

Infinity and voracity of lists in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*

Infinidade e voracidade das listas em Paradise Lost de John Milton

Luiz Fernando Ferreira Sá

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) / CNPQ 2, Belo Horizonte,
Minas Gerais / Brasil
saluiz18@gmail.com

Mayra Helena Alves Olalquiaga

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais / Brasil
mayrahelena@yahoo.com.br

Abstract: Taking a cue from Stanley Fish, the focus of this essay will be on the forms of “intangling” that read as a play of captivity and unboundedness, two apparently opposed notions that, nevertheless, underpin Milton’s poetics. What we propose to look at here is how these terms are effected in the literary lists, inventories, catalogues and accumulations Milton consistently explores in *Paradise Lost*. More specifically, this essay argues that the paradoxes of, and possible antidotes to, captivity that we see operating in the lists in *Paradise Lost* are staged in a treatment that lends them the quality of being at once infinite and voracious, thus a tentative antidote to (something that relieves, prevents, or counteracts, as an antidote to boredom) captivity.

Keywords: lists; *Paradise Lost*; Milton.

Resumo: Tomando uma sugestão de Stanley Fish, o foco deste artigo cairá sobre as formas de “emaranhamento” que lêem como um jogo de clausura e um estado de liberdade ilimitada, duas noções aparentemente

opostas que, no entanto, sustentam a poética miltoniana. O que propomos estudar aqui é a forma como esses termos são postos em prática nas listas literárias, inventários, catálogos e acumulações encontradas no poema épico *Paradise Lost*. Mais especificamente, este artigo sustenta que os paradoxos do cativo e antídotos ao cativo que vemos operando nas listas de *Paradise Lost* são encenadas em um tratamento que lhes empresta a qualidade de ser ao mesmo tempo infinitas e vorazes.

Palavras-chave: listas; *Paraíso Perdido*; Milton.

Recebido em 29 de outubro de 2015

Aprovado em 23 de fevereiro de 2016

John Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*, taking for its theme the founding myth of the fall of Adam and Eve and the consequent loss of Eden for all mankind, constantly confronts its reader with the full implications of the Fall (as for example, the images of the hellish landscape that open Book I mirroring, for Satan and his followers, their altered condition, one in which man will soon have a share). On the one hand, this concern with the Fall is underscored by reflections on sin, the (im)possibilities of atoning for it and the constant struggle and toil that come with choosing a godly path in a post-lapsarian world, an action to which Milton refers in the closing lines of the epic as simultaneously taking place in and constituting a "paradise within". Published in the late 17th century, *Paradise Lost* is also variegated, on the other hand, there is the political rhetoric of the period.¹ It would hardly be surprising then that, in Milton's hand,

¹ The scholarly associations of *Paradise Lost* to the political climate in 17th century England are vast. Although such associations form a backdrop to the reading of *Paradise Lost* and its explorations of a shifting dynamic of captivity and freedom, such close associations will not be traced in depth here. However, it is still important to highlight for the general argument of this paper, along with Sá (2001), that in England's incipient colonial endeavours *Paradise Lost*, among all of Milton's texts, was the most likely to be exported as a model of a liberal politics (and a politics of freedom). This textual implicating of *Paradise Lost* in England's sense of national and colonial politics is explored also by Martin Evans' reading of the epic, via the associations the critic makes between passages in the epic and the processes and relations set up by colonial expansion. Richard Helgerson has likewise explored the political bend in Milton's text in his analysis of its deviations of traditional epic thematic. Lydia Schulman has

discourses of captivity and subjection, mingled with different notions of freedom and imagery of binding/unboundedness, should be intermixed with the issues the poet chooses to address more directly.

