adam would not be simply regarded as a sign or message from God. Instead, revelation, according to the reading of this thesis, might have its meaning based on an act of making people aware of something that has been secret or hidden (*OED*). In this sense, Michael's use of typology works as Derrida's *différance*, providing meaning through different and deferred acts and exhibiting presence out of absence. Milton's strategic presentation through Michael's typology reinforces his concern as a critic that brings forth the need to understand the present from the play of past and future traces and also to supplement the comprehension of the meanings of sign(s) through the absence of their full presence. "Milton not only exploits the logic of provisionality characteristic of typology, he also manipulates its characteristic reference to another authority" (Schwartz, 1988: 133). Milton plays with the typological elements

and in his play he shows how to subvert a master text that does not totalize its typology in the revelation of a divine sign, but instead becomes a testimony to absence.

A testimony to absence is thus the outcome of Michael's (un)veiling of Adam's eyes. Absence is highlighted by the spatial and temporal deferral in Michael's deliverance of the images before Adam's vision. The reference to darkness as absence opens the possibility of visibility. The visual metaphors reinforce Michael's position as a "true opener" of Adam's "eyes" (11.598). Instead of showing the beauties and illusions of the world, Michael calls attention to the hidden aspects of superficial appearances. Therefore, Michael prepares Adam "to nobler sights" (11.411), sights that (un)veil and suggest the challenge of seeing inwardly, in a nobler dimension, the effects of the outward experiences, as in the passage below:

Michael from Adam's eyes the film removed,
Which that false fruit that promised clearer sight
Had bred, then purged with euphrasy and rue
The visual nerve, for he had much to see,
And from the well of life three drops instilled.
So deep the power of these ingredients pierced,
Even to the inmost seat of mental sight,
That Adam, now enforced to close his eyes,
Sunk down, and all his spirits became entranced;
But him the gentle Angel by the hand
Soon raised, and his attention thus recalled:
'Adam, now ope thine eyes, and first behold
The effects which thy original crime hath wrought
In some to spring from thee'. (11.412-25)

The eight visual elements (my emphasis) are presented gradually to Adam. The process begins with the posture of "downcast eyes" that go on a "downward path to wisdom" through a "darkness visible" perspective. Michael removes the film from Adam's eyes and right afterward proceeds to clear Adam's physical sight. The downcast eyes suggest

seeing inwardly until they reach “the inmost seat of mental sight”, which is related to the achievement of wisdom. Adam, during the process, experiences the unveiling and the veiling of his physical eyes and through darkness he sees the effects of life before him.

Derrida’s approaches in *Memoirs of the Blind* can be associated with the moment of revelation placed by the (un)veiling act of Michael to Adam’s eyes. Revelation, for Derrida, could be read as an “unveiling that renders visible, the truth of truth: light that shows itself, as and by itself” (1993: 122-23). In this manner, re-velation is the double act of unveiling and veiling, with the interiorization of the corporeal sight and, from it, ruin and sacrifice emerge. The unveiling moment reveals ruin and sacrifice through memory, but this time the inner light illuminates this view and makes the best performance of it.

Derrida puts into discussion the (un)veiling of sight and also argues on the importance of tears. He supplements his approaches on tears with the examples of Saint Augustine and Nietzsche, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Playing with the signification of their examples, Derrida reinforces that “if tears come to the eyes, if they well up in them, and if they can also veil sight, perhaps they reveal, in the very course of this experience, [...] an essence of the eye” (1993: 126). The act of weeping veils sight but concomitantly unveils it revealing its essence, blurring the outside image, denigrating the supremacy of the physical and recalling the inward exercise of insight. In Adam’s case, “Sight so deform what heart of rock could long / Dry-eyed behold? Adam could not, but wept” (11.494-95) and his weeping veils his deformed sight and brings about his ruin, which will be reflected in his generations to come.

Adam’s seeing his own ruin reflected in his offspring opens up another view. According to Ann Baynes Coiro’s essay, “‘To repair the ruins of our first parents’: *Of*

Education and Adam” (1988), the purpose of Michael’s lesson to Adam corresponds to Milton’s ideal of learning in his treatise *Of Education*. In *Paradise Lost*, as well as in the pedagogical lesson in *Of Education*, Milton shows his view on the issues of vision. In *Of Education*, Milton gives voice to his views of an ideal path to knowledge:

to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love Him, to be like Him, as we may the nearest by possessing our soul of true virtue [...], but because our understanding cannot in this body found itself but on sensible things, nor arrive so clearly to the knowledge of God and things invisible as by orderly conning over the visible and inferior creature, the same method is necessarily to be followed in all discreet teaching. (1991: 227)

In this manner, visibility would be understood only if the invisible things, through a process of acquisition of knowledge, implied their wisdom about “the visible and inferior creature”, any created thing or sign.

In short, the erasure of the physical expression of vision and the elevation of the inner sight goes through the process from darkness to visibility, and from the superficial through the deep exercise of virtue, knowledge and wisdom. In this matter, “the ruin of our first parents”, the pure expression of all the traces and memories that humankind carries can be negotiated through the exercise of reason and choice.

Finally, Book 12 reinforces Milton’s lesson. Michael, to provide support for the need to exclude the physical aspect of sight, anticipates for Adam that his human sense or “mortal sight” (12.9) may fail and needs to be impaired for the concluding words of his mission. The 39 visual metaphors turn out to become a visual rhetoric and, in the last lines of the epic, vision and word proceed hand in hand. Adam sees “Light out of darkness” (12.473) and realizes that his vision and rhetoric may obey the rule, expressing the idea that “by small / Accomplishing great things” (12.566-67). The “darkness visible”

perspective is thus emphasized in Michael's last words, which prepare Adam and Eve "to leave Paradise" but with the assurance that they may possess "A Paradise within thee, happier far" (12.586-87), invisible to their physical eyes but open to their inner virtue: the power of reason and choice. The presence of "some natural tears" (12.645) in their eyes strengthens their lesson, but their act of having "wiped them soon" (12.645) demonstrate their inner capacity to see out of that momentary darkness the broadened scope of vision that is presented to them. Adam and Eve leave Paradise "hand in hand" (12.648), with "downcast eyes", ready to take "their solitary way" (12.649) on a "downward path to wisdom", together, but taught to become independent in their lives.

