Caucasus Journal of Milton Studies
Published by The Milton Society of Georgia
e-ISSN : 2720-8222 (Online)
Vol-2-Issue-1
March 2023

THE FASCINATION OF CHAOS IN *PARADISE LOST*

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Abstract Milton's contradictory rendition of Chaos as the "womb of nature and perhaps her grave" makes Chaos one of the most fascinating presences in *Paradise Lost*. This article argues that Milton's ambiguous depiction of Chaos presents a rich and multifaceted concept that offers insights into the complexities of human nature and the universe. The first part of the paper suggests that Chaos is a significant principle underlying Milton's theology, cosmology, and aesthetics. The second part explores the essence of Chaos, highlighting its dual nature as both a copious material basis of life and a destructive force with political implications. The third part examines the psychoanalytic significance of Chaos, linking its generative-destructive duality to both Satan and Milton's Oedipus Complex. The author argues that Chaos represents the unconscious aspects of human nature, wherein the tension between the drives of life and death is deeply ingrained. Although Milton's Chaos is rooted in a religious framework, the author concludes by suggesting that it has broad implications for modern science, sociology, and non-religious philosophies.

Keywords: Chaos, grave, Milton, Oedipus Complex, *Paradise Lost*, womb

Introduction

Chaos holds tremendous fascination as one of the most subtle presences in *Paradise Lost*. Concerning the allegorical figure Chaos, Milton provides a wealth of descriptive detail in Book 2 and numerous allusions in later books as well. We are told that Chaos contains within it "embryon atoms" (2, 900), clearly indicating its existence before the creation of hell and earth. Yet this poses questions related to the generation of this disordered region, its participation in the process of divine creation, and most fundamentally, its nature—whether it is good or evil in essence. Milton's *Christian Doctrine* unequivocally states that matter is good, but the material Chaos of *Paradise Lost* seems also to be opposed to God (Chambers, 1963). Chaos is, on the one hand, the "womb of Nature" (2, 911) containing "pregnant causes" (2, 913), and on the other, "perhaps her grave" (2, 911), a turbulent netherworld overseen by a court of dark consorts whose disposition toward God is openly antagonistic (Kuny, 2009). Such questions are not easily answered, yet one would like to know why Chaos, with its puzzling details, occupies so prominent a position in Milton's narrative.

This research approaches Chaos first from a diachronic point of view, tracing the origins of Milton's idiosyncratic theology, cosmology, and related aesthetics. The introduction of his intellectual background enables the author, in Section Three, to touch upon the essence of his Chaos and its place in the progressive generation of all things. Then by drawing on psychoanalytic theories, the Fourth Section accounts for the oedipal fascination that Chaos holds for Satan, Milton, and perhaps the whole of humanity. Based upon the physical and metaphysical characteristics established in these three sections, the author's conclusion offers a theory concerning the profound significance of Chaos, as it represents the

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liminality, indeterminacy, and randomness essential to both the higher cosmological power and the human psyche.

Intellectual Contexts of Milton's Chaos

As Rumrich (1996) notes, when faced with the complexity of a work like *Paradise Lost* and a syncretic yet stunningly idiosyncratic mind like Milton's, scholars too often assign him to a more readily assimilable tradition, usually a reconstruction of the Christian mainstream. Dividing Milton, the thinker from Milton, the poet, however, is a serious mistake and one that eventually leads to absurdities as interpreters discount certain portions of his stated thought in an attempt to establish his poetic allegiance with whatever tradition it is that they themselves favor, or to which they have responded.