The (possible) link between Milton's professed political commitments and the repeated allusions to such discourses and imagery is raised in Stanley Fish's magisterial book on Milton's epic, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (1998), which introduces his overall thesis with a chapter whose title is: "Not so Much a Teaching as an Intangling." Departing from Fish's observations, the focus here will be on the forms of "intangling"² that read as a play of captivity and unboundedness, two apparently opposed notions that, nevertheless, underpin Milton's poetics. What we propose to look at here is how these terms are effected not in a comparative reading of *Paradise Lost* and Milton's prose, but rather in the literary lists, inventories, catalogues and accumulations Milton consistently explores in what is arguably his most celebrated text. More specifically, this article argues that the paradoxes of captivity and antidotes to captivity that we see operating in the lists in *Paradise Lost* are staged in a treatment that lends them the quality of being at once infinite and voracious, thus a tentative antidote to captivity. With the infinity and voracity of lists in *Paradise Lost*, an in-captivity (if we use the logic of "intangling" proposed by Fish) kind of accumulation and paradox, the poetics of the list thus reaches the acme of orthodoxy and at the same time confounds all pre-constituted logical order (a captivity so to speak) by emphasizing the need of supplementation.

highlighted the underlying republicanism of *Paradise Lost*, with its attending notions of a personal sense of freedom we also see in Helgerson's reading, via its quotations by American anti-colonial insurgents.

² In "Not so much a Teaching as an Intangling," Stanley Fish undertakes a close reading of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* to show how Milton's rhetorical strategies work to make readers complicit in the subject of the poem itself. The rhetorical strategies of the poem are connected with the notion of entanglement as a play of captivity (not being able to leave or be free, in terms of limitations inherent to the human condition) against unboundedness (a state of unrestrained possibilities, of uncontrolled potentials). In order to read the rhetorical strategies of the poem, the rhetorical notions associated with lists and accumulations in general will be used: lists in *Paradise Lost* will be shown to be both infinite (taking the whole world, or even worlds, in their train) and voracious (having a huge appetite, being ravenous, being hungry, greedy for any kind of food, satisfaction, or gratification).

The voracious lists of *Paradise Lost* can then culminate in a new wisdom that operates inside the logic of supplementation, encapsulated precisely at that locus of struggle and labor whose name is “paradise within”. This potential space, the peak of all the previous lists that appear in the epic, may be read as a locus for the emergence of cultural creativity, a territory of/for play, and, making use of terms ideologically and historically close to the poet, an arena where faith and reason, reason and free will, free will and knowledge, knowledge and faith would be in full movement of continuity-contiguity. In this way, Milton’s proposal of a “paradise within”, following the exhaustive accumulations and inventories in the epic, forms a potential space that can be thought of as a *bildung*.

In a 2009 volume titled *The Infinity of Lists*, Umberto Eco declares that “in traditional rhetoric there is no interesting definition of what strikes us as the dizzying voraciousness of the list, especially fairly long lists of different things” (137). It is this dizzying aspect of literary listing, which creates a reading experience bordering on the overwhelming, that Milton explores until the sum of wisdom open to man, the constitution of a “paradise within”, is finally accessed by Adam. The dizzying voraciousness of Milton’s lists also make them open-ended, unbound, so that, in activating the rhetoric of lists, his writing at once enacts a drive for order and destabilizes it. Thus, a paradox of displaced captivity grounds the very construction of *Paradise Lost*. This paradox is further emphasized in Milton’s characterizations, particularly via the discourses of unbounded freedom uttered by Satan, precisely at those moments when he is irrevocably bound to his sin, captive to his passions, condemned by the Father to abide outside of Heaven.

Eco goes on to argue that while it is obvious why people make practical lists, why they should choose to make poetic ones is not always so clear. A possible answer he offers is that poetic listings or inventories arise in part from our attempts at enumerating, and thus elucidating, what escapes our capacity for denomination and, most importantly, our control (371). Thus, for Eco, the act of making poetic lists is ultimately underlined by a desire for holding down meaning, by a need for mastery over something that eludes us, in other words, by a drive for capturing, ordering and bounding/binding. What Milton’s lists seem to do is to speak to this drive while at the same time playing up, in the exhaustingly voracious piling up of terms we see in them, the challenges

to literary depiction posed by the spaces his poem describes. Again, not so much a teaching, since the epic poem is not a religious treatise, but an intangling: the poem involves us so as to hamper and embarrass our sinful inclinations, the epic holds us as if in a snare, piling deviousness upon deviousness in order for us to better see the paths we choose. Milton's poetics thus unites and holds together in intricate confusion many things as we, readers, list.

Rhythmically enunciated and enunciabile lists, "in which it was less important to hint at inexhaustible quantities than to attribute properties to things in a redundant manner, often for pure love of iteration" (Eco 133) long pre-date the publication of *Paradise Lost*. Still, this mode of listing by accumulation, in other words, the sequence and juxtaposition of linguistic terms in some way belonging to the same conceptual sphere, is repeatedly found in the epic. Book I of *Paradise Lost* opens with a description of Hell that starkly contrasts with the landscape in Heaven, which the fallen angels had previously enjoyed.