The deliverance from absent signs and the openness of the whole world before Adam's and Eve's eyes conclude Michael's lesson under the "darkness visible" perspective. It seems that the lesson is ended, yet the enormous scope before Adam's and Eve's eyes shows that closure is impossible with the gates of the world wide open before them and the reader. In the last three Books of the epic, the highest and the lowest extremes in the presence of the visual metaphors are presented and they place "under erasure" the tension between literal and figural sight. In addition, they reinforce the notion that the issue of vision, like the epic, resists closure and is left open to the immense abyss of life. Thus, in such a dimension, the "darkness visible" scope is endlessly represented in ("a paradise within") sight.

5 – Conclusion

The present conclusion is (pro)visional insofar as this thesis has tried to study Milton's visual metaphors through a poststructuralist stance. Although a wide variety of works have been published on Milton's use of allegory, similes, emblems, metaphors, and icons, this text is unique because it promotes the encounter of the perspectives of *Paradise Lost's* visual metaphors with the view of Derrida in the issue of vision/blindness. This specific analysis was an attempt to unfold the visual metaphors of the epic and, through this revelatory process, to conclude that the approaches to the issue of vision from the Greeks to contemporary time are present in *Paradise Lost*. This poem of the seventeenth century encompasses the features of the classical accounts on sight since Plato up to the poststructuralist/postmodern time.

The presentation of the approaches toward the issue of sight since their early allusions up to a contemporary perspective was grounded on Jay's encyclopedic guide, *Downcast Eyes*, whose broad scope on the matter of vision reinforced the power of the visual metaphors and demonstrated that their use does not play only on the modality of the physical perception of the eyes, but also reveals the cultural tropes behind them. Such

play unbalances the status of the visually dominant aspect of Western culture and weakens the claim of the nobility of the eyes to conceive knowledge. The mistrust in the innocent expression of the immediate view also contributes to denigrate the eyes as instruments to acquire knowledge. For this reason, in antiocularcentric discourse, sight loses its high privilege over the other senses and is inserted in a realm of darkness. Sight also undergoes figural cancellation for the elevation of the “I”, and the logic of visibility surrenders to the expression of the invisible.

The dialectics of the visible at the service of the invisible parallels the Derridean questions of logocentrism or the matters of the “metaphysics of presence”. In Derrida’s views the invisible stands for the figural aspect of language that de-stabilizes the notion of a fixed present as a determinant of immediacy or a bearer of true essence. In this case, the best way to meaning may follow an operation that does not rely on the pure exercise of the physical eyes but rather on the one that expresses the placement of the (in)stance in the realm of interpretation, and resists the immediate risk of the superficiality of the visual.

The visual references in Milton’s early and late works show that he had in mind a special concern for the issue of vision. The failure of his eyesight no doubt contributed to this concern. His poetic choices in early modern times reinforced his concerns on the academic debate around the condemnation of the individual whose eyes were closed to the practices of institutional systems. In such aspect, Milton’s works play directly on the condemnation of outward conformity with a disregard of an inner reflection. Physical sight, according to this view, may symbolize the threshold for the dangers of the external domain of the eyes that can be established by the systems of power and control. The

claim for a more aware individual, possessor of critical eyes to reach public spheres culminates in the visual words of *Paradise Lost*. It is in the argument here that the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost* were not used randomly as pieces of rhetorical poetry; on the contrary, their choice gave birth to genuine ideas that can be used in our current sphere of criticism.

In my poststructuralist reading, Milton's approach to vision/blindness in the visual references of *Paradise Lost* are negotiated with the engine of Derrida's theories, more specifically with his direct account of the issue of the sacrificial and the transcendental blindness in *Memoirs of the Blind*. The line that connects these two writers, in the view of this thesis, is based on their approaches on blindness that invade the visual field in a "darkness visible" perspective.

The "darkness visible" perspective, after a painstaking analysis of the visual metaphors in Milton's works, including *Paradise Lost*, dissipates the outward and inward visions. From this dual bondage, sight becomes better exercised inwardly. In my reading, the "darkness visible" perspective works as a poststructuralist concept in relation to sight. Milton's lyric "I", reflected in the employment of the visual metaphors of *Paradise Lost*, grounds the seer aspect of his view and assures his power as a sightless visionary.

The power of a visionary is also given to Milton by Derrida and helps conclude this thesis. The reference of blindness as the exercise of vision establishes these two writers as deconstructive readers of the dialectics of traditional philosophy on the issue of sight. Both writings, *Paradise Lost* and *Memoirs of the Blind*, invite the readers to reflect on the use of the eyes and place the issue of vision/blindness "under erasure". In their transformative attempts, the common denominator on sight is the "darkness visible"

perspective, in which the literal eye is cancelled and the figural “I” exercises vision. Through it, the immediate exercise of sight is replaced by a more reflective attempt, avoiding the risks of this act. Out of darkness, blindness is the experience of evidence. In this sense, Milton and Derrida suggest the opening of the eyes as an attempt, through a process of (in)visible interiorization on a “downward path to wisdom”, to cancel them out and place the exercise of the (in)stance in the act of reading.

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