Therefore, to understand Milton's Chaos, we must first examine his metaphysics/theology, which is monistic by nature. In Book 5 of *Paradise Lost*, Raphael describes varying degrees of substance to Adam:

> Oh Adam, one Almighty is, from whom
> All things proceed, and up to him return,
> If not depraved from good, created all
> Such to perfection, on first matter all,
> Endued with various forms, various degrees
> Of substance, and in things that live, of life;
> But more refined, more spiritous, and pure,
> As nearer to him placed or nearer tending
> Each in their several active spheres assigned,
> Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
> Proportioned to each kind. (5, 468-479)

Raphael's remarks demonstrate Milton's materialist monism, which rejects the Platonic idea that matter and spirit exist as two separate entities, and instead suggests a continuum in which the material is merely further removed from God than the spiritual. Since God is "one," and he creates ex deo, all are created out of "one first matter" (Chaos), differing only in degrees of refinement and purity but are essentially of the same matter. Kuny (2009, 11) notes in his dissertation that Raphael's descriptions of the original matter as good "if not depraved from good" seems to contradict Milton's statement that matter "came from God in an incorruptible state, and even since the fall it is still incorruptible, so far as its essence is concerned.". Yet, while matter may be "depraved from good," such depravity does not negate the goodness of its essence. As the prime example of evilness, even Satan retains his angelic flexibility and metamorphic ability after his fall—his essence is not corruptible, "for neither do the spirits damned / Lose all their virtue" (2, 482-483).

Milton's materialist belief, therefore, makes matter the necessary basis of all good. Materially based processes occur even at the most exalted levels: angels eat and digest and obtain pleasure from sex (Rumrich, 1996), which is in accordance with Milton's account in *Christian Doctrine*: the first matter is "a demonstration of God's supreme power and goodness," and should be dispersed, propagated and extended as far as God wills (1825/1973, 308). This animism of Milton's monism, as Fallon observes, is apparent in Raphael's discourse, where he illustrates the movement of "body up to spirit" (5, 478) through the image of a flowering plant: "from the root / Springs lighter the green stalk," and "by gradual scale sublimed / To vital spirits aspire" (5, 479-480, 483-484). Fallon (1991, 103) interprets "the relations of the plant to the one first matter as synecdochic," for the tender flowering plant reflects the flexibility of the monistic cosmos where things are interconnected not by a rigidly hierarchical order, but by their shared indeterminacy essential to the divine power. From soft plants to the radically fluid angelic bodies, such synesthetic confusion abounds in Milton's monistic universe and eventually extends to the general aesthetic of *Paradise Lost*.

An investigation into Milton's cosmology also sheds light on his construction of Chaos. He faces a cosmological dilemma in writing *Paradise Lost* which centers on choosing between Galileo's

fully Copernican astronomy and Tycho Brahe's alternative, but not on any lingering nostalgia for the mystification and confusion associated with the Ptolemaic model (Martin, 2001).

Whereas scholars such as Lovejoy and Svendsen assign to Milton's epic cosmos the retrograde Ptolemaic worldview, Milton, as a pragmatic Baconian, clearly associates the traditional cosmology with mere superstition (Martin, 2001). He consistently announces his commitment to the Baconian/Galilean reformation of modern learning through incessant attacks on the "monkish and miserable sophistry" of the schoolmen (Martin, 2001, 237). And like Bacon, Milton supports the formation of tentative, speculative hypotheses as the best way to secure an "interim" knowledge that will achieve complete certitude only with the "Master's second comming" (Martin, 2001, 243). This shows that during Milton's time, honest skepticism was seen as the best policy toward the unknowable secrets of divine Providence, and no fully secular outlook existed even among the scientific pioneers (Martin, 2001). Thus, a more balanced evaluation of Milton's position would be Boas's (1962, 119-20) summary that he "combined rational science and mysticism in a peculiar blend," a view endorsed by one of Milton's finest editors, Alastair Fowler.

For Fowler, Milton is determinedly yet also intelligently undecided as to which world system to adopt, although Fowler acknowledges that Raphael's rhetoric often suggests strong Copernican leanings (Martin, 2001). Raphael scornfully criticizes the Ptolemists' idolatrous mis-devotion as they

> …build, unbuild, contrive
>
> To save appearances, how gird the sphere
>
> With centric and eccentric scribbled o'er,
>
> Cycle and epicycle, orb in orb. (8, 81-84)

Such contrivances promote a humanly commonsensical geo-centrism only by defacing the vast frame of the cosmos with an ugly and unwieldy system.