The dismal situation waste and wild,
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round
As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible
Served only to discover sights of woe,
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
That comes to all; (I, 60-67)

The fallen angels find themselves in a dismal situation, surrounded by waste and wild, by a great furnace and sights of woe, by doleful shades and everlasting sorrow. All in all, the first list in the epic serves to inscribe the fallen angels within a special setting and instills in them and on the lists to come layers of meaning. There is in this list an accumulation of purpose on Milton's part, not merely to name, define, and possess this rare and unique place, but also to offer a type of rhetorical reduction that represents a scaling down: Hell is a darkness visible. The description of Hell attempted in this first list thus ends rather flatly on this scaled-down note. Milton seems to offer here a first attempt at encapsulating Hell, but it proves to be a space so terrifying and completely unknown that the list of things he likens to it trails off, open-ended, in this last verse.

This newly inaugurated space becomes the new abode of Satan and his followers after their fall. Confusing, dark, and terrifying to behold, it becomes an appropriate mirror of the altered internal nature of its occupants. Surmising the landscape in Hell, Satan speaks for the first time in the epic

All is not lost; the unconquerable will,
 And study of revenge, immortal hate,
 And courage never to submit or yield:
 And what is else not to be overcome?
 That glory never shall his wrath or might
 Extort from me. (I, 106-111)

This second list serves as a panelling, frame or hurdle, where another stratum of reality, the new internal reality of the fallen angels, is presented as a doppelgänger of Heaven: glory in immortal hate. True glory, in the overall logic of *Paradise Lost*, is an attribute of God, belonging to the heavenly sphere and thus antithetical to hatred. Such glory is here coupled with the suggestion that Satan is not a free rebel, as he seems to see himself in this speech, but in fact a prisoner in Hell. This underscores his mistaken apprehension on what it means to be captive and what it means to be free, something the epic will still explore further, rendering him a pathetic figure able to move readers either towards compassionate or contemptuous pity. This second list could also be read as a sort of *jeu d'esprit*, receding to infinity, laying a monochrome veneer, glory in immortal hate, over all the chaos of the real world of Hell, thus playing up its resistance to the epic narrator's powers of description and encapsulation evidenced in the previous list.

The futility of the claims to glory Satan makes, although lost on him, is brought to the fore in Book II of *Paradise Lost*. The fallen angels, after building *Pandemonium*, confer to decide what should be their next move. Among the higher orders that speak at the assembly is Belial

I laugh, when those who at the Spear are bold
 And vent'rous, if that fail them, shrink and fear
 What yet they know must follow, to endure
 Exile, or ignominy, or bonds, or pain,
 The sentence of thir Conquerour: This is now
 Our doom; (II, 204-209)

The list in question is syndetic, four conjuncts are joined by a conjunction: or. This stylistic scheme achieves a variety of effects: it can increase the rhythm of the line, convey solemnity or even ecstasy and exuberance. This syndetic list, and indeed most of the lists we find in *Paradise Lost*, thus creates a sense of being overwhelmed, or indeed directly overwhelms the reader, leaving him/her little room to breathe. Dizzying and voracious, tending to open-endedness in its piling up of elements, this list echoes those used to describe Hell in Book I. And although Belial's counsel is not meant to be taken for wisdom (for how can the fallen be wise?), his speech does highlight the inherent contradiction of captivity and true, unbound freedom Milton's listings stage and which Satan seems to ignore.

The opening books of *Paradise Lost* are highly descriptive. The lists Milton employs to this end, in which Eco's discussion of poetic accumulation in terms of an attempt at capturing is in operation, are nonetheless underpinned by tentative antidotes to captivity as these lists, mirroring the spaces they try to impose order on, tend to voracity and infinity. And yet, Milton's particular, almost obsessive, use of lists serves another purpose besides that of mere description. The dynamics of incaptivity and unboundedness we see underscoring the listings of *Paradise Lost* could be seen to play up an issue that the epic consistently explores and works to bring home to the reader: what it means to be captive. This concern is explored, at least in the first few books, in the person of Satan, and reaches its climax in the revelation of the "paradise within" to Adam. Seeing Satan escape from Hell, the Father thus speaks to the Son

