THE IMPLICATIONS OF CHAOS IN PARADISE LOST

THE IMPLICATIONS OF CHAOS IN PARADISE LOST

by

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ABSTRACT

I plan to trace the implications of Chaos in Paradise Lost as a place, an illuminating allegorical figure, and as a constant fact of fallen reality. "The heav'ns and earth / Rose out of Chaos", says Milton (I, 9-10), and I intend to establish its cosmological reference points before investigating Chaos, as it is presented in the poem, with its frightening extrapolations for man's fallen state. By recognizing the enormity of Chaos we gain a sense of its overwhelming presence, and a heightened awareness of its everthreatening encroachment on our fallen world.

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So, when the compast course of the universe
In six and thirtie thousand yeares is ronne,
The bands of th' elements shall backe reverse
To their first discord, and be quite undonne:
The seeds, of which all things at first were bred,
Shall in great Chaos wombe againe be hid.

-- Spenser
(from The Ruines of Rome)

INTRODUCTION

The first book of Paradise Lost "hastes into the midst of things" by revealing the thunderstruck state of the fallen angels in their hell, arbitrarily reported in the Argument as lying in "a place of utter darkness, fitliest called Chaos."[1] In cosmological studies the place is rarely ignored but, after brief mention, glossed over as a self-described vastness brilliantly outshone in significance by heaven, the starry spheres, and even hell's visible darkness. Chaos is tantalizingly referred to as "the palpable obscure" (II, 406), yet its manifest presence is not overshadowed by its usually assumed obscurity. Descriptions of chaos recur throughout Paradise Lost, in fact, and as a concept it is mentioned in every book but IV and IX.

The palpability of chaos may be a part of the critical problem; it is always too much of a "feel", a gleaning, rather than something substantial in the reader's mind, like God's ordered creations of heaven and our world. To trace its broader, and what I consider overwhelming, implications in terms of word choice, diction, and imagery within the poem requires what has been depreciatingly referred to by a former investigator as a type of monomania.[2] But it is valid to focus specifically on chaos because while we may "feel"

it raging eternally in the background, it is often subdued by the elevated patterning of Milton's epic. We may derive a false sense of security from this, and I intend to show that chaos' ominous pressure at the floodgate of every caesura is eventually enough to allow its seepage into both the poem and Adam's fallen reality.

Chaos is here. It is the largest part of what must be accepted along with the Fall. It pervades all the confusion, mishap, apprehension and disappointment that make up life in the postlapsarian world, as much as it is everpresent in Paradise Lost. We journey with the Fiend as he attempts to navigate pure confusion, and even meet the strange allegorical entity Chaos is, but as a backdrop to the cosmic presentation of man's fall chaos finally comes to dominate the stage in metaphors of violence, argument and damnable circumstance--and as a fact of fallen life.

In Paradise Lost we witness the incessant erosion and subtle breaking-down of an imposed order; what was ordered becomes disordered, what was solid slips away, what was good becomes tinged by discord and disruption. Man is seen to acquire a new status whereby he exercises his free will and, in so doing, leaves himself vulnerable to chance and failure. In bringing about this state of chaos Satan acts as agent.

The poet is often seen as God's amanuensis who draws the order of his poetic expression from the chaos of his thought. Typically

the poet's creativity is seen as a metaphor for God's act of creation, and Milton emphasizes this in his declared intention to "justify the ways of God to men" (I, 26), but what about the poet's personal circumstances? In her biography, Dora Raymond remarks rather starkly, "Chaos is introduced, but it is not the chaos that gives birth to dancing stars. It is the chaos of negation, a foil for luminous heaven. To Milton, chaos was fearful."[3] Chaos is not meant to be taken as a fanciful topsy-turvy world of spontaneity, however, and we have reason to believe that what was chaos to Milton would be execrable in any time.

Masson uses the living memory of Edward Phillips in supporting a picture of the fugitive rebel in his blindness shuttled confusedly through the alleys behind Bartholomew Close, searching out sanctuary in fear for his life.[4] But while we may ponder the bewildered state of the blind subversive, now condemned, now absolved, his books burned and his financial state all but ruined,[5] the best biographical support for Milton's personal sense of chaos is to be found in Paradise Lost where he invokes the muses at the outset of book VII:

> . . . though fall'n on evil days,
> On evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues;
> In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,
> And solitude.
>
> (VII, 25-8)

In fathoming the depths of chaos in Paradise Lost, I plan to follow the poem's wording closely. What refers to chaos is often seen

to refer to hell, and there can be little doubt but that the demons are in a state of complete astonishment (II, 420-3). This sinister quality of chaos must be studied in understanding its grip on the poem, but is chaos to be considered purely evil? We are constantly presented the tumult of war, and we have known for some time that "war is hell", but what of its significance as an object lesson on the nature of chaos? I also wonder if the chaotic nature of the fallen human appetite is something whetted in hell; and what of the terrible dismay of the banished Adam and Eve? is everpresent chaos a fit punishment for their misdeeds? Was there ever an example they could have followed to thwart the encroachment of confusion?