Nevertheless, while Raphael acknowledges the essential absurdity of the Ptolemaic, the drift of his lecture is that it should not be man's duty to decide which system is true, as "heav'n is for thee too high / To know what passes there" (8, 172-73). Raphael's notable caution in deciding which chief world system is best able to "save the appearances" thus seems to derive from Milton's Baconian awareness that it was never acceptable for scientists to manipulate "appearances" to fit preconceived theories of any kind (Martin, 2001). Bacon also insists that empirical skepticism does not necessarily validate the opposing Copernican position, apparently preferring Brahe's alternative to heliocentrism (Martin, 2001). Brahe's interim theory suggests that all planets revolve around the sun while the sun itself revolves around Earth, which, for Milton, is a perfect combination of the Ptolemaic and the Copernican. In this sense, although heliocentrism accords with the more orderly design expected of a rational God, Brahe's method more closely conforms to the careful, commonsense principles of observation extolled by Bacon (Boas, 1962).

On the other hand, Milton's universe is not in opposition to heliocentrism. In fact, Bacon's speculation that there are two basic "types of spirits; the 'animate' and the lifeless," or the airy and the fiery, seems to explain much about the *materia prima* of Milton's Chaos, which when summoned to creation is also divided into two types: those that can be "infus'd" with both "vital virtue" and "vital warmth," and those fated to remain inanimately or "tartareously" "adverse to life" (7, 236-39). In both cases, this aversion to life is produced by the particles being "cut off and surrounded by the grosser body which intercepts them." Milton associates the "grosser body" with the vital fires of the sun, whose quasi-divine chemical agency is firmly "centered" in its universe by the golden compasses of the heavenly Son (7, 235-37) (Kargon, 1966, quoted in Martin, 2001, 251). Hence, in Milton's cosmos, the solar sphere acts as a quasi-Copernican dispenser, or as Satan calls it, the "God / of this new world" (4, 33-34). This analogy implies two of Milton's

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e-ISSN : 2720-8222 (Online)
Vol-2-Issue-1
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rationalities: 1) Chaos has an ambiguous nature, and 2) God's divine power breeds the duality of Chaos. Upon this matter, the following sections shall provide further elaboration.

In Milton's infinite and chaotic universe, therefore, there exists a continuum of multiple "worlds and worlds" (Martin, 2001, 252). Milton's theology and astronomy are permeated with such equivocal philosophies as he breaks the boundaries of the material and spiritual, the animate and lifeless, the geocentric and heliocentric. This in all senses support Rumrich's (1996) view that Milton is a poet of indeterminacy who finds a way to incorporate the uncertain and the evolving into his literary art, and that Chaos is a morally and ideologically significant principle underlying it.

Essence of Chaos: Womb and Grave

All through *Paradise Lost*, whether the subject is creation, destruction, astronomy, gender, or alchemy, we find excess and instability; we find incoherence and undecidability. We find chaos. Rumrich (1996, 118) notes that the influence of Chaos is pervasive in Milton's cosmos, as it is "an expression of the nature of things—and therefore of God himself—rather than evidence of a divine plot to ensnare humanity."

Yet, it has not been made explicit what the essential nature of Chaos is, although its duality is implied in Section Two. By Milton's definition, Chaos is simultaneously the womb of nature and her grave. On the one hand, it represents Nature's Womb because it contains "materials to create more worlds" (2, 916). On the other hand, there is "the waste / Wide anarchy of Chaos damp and dark" (10, 282-83), a turbulent underworld overseen by an allegorical figure who openly claims that "Havoc and spoil and ruin are my gain" (2, 1009). The creative capacities are intertwined with Chaos's antagonistic disposition towards God, and this contradiction confounds readings that ache to establish a united understanding of the essence of Chaos.