Onely begotten Son, seest thou what rage
Transports our adversarie, whom no bounds
Prescrib'd, no barrs of Hell, nor all the chains
Heapt on him there, nor yet the main Abyss
Wide interrupt can hold; so bent he seems
On desperate revenge, that shall redound
Upon his own rebellious head. (III, 80-86)

This list represents an inventory of things that cannot hold Satan: no bounds prescribed, no bars of Hell, no chains heaped on him, no abyss can interrupt his desperate revenge. It would thus seem, and indeed this is his own interpretation, that Satan is at last free from all bonds, able to exert his free will even if in open rebellion against God. However, what *Paradise Lost* appositively shows the reader is that, paradoxically,

when he most believes himself free Satan is in fact most bound by/to his sin. Thus, the paradoxes of ordering (captivity) and unboundedness we see operating in the dizzying voraciousness of Milton's lists indeed mirror or suggest an intricate paradox in the text, a shifting between illusory interpretations of freedom and the tentative antidotes to captivity championed by Satan.

Looking at the opening passages of *Paradise Lost*, John Rumrich seems to pick up on this dynamic of voracious listings underscored by a shifting play on binding/unboundedness when he argues that the readers of the epic are consistently faced with a lack of meaning. For the critic, if the reader sympathizes at all with Satan it is not due to an underlying didacticism that relies on this identification to function (as Fish's work suggests), but because, like the reader, Satan also is confused by the text (Rumrich 22). Contrary to the conception of a prescriptive and authoritative persona usually associated with Milton in many contemporary readings of his work, Rumrich argues rather for Milton as a poet who persistently tackles indeterminacy as a vital dimension not only of satanic but also of a fundamentally human experience. Tracing the various lists of the long epic, the indeterminacy Rumrich sees operating in *Paradise Lost*, productive of a sense of bewilderment, could be said to be a function of a poetics deeply imbued with the rhetoric of post-revolutionary England, but a poetics which, staged in voracious inventories, lends itself to a logic of supplementation and open-endedness, rather than an enforcement of unequivocal positioning.

The issues of captivity and antidotes to captivity we have been discussing in relation to *Paradise Lost* by means of its use of poetic lists have thus far been restricted to the hellish spheres and to the fallen angels. However, Milton's use of poetic accumulation spans the whole text of the long poem, reaching into Heaven and Eden. Thus, mirroring the exploratory journeys of the fallen angels in Hell, Milton describes, via accumulation, the frolicking of the angels in Heaven.

About him exercis'd Heroic Games
Th' unarmed Youth of Heav'n, but nigh at hand
Celestial Armourie, Shields, Helmes, and Speares
Hung high with Diamond flaming, and with Gold. (IV, 551-554)

Here we find another *tour de force* in encapsulation and a kind of sleight of hand, for instead of the games they play, we have a list of things nigh

at hand of the unarmed youth of Heaven: armory, shields, helmets and spears. Milton, through a listing of the different parts of their armor, attempts to present in terms comprehensible to the reader a picture of what has no inherent form, or at least not one the readers' eyes would easily recognize, the host of angels that watch over Eden. In this descriptive train, this list harks back to the inventories Milton presents to the reader in Hell, spreading the rhetoric of voracious accumulation and all its associations throughout the text.

From the lists used to describe Hell and the one above, which attempt to pin down in terms comprehensible to the reader that which has no form, yet is paradoxically made visible to human eyes by these means, Milton's use of lists thus remains consistent throughout the epic. These lists, however, instead of instituting order, constitute a dizzying and voracious reading experience, which points to the underlying challenge to capturing and ordering Milton's copious themes or his poetics of "intangling". This dynamic of a dislodged captivity is mirrored in the visions of freedom Milton puts forth through his characters, particularly Satan; these two features or instances of poetic accumulation come together in the closing lines of the epic, when Milton can finally suggest a form of knowledge that is itself, like the list, supplementary, open-ended and the site and space of the constitution of true freedom in a post-lapsarian world, the "paradise within".