In the critical history of Chaos, which paradigm to adopt remains the crux of the matter: that which polarizes creator and chaos, or that which locates in Chaos a principle of ironic indeterminacy and the implicit basis of all subsequent order (Rumrich, 1996). As mentioned before, Milton's monist representation of Chaos requires that its nature be good:

> It is, I say, a demonstration of God's supreme power and goodness that he should not shut up this heterogeneous and substantial virtue within himself, but should disperse, propagate, and extend it as far as, and in whatever way, he wills. For this original matter was not an evil thing, nor to be thought of as worthless: it was good, and it contained the seeds of all subsequent good. It was a substance and could only have been derived from the source of all substance. It was in a confused and disordered state at first, but afterwards, God made it ordered and beautiful. (Milton, 1825/1973, 308)

The disordered, confused first matter is depicted as good in itself, for if this chaotic matrix is intrinsically hostile to God and creation, any attempt to justify God's way would be moot. Milton's argument is in line with the early Church fathers' declaration that matter, like all being in Augustine's metaphysics, is good—if matter had been designated evil, the consequence would have been a dualist religion and would have contradicted the Augustinian conviction that a single, omnipotent deity governs everything, and thereby undermined order at the cosmic or imperial level (Rumrich, 1996). Thus, if Milton's theological peculiarities inform his poetry at all, Chaos in *Paradise Lost* should not appear as God's enemy; it is the Womb of Nature instead—the generative place from which all other things emerge, the material basis ready to be shaped and ordered by God.

Freud's psychoanalytic perspective also contributes to an extensive understanding of this life-affirming generative nature of Chaos. In his theory, every being lives the initial stage of their existence in the amniotic fluid of their mother's

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womb, where a sea of unbounded oneness with dark, mysterious serenity encloses them. The womb as a maternal symbol evokes a prenatal "oceanic feeling" (Freud, 1930/1961, 2), much resembling Milton's description of the realm of Chaos as "a dark / Illimitable ocean without bound, / Without dimension, where length, breadth, and highth, / And time and place are lost" (2, 891-894), and like a womb filled with water, it involves "embryon immature", "with warm / Prolific humor soft'ning" the world, and "[s]atiate with genial moisture" (7, 277, 279, 282). In this libidinal matrix, the divine angels, as the first and most refined beings, engage themselves in a boundless elemental mix. Their bodies are radically fluid and unfixed (DeGruy, 2012) and their interpenetrations are unconstrained by flesh or any fixed bodily configuration: "All heart they live, all head, all eye, all ear, / All intellect, all sense, and as they please, / They limb themselves" (6, 350-52). Porous beings that they are, their boundless essence suffuses the cosmos; they satiate in amorous pleasure, unquestionably reflecting the wild energy of Chaos, and suggesting that, in contrast to the rigidity of human bodies, the more refined the creature, the more capable they are in being indeterminate.

However, though matter is ontologically good, it is also deemed marginal and inferior in comparison to spirit. Unlike the unfallen angels, matter in the form of human flesh required discipline and direction before it could aspire to the appropriate virtues. Christianity in this sense suited the patriarchal government of church and state as it was ready to resort to coercive force, and suppression of the lower classes generally (Rumrich, 1996). Girardot (1987, 216) also points out that those myths featuring the violent defeat of a hostile chaos often function to celebrate the "heroic finality of some authoritarian order," and such understandings remained a commonplace of political theory throughout the English Renaissance. One of the most influential exponents in Milton's century, Hobbes (1651/1991, 299), for example, in his book *Leviathan* invokes "the first Chaos of Violence, and Civill Warre" to deplore the consequences of rebellion against the divinely sanctioned monarch —the political bent of Augustinian is thus magnified. Apart from political understandings, the malignancy of Chaos and its symbolic associations may also be attributed to the ancient mythological antecedents, especially in the *Enuma elish*, a Babylonian epic behind the Genesis account. Marduk, the heroic creator in the epic, kills and mutilates the maternal chaos deity, Tiamat, and builds creation out of the pieces. Such rough, revisionist treatment of the maternal deities like Tiamat reflects the deep-seated attitudes against the wild, ominous matter.

In *Paradise Lost*, however, the nonviolence of Milton's treatment of Chaos is in stark contrast to the matricidal violence in the Babylonian myth. Despite narrative evidence of Chaos's being "outrageous" and "wild", and with "furious winds / And surging waves" (7, 212-13), Milton does not register creation as the beginning of a continuing battle against the "monstrous" Chaos (Rumrich, 1996). For unlike Sin and Death, Chaos declares no relationship or allegiance to Satan and doesn't have in its origin agency adversarial to God (Rumrich, 2014). God's appeasement of Chaos is therefore only to pacify the stormy waves, not foes at war—the arms he wields against the sea of troubles are not the holy terror and overpowering thunder that blast the rebel angels, but his ministering word and "golden compasses" (7, 225), meant to delimit, not dismember, the "dark materials" of a new world (2, 916). Admittedly, the Creator in *Paradise Lost* suppresses chaos, and circumscribes part of it with the golden compasses; his suppression is temporary, and once creation has occurred, chaos is left as boundless and wild as the Creator found it, available to substantiate alternatives to the established order (Rumrich, 1996).

Therefore, by nature, Chaos is not the enemy of God or creation, although he is tricked into helping Satan. As Rumrich (1995, 1040**)** astutely observes, if anyone in the poem desires the establishment of "some authoritarian order" and the lasting suppression of chaos, it is Satan. Satan has intriguing dynamics with Chaos, which shall

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account for Chaos's transition from the womb to grave and further illuminate its irresistible fascination for all of humanity.

Irresistible Entanglement with Chaos

In examining Satan's fight for supremacy against God, Peter Rudnytsky (2014) delineates a three-generational oedipal dynamic, observing that Earth takes the maternal position poised between Heaven and Hell, and is the object of the cosmic struggle pitting God the Father against his son Satan. This paper, however, drawing upon previous readings of Chaos as "God's womb", argues that Chaos serves more conspicuously as the feminine in the oedipal allegory, and its excessive indeterminacy has wild enchantment for Satan, Milton and perhaps the entire humanity.

Textual evidences abound in support of the formulation where Chaos takes the maternal position, and God and Satan that of father and son. God the creator "with mighty wings outspread / Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss / And mad'st [Chaos] pregnant" (1, 20-22). In an interconnected fashion, Satan conducts a violent sexual prying into Chaos as he "forced to ride / Th' untractable abyss, plunged in the womb / Of unoriginal Night and Chaos wild" (10, 475-477). Initially, Satan is captivated by the vast infinity of Chaos. His incestuous desire manifests itself as he fires himself out of the "hollow abyss" of hell into chaos and intrudes on "[t]he secrets of the hoary deep" (2, 518, 891) until yet another fiery blast propels him to reach the vicinity of the allegorical anarch. Continuing the pattern of uterine intrusion and explosive birth, Satan springs upward from chaos "like a pyramid of fire / Into the wild expanse" (2, 1013-14) and proceeds to violate a series of enclosed places (Rumrich, 1995). Such desire for the Womb can be alternatively construed as a strong atavistic compulsion, which impels Satan to return to the chaotic embryonic state (Eliade, 1963). It is in line with his promise to Chaos that he will restore the original darkness and bring "no mean recompense" to Chaos's "behoof" (2, 981-82). As he overtly claims, "my way / Lies through your spacious empire up to light" (2, 973-74), the gloomy bound of Chaos bordering on Heaven is the only way back to the blissful state.

What Satan desires is unmediated gratification in a world that returns to the raw. He yearns for an experience that is formless, infinite, and whole, and with his remembrance of being once fit to receive the blessings of unity and divine love, Satan the sufferer "venture[s] down / The dark descent" (3, 19-20) to the womb-like sanctuary and seeks for a restoration of the original equilibrium.