The lists Milton compiles in the first books of *Paradise Lost*, as we have been arguing, thus rely on a dynamics of captivity and antidotes to captivity. This dynamic is further amplified and steered towards the issues of true freedom and right use of free will Milton conveys in the satanic plotline and its implications in original sin. With the fall of Adam and Eve, following that of Satan, Milton's verse turns from the enormity of Satan's transgression, which triggers the altered inner state the lists in Hell mirror, to the implications of sin for mankind

Disloyal on the part of Man, revolt
And disobedience: On the part of Heav'n
Now alienated, distance and distaste,
Anger and just rebuke, and judgement giv'n,
That brought into this World a world of woe,
Sinne and her shadow Death, and Miserie
Deaths Harbinger: Sad task, yet argument
Not less but more Heroic then the wrauth

Of stern ACHILLES on his Foe pursu'd
 Thrice Fugitive about TROY Wall; or rage
 Of TURNUS for LAVINIA disespous'd,
 Or NEPTUN'S ire or JUNO'S, that so long
 Perplex'd the GREEK and CYTHEREA'S Son;
 If answerable style I can obtaine. (IX, 7-20)

With the fall of man, the notes are changed to tragic: revolt, disobedience, alienation, distance, distaste, anger, rebuke, judgment, woe, sin and death and misery enter the created world. The second part of the list completes this enumeration of all the terrible things that enter the world *in lieu* of Adam's choice and has to do with the heroic argument or the sad task of the epic narrator to narrate events after the Fall. The epic narrator ends his list of classical heroic wrath by concluding: "if answerable style I can obtain." In other words, he compares great wrath (God's) with small or venial (because only dreams) wrath (that of the Greek and Roman gods). Thus, Milton's enumeration of the first repercussions of original sin relies on an opposition that amplifies God's just wrath by making small the wrath of gods in classical rhetoric.

The tragic note and the likening of Milton's argument to the themes of classical literature in order to amplify the scope and range of a Christian text such as *Paradise Lost* is thus accomplished also via listings and enumerations. Milton's narrator, after invoking and comparing God's wrath to the classical gods', only to diminish the latter, tells the reader that, contrary to Milton's literary predecessors, *Paradise Lost* will sing of true patience and heroic martyrdom, not confining itself

To describe Races and Games,
 Or tilting Furniture, emblazon'd Shields,
 Impreses quaint, Caparisons and Steeds;
 Bases and tinsel Trappings, gorgious Knights
 At Joust and Torneament; then marshal'd Feast
 Serv'd up in Hall with Sewers, and Seneshals;
 The skill of Artifice or Office mean,
 Not that which justly gives Heroic name
 To Person or to Poem. (IX, 33-41)

This list begins where the previous one left open: the development of an answerable style by comparing great things with small. In other words, by means of the accumulations Milton has been employing, the epic

narrator makes sure the reader understands he is not going to relate the wrath of God and the tragedy that befalls Adam and Eve in terms of skill of artifice or a mean office. The heights of his theme, that is, original sin and the pitfalls of illusory notions of freedom and mistaken uses of free will, call forth more complex verse.

Once the Fall of Adam and Eve is accomplished, the dizzying and voracious lists (one of the marks of his lofty poetics) Milton had previously used to describe Hell and Chaos as spaces that reflect to the reader a troubled, captive, fallen state of mind, are extended into Eden.

Of Hill and Vallie, Rivers, Woods and Plaines,
Now Land, now Sea, & Shores with Forrest crownd,
Rocks, Dens, and Caves; but I in none of these
Find place or refuge. (IX, 116-119)

Surmising Eden Satan takes stock of the fact that not even Paradise may provide a place of refuge. This speech resonates with Adam's lamentation later on in Book 9 when he surmises Eden with fallen eyes, taking in the full implications of his transgression. Sin has come to him and through him into Eden. This list focuses on the lack of place and refuge for Adam and Eve, as much as for Satan, after the Fall and the state of displaced captivity that is due to their erroneous use of free will, the state of being permanently bound by/to their sinful act of transgression.

Thus, Milton's epic, shifting between such disparate spaces as Hell, Heaven and Eden, links them all via poetic accumulation, tying them all together in the paradox of captivity and unboundedness the text repeatedly implies and for which Milton will offer a measure of redemption in "paradise within". It is in this context that Adam begins to understand what Satan never fully can, that choosing the godly path is the way to true liberty (individual man's freedom and the freedom of a Christian nation). Reflecting on his altered condition, dwelling on the passions he feels rising within him, Adam muses

Against our selves, and wilful barrenness,
That cuts us off from hope, and savours onely
Rancor and pride, impatience and despite,
Reluctance against God and his just yoke
Laid on our Necks. (X,1042-1046)

It is man's subjection to such passions as rancor, pride, impatience and spite, before unknown in Eden that *Paradise Lost* here seems most deeply to lament. The successive accumulations in the long poem, from the voracious turn of the lists in the opening books that seem to thwart the drive for poetic description and ordering (for capturing) and which, in their turn, enact the paradox of Satan's enslavement to base passions at the moment when he most strenuously exerts his illusory antidote to captivity, have thus brought its reader to the point in which Adam begins to understand the larger reflections on subjection and freedom the epic has been working towards. Thus, Adam begins to understand that, in the logic of *Paradise Lost*, true freedom is found, paradoxically, by choosing what he and Satan call the godly yoke.

To complete his instruction, Adam is taken by Michael to a mountain top and shown a sweeping vision of the fallen world that is come in consequence of his sin

His Eye might there command wherever stood
 City of old or modern Fame, the Seat
 Of mightiest Empire, from the destined Walls
 Of CAMBALU, seat of CATHAIAN CAN
 And SAMARCHAND by OXUS, TEMIRS Throne,
 To PAQUIN of SINAEAN Kings, and thence
 To AGRA and LAHOR of great MOGUL
 Down to the golden CHERSONESE, or where
 The PERSIAN in ECBATAN sate, or since
 In HISPAHAN, or where the RUSSIAN KSAR
 In MOSCO, or the Sultan in BIZANCE,
 TURCHESTAN-born; nor could his eye not ken
 Th' Empire of NEGUS to his utmost Port
 ERCOCO and the less Maritime Kings
 MOMBAZA, and QUILOA, and MELIND,
 And SOFALA thought OPHIR, to the Realm
 Of CONGO, and ANGOLA fardest South;
 Or thence from NIGER Flood to ATLAS Mount
 The Kingdoms of ALMANSOR, FEZ, and SUS,
 MAROCCO and ALGIERS, and TREMISEN;
 On EUROPE thence, and where ROME was to sway
 The World: in Spirit perhaps he also saw
 Rich MEXICO the seat of MOTEZUME,
 And CUSCO in PERU, the richer seat

Of ATABALIPA, and yet unspoil'd
GUIANA, whose great Citie GERYONS Sons
Call EL DORADO: but to nobler sights
MICHAEL from ADAMS eyes the Filme remov'd
VVhich that false Fruit that promis'd clearer sight
Had bred; (XI, 385-414)

The protective “film” administered by the archangel in order to make Adam see into the future and to serve as a true lens through which “the promised clearer sight from the false fruit” could be balanced against reveals another, rather long enumeration of places that encompasses the mightiest empires of fame as we know them in the fallen world. With this list, Milton once more attempts to demonstrate to Adam the enormous extent of his fall and the consequences it will bring about in the world, consequences which the reader of the epic inevitably also reaps.

This expansive view of future empires and their corrupt rulers is complemented by Milton, also via accumulation, by a vision of human suffering, disease and bodily decay, another consequence of original sin. Again Adam sees into the future, but this future is nothing but a catalogue of the triumphant deeds Death’s darts daubed. The list is highly amplified oratorically by the asyndetic piling up of gruesome maladies and illnesses our bodies are subject to. By way of voracious listings of corrupt imperial capitals and diseased human bodies, Milton conveys to Adam the ravenousness of sin, whose consequences are heaped on the heads also of the rest of mankind.

With the exhaustive lists of the consequences of original sin and Adam’s subsequent reflections on freedom and captivity to sin, it seems the epic has reached its climax. Through the accumulations Milton devises, Adam is finally able to come to an understanding of sin and, concomitantly, of “paradise within” as a tentative antidote to his fallen condition, his being bound to the consequences of his disobedience and captive to his baser passions. After all these visions of sorrow, Adam can acknowledge the depth of his transgression, he is able to fully understand all of its repercussions and, out of his despair, can finally glimpse at a measure of redemption.