Apart from a perverted love for the mother, the vexed feelings of the son in an oedipal dynamic also comprise fierce enmity against the father. Satan's destructive inventions, for instance, betray his aspiration to usurp God's creative potency and to reconstruct Chaos. As noted by Smith (2017), since God's divine copulation with Chaos is essentially an act of ordering matter, the rearrangement of the maternal matter is an evil perversion of providence. Through his incestuous conquest, Satan desires to establish his own authoritarian order over Chaos (Rumrich, 1995), mining the "originals of nature in their crude / Conception," intruding on the womb of heaven and then perverting "with subtle art" the natural processes (6, 511-13). In building Pandemonium and producing gunpowder, the rebel angels manipulate the matter by melting, refining, reshaping and concocting, a sacrilegious appropriation of the fundamental substances. And the fabrication of the bridge over Chaos is an even more direct parody of God's divine creations. Creating from chaos as God did, Satan's offspring Sin and Death indiscriminately use whatever materials they encounter (Smith, 2017): "Solid or slimy, as in raging sea / Tossed up and down, together crowded drove / From each side shoaling towards the mouth of Hell" (10, 286-88). Death uses a "mace petrific" to fix the once indeterminate matter (Rumrich, 1995, 1040), now "[b]ound with Gorgonian rigor not to move," and secures the structure "with pins of adamant/ And Chains," making "all fast, too fast" (10, 294, 297, 318-19). The double-crossed Chaos can now never undo the division to his realm which is "disparted". As

Rumrich (1995) points out, the fall has imposed new order on Chaos: the tyrannically oppressive structure of evil. Since then, the evil energy is injected into the dark, wasteful deep, and Chaos is thereafter tinged with Satanic violence and havoc—no longer just the womb of nature, but perhaps her grave.

In his "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men", Freud (1925/1957, 172) addresses such "parental complex" exactly as Satan experiences it. He observes that when a child hears that he owes his life to his parents, "his feelings of tenderness unite with impulses which strive at power and independence, and they generate the wish to return this gift to the parents and to repay them with one of equal value." It is, as Satan wails, a "debt immense of endless gratitude, / So burdensome still paying, still to owe" (4, 52-53). Since Chaos substantiated God's creation and gave Satan his life, and it is not easy to find a substitute of equal value for this unique gift, the recompense takes on the impulse of giving her a "child" that has the greatest resemblance to himself. In other words, this ambivalence is particularly bound up with the son's vexed relationship with his father. In his fantasy, Satan is completely identifying himself with God: "All his instincts, those of tenderness, gratitude, lustfulness, defiance and independence, find satisfaction in the single wish to be his own father" (Freud, 1925/1957, 173). While Satan the child longs to take his father's place in his sexual role, Barnaby (2018, 187) notes that this might as well be interpreted as "a wish not to have any father at all." In other words, Satan disavows the fact that God gave him life by giving it to himself. By claiming "We know no time when we were not as now; / Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised" (5, 859-860), he is effectively manufacturing an ontological-temporal equality with God the father and refusing to acknowledge that he was created at all (Barnaby, 2018). Satan's incestuous alliance with Chaos, therefore, reflects his obsession with a dark, primeval power that sustains him in his rebellion against God.

Yet, Rumrich (1996, 82, 93) urges that it would be erroneous to account for the poem by mere reference to father-son jealousy, since "Milton's poetry is more remarkable for the emotional impact of its mothers than of its fathers" and "his response to female creative power amounts to more than our bias toward the superego and its punitive didacticism can allow." Indeed, through Satan's Oedipus Complex, the poet discloses the paradoxical nature of Chaos's maternity. The intriguing, bifurcated image of the mother manifests itself simultaneously as a generative cateress and a convulsively prolific source of threatening life. Otto Weininger (1906, 298) describes the ambivalent prospect of Chaos's maternal engulfment as "the alluring abyss of annihilation," reflecting a morbid obsession that the rebel angels frequently exhibit. Belial, for one, publicly expresses the fear of being "swallowed up and lost / In the wide womb of uncreated night" (2, 149-50); Satan also exploits his dread of the dark abyss in recounting the dangers that must be passed on the way to the new world: "the void profound / Of unessential Night receives him… / Wide gaping, and with utter loss of being / Threat'ns him, plung'd in that abortive gulf" (2, 438-41).