This having learnt, thou hast attaind the summe
Of wisdom; hope no higher, though all the Starrs
Thou knewst by name, and all th’ ethereal Powers,
All secrets of the deep, all Natures works,

Or works of God in Heav'n, Air, Earth, or Sea,
 And all the riches of this World enjoydst,
 And all the rule, one Empire; onely add
 Deeds to thy knowledge answerable, add Faith,
 Add Vertue, Patience, Temperance, add Love,
 By name to come call'd Charitie, the soul
 Of all the rest: then wilt thou not be loath
 To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess
 A Paradise within thee, happier farr. (XII, 575-588)

The last list of *Paradise Lost* takes up from where Adam left off and is uttered by the archangel. This list is a lesson in terms of supplementary wisdom: its encyclopedic ambitions strive towards an absolute knowledge, which is faith pasted to virtue glued to patience stuck to temperance attached to love bound to charity. This final list can then be seen to be the sum total of Christian knowledge, knowledge that is also an acknowledgement of the Redeemer to come and that makes both Adam and the reader knowledgeable about the “paradise within”, and thus able to choose a godly path even in the post-lapsarian world.

Here, in Book 12, it is finally possible for Milton's reader to glimpse that locus of struggle and labor whose name is “paradise within”. This internalized space could be assessed in terms of a potential space that would account for the intermediate zone of experience between internal and external reality without settling on an ordering and final synthesis. The effect which Fish calls “Not so much a teaching as an intangling” comes across in the things listed in the epic poem, things summarily grouped according to laws that defy formulation – those external accidents or imponderable and arbitrary leaps of faith – are torn from their mundane, everyday significance and mystified, made free once more and capable of assuming a multiplicity of meanings that is both mysterious and rational in their educational craving. Far from containing and mirroring the hierarchy of divine existence, the things listed in the long poem were to play a central role in a culture of the effects of systematic disorientation; pointing towards a different reality, they no longer referred back to the reassuring, sensible world of the divine order, but looked instead to the intangling world of *bildung*. This potential space is indeed an open course full of plasticity, porosity, and interaction. This territory of/for play, or in Milton's phrasing, this “paradise within happier far”, is a privileged arena where the intricate paradoxes of captivity,

unboundedness, and in-captivity enjoin us, readers, to be careful with the (reading, readerly) choices we make.

From the infinity and voracity of the lists rehearsed here, it is further possible to say that this potential space to which we have been referring, the only space in which true freedom may be exercised in a post-lapsarian world where mankind is inextricably bound to/by sin, can enhance the interpretative trail Fish proposed in 1998: we have been binding them (the lists as a whole and the idea of a “paradise within”) to a *bildung*, which Fish delineates as either the way a historical epoch articulates its understanding of the world, or the formation of the individual in its pedagogical dimension and, finally, a means to approach art. Yet once more, as Milton used to say (following a biblical tradition that called attention to the splice between things eternal and things mortal), with the infinity and voracity of lists in *Paradise Lost* the poetics of the list reaches the acme of orthodoxy in the way it teaches us a lesson and at the same time confounds all pre-constituted logical order by emphasizing the need of supplementation by the way it “entangles” us. In sum, the lists in Milton’s epic are infinite for obvious reasons (copious and simultaneously about a plethora of things) and voracious because they teach us, particularly via Satan’s (mis)understanding of freedom and Adam’s new-found enlightenment about a “paradise within”, that we are the fiction (from Latin fiction-, *fictio* act of fashioning, fiction, from *fingere* to shape, fashion, feign) we create (from Latin *creatus*, past participle of create; akin to Latin *crescere* to grow, in other words, to cultivate, shape and fashion as on lists, catalogues, accumulations, enumerations).

Works Cited

ECO, Umberto. *The infinity of lists: from Homer to Joyce*. London: MacLehose, 2009. Print.

FISH, Stanley. *Surprised by sin: the reader in Paradise lost*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998. Print.

HELGERSON, Richard. *Forms of nationhood: the Elizabethan writing of England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. Print.

MILTON, John. *Paradise lost*. Ed. Barbara K. Lewalski. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. Print.

RUMRICH, John. *Milton unbound*. Controversy and reinterpretation. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Print.

SÁ, Luiz Fernando Ferreira. *Paraíso perdido em contracena*. Uma conversa pós-colonial. Belo Horizonte: Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2001. Print.

SCHULMAN, Lydia. *Paradise lost and the Rise of the American Republic*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992. Print.