According to Rumrich (1996), such paralyzing anxiety was not without a basis in the poet's childhood experience of his own mother. Despite growing up in a patriarchal society where male supremacy and the restrictive denigration of women were systematic, Sara Milton held real though limited power within her household. Christopher Hill (1997, 119) points out that "the wife had a position of authority over servants, apprentices and children, though in subordination to her husband" and Parker (1996, 8) worries that "perhaps Milton as a boy spent too much time in the company of a doting mother.". For Sara, a long-awaited male child may have represented the means for realizing dreams of consequence that she as a woman in seventeenth-century England would not ordinarily have been permitted outside the household, even as she held sway within it. In such a situation, intense narcissistic involvement with one's child is often the result, for the birth of a precious male child serves as a spiritual

validation of the female (Rumrich, 1996). Although most parents have a degree of narcissistic interest in their children, the stakes seem to have been particularly high for young Milton. His modern biographers unanimously depict him as the focus of his parent's attention, hopes, and even religious ambitions. For children molded under such circumstances, the pressure can seem unendurable. On the one hand, the grandiose expectation might have been positive; on the other hand, the child absorbs the mother's unrealistic hopes and any ambivalence as toxic nourishment, the consequence of which can be a deep uncertainty over one's own boundaries coupled with the conviction that one must fulfill all of the mother's desires and expectations. The engulfing maternity that Sara Milton embodies much resembles Milton's representation of Chaos as the "phylogenetic foundation" for creation (Rumrich, 1996, 81). Though Chaos is under God's paternal control, its strong mystical compulsion keeps hauling the individuals back to the primordial oceanic state which threatens to annihilate all identities. Nonetheless, Chaos's wish to restore its original darkness through Satan is not unwarranted—it mirrors the female's yearning for an expression of and a cure for her own frustration in an oppressive patriarchal society.

Correspondingly, the rebel angels' anxious entanglement with Chaos also reflects humanity's deep-seated, ambivalent fascination with the feminine procreative-destructive power. On the one hand, maternal support, generalizable to nature itself, is necessary; on the other, enveloping care and affection threaten with oblivion one's identity and sense of self-determination (Rumrich, 1996). Psychoanalytic rendition as such demonstrates once again Chaos's essence as a realm of both the womb and grave. Thus, Chaos can provide the matter for a landscape of bliss or of horrors, but either way, the place burgeons with rampant vigor. It is, as Milton termed it, infinite, limitless, boundless, and eternal, like an imagination based on matter and ungoverned by reason. The excessiveness symbolized on the human level is Freud's **(**1915**)** concept of the mysterious unconscious. As an essential stratum of the human psyche, this fascinating underworld is a generator of fantasies—it has a similar imaginative tenor of chaos-based procreative power, which might be described as nightmarish, or even violently psychotic (Rumrich, 1996) —without any rational bounds, the unconscious functions as the dangerously tantalizing liminal space between life and death. By leaning into the unconscious, human beings participate vicariously in the mixed state of life-in-death and death-in-life, overcoming the circumscribed scope of postlapsarian binaries. It is as if they gain access to the primitive Chaos, where all beings have yet an oceanic union with the divine potential in its rawest state. The chaotic potency in this sense is a wild ecstatic celebration of irrationality—a frenzy of self-forgetting in which the self gives way to a primordial unity where individuals are at one with others, where God is all in all.

The allegorical presentation of Chaos as a tempestuous netherworld seems to manifest its hostility towards God. However, as Rumrich (1996) notes, God's aptitude for indeterminacy and flexibility is also an aspect of theodicy, and humanity's true free will can only be embodied in this unpredictability:

> Indeed, the psychological correlative of this substantial, divine capacity for otherness is freedom of the sake of his sovereignty and omnipotence, must always have access to the realm of possibility, to the well of new life. And will, the foundation of Milton's ethical beliefs at least since the composition of *Areopagitica*. Milton's deity, for this condition means that God must also remain essentially passive and dark in one aspect of his being. (Rumrich, 1996, 145)

The confusing incoherence of God's actions, such as entrusting Sin with the key to hell and setting free Satan multiple times—demonstrates one of the basic principles of Milton's theology: things are constitutionally unpredictable and resistant to easy explanations. This is because God, as the highest

authority and highest power in the universe, makes decisions according to his own absolutely free will. Against such a backdrop, human beings are also not expected to appeal servilely to the divine law. The psychological diversity and complexity of mankind allow for free rational choices that come with emotional honesty, which, while conforming to the divine will, are by no means simple obedience. The dialectical relation between reason and irrationality, fixed fate, and free will are thus combined in one single proposition, i.e., Chaos represents a principle of indeterminacy and randomness essential to God, hence the whole universe.

In all, by placing Chaos within a more capacious psychological framework, this part of the article examines the convolutions of Satan's Oedipus Complex and Milton's fraught childhood relationship with his mother. A juxtaposition of the two showcases Chaos's transition from good to "evil" and indicates a dialectic tension between life and death drives—an internal tumult raging in all humanity. The proposition can then be extended to suggest that the elemental essence of Chaos suffuses the cosmos and spellbinds all beings with generative-destructive duality, which is also intrinsic to God.

Conclusion

The significance of Chaos proves "both cosmically general and humanly specific" now that its multilayered implications have been expounded on (Rumrich, 1996, 113). Theologically/cosmologically, chaos is the fundamental principle underlying Milton's monistic universe. As an essential part of a hermaphrodite God, the existence of Chaos attests to Milton's doctrine that God creates out of himself (*ex deo*). It is the good "one first matter" that participates in all creative production, and its chaotic indeterminacy is proven not only justifiable but necessary—for according to Baconian philosophies, an ambiguous interim knowledge opens up infinite access to the universal dimension. How come then, that the copious material basis of life is derogated to a wild presence that threatens the divine order? This pertains to the political aspect of the issue. Monarchs at the time of the Civil War are strongly antirevolutionary; they deplored all consequences of insurrections and attributed malignancy to Chaos the "ancient disorder". However, such oppression runs counter to Milton's hatred of tyranny in all its forms and his unwavering commitment to human freedom. He, therefore, ascribes the authoritarian propensity to the devilish power, Satan, and through his Oedipus Complex, unravels the duality of Chaos as both a generative cateress and an engulfing maternal power, which has its biographical source in Milton's relationship with his own mother. Psychologically, Chaos epitomizes human beings' unconsciousness, wherein the dialectic tension between life and death drives is deeply ingrained. The "pull of paradise" urges a final dissolution in the inorganic matter and a permanent surcease from the pain of living. Nonetheless, such revertive desire to Chaos is not so much a wish to be annihilated as to transcend all boundaries and return to that blissful prelapsarian existence when death was not yet introduced to the world, and when humanity had yet a direct connection with the all-encompassing divine who has absolute freedom.

While the discussion of Chaos seems to be limited to a religious framework, it offers great inspiration to modern science, sociology, and non-religious philosophies in general. For contemporary science, chaos is now regarded as "order's precursor and partner rather than its opposite" (Hayles, 2018, 9); it is seen not as a disorderly space to be replaced, but as an ever-returning dimension of the cosmos. Modern communication theory has similarly placed a positive value on entropy and fuzziness, finding in disorder and equivocation the condition of informational complexity and richness (Rumrich, 1996). Even in the midst of ordered lives, human beings continually experience the chaotic, in the wilderness of the wind in a storm, in the untamable violence of the sea, and in the dark and lonely hours of the night. Perhaps, as Deleuze (1986, 81) repeatedly stresses, in becoming post-human, we should sustain that vision of the

"iridescent chaos of a world before man," when there is direct access to "things in themselves". Chaos then lends us a transcendental perception of the nature of things beyond all boundaries.

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