My study will follow Satan as he moves into Paradise and brings chaos with him. As soon as he arrives, order begins to fragment in subtle but damning ways, illuminating the fact that Paradise Lost, as "the ultimate plot in which all other stories are episodes,"[6] is a movement from utter chaos to perfect order, to an order with chaos diffused mysteriously throughout. We are left, finally, with chaos as an exasperating fact of life ever-ready to distort, scatter and, indeed, shape reality in its own image whenever even a minor lapse in order will allow it.

NOTES

1. John Milton, "Paradise Lost" in The Complete Poetical Works of John Milton, ed. Douglas Bush, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), p. 211. All line references and word usage in quoted passages will fall into conformity with the Bush edition.

2. Robert M. Adams, "A Little Look Into Chaos" in Illustrious Evidence, ed. Earl Miner, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 71-89.

3. Dora N. Raymond, Oliver's Secretary, (New York: Minton Balch & Co., 1932), p. 249.

4. David Masson, "How Did Milton Escape?" in The Life of John Milton vol. VI, (London: Macmillan & Co., 1880), pp. 184-92.

5. Masson, Life, VI, 444-5.

6. C.S. Lewis, A Preface to Paradise Lost, (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 132.

I

THE PALPABLE OBSCURE

First, we must establish cosmological coordinates. The part chaos played in the actual creation is of utmost importance in understanding exactly what chaos is. After determining this, we may be able to fathom its qualities within the poem. Biblical signposts may be of help in our investigations.

The opening verses of Genesis present both a sense of desolation, "And the earth was without form and void: and darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Gen. 1:2), and violent upheaval, "God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters" (Gen. 1:7). The "deep" and "waters" of Genesis were ideas that the early church fathers saw fit to identify with the expressive, if somewhat nebulous, Greek concept of chaos.

In its strictest sense, Chaos is a pagan entity first seen in Hesiod's Theogony where it etymologically expresses the idea of "yawn", "gulf", or "abyss". The word stands antithetical to the Greek kosmos which means order. Order, and Milton corroborates this, is drawn out of chaos, as Hesiod originally pronounced in his listing of the gods: "First of all there came Chaos."[1]

In his article Walter Clyde Curry notes: "Milton could easily have found philosophic support for his fusion of these occult powers--introduced primarily for poetic or dramatic reasons--with a cosmogony which, at first glance, might seem alien to them",[2] but Milton's conception is a more elaborate fleshing-out and allegorization of the shady mystical concept of classical tradition, bearing constant reference to the root meaning of "chasm" or "abyss".

In Paradise Lost the term "abyss" is tied to chaos throughout, but it would be heretical to maintain the existence of anything antedating God. In fact the very introduction of such a blatantly pagan notion only serves to complicate matters alongside the assurance of God's infinity:

> . . . God is light,
> And never but in unapproachèd light
> Dwelt from eternity.
> (III, 3-5)

Yet Milton, in his Investigations Into Christian Doctrine, finds it preposterous that God could have created out of nothing. There had to be some matter upon which He exercised his omnipotent ordering power. To "order" something directly implies a state of disorder before the fact. That disorder is, of course, chaos, and chaos is something--an infinitely unorganized entity of darkness lacking the gift of created forms.

But, that state of disorder had to proceed from God or chaos

would be synonymous with God, and God reduced in significance to a Platonic demiurge. The notion of God possessing a "chaotic" capability is commensurate with the notion of his infinity, however, as Milton points out:

> . . . if matter did not exist from eternity, it is not very easy to see where it originally came from. There remains only this solution, especially if we allow ourselves to be guided by scripture, namely that all things come from God. [3]

Milton would, no doubt, be familiar with the thought of the ninth-century theological philosopher Scotus Erigena, who argued against the idea of God's creation out of nothing thus:

> The formulation ex nihilo, . . . does not mean that creation is from nothingness (ex nihil nihilo), but rather that it is from "no thing". There is only one being that is not a thing or object, that exists within and of itself, and that is God. Creation, ex nihilo, therefore, when rightly understood means creation ex Deo. [4]

This immeasurable and boundless deep we are to refer to as chaos, then, is seen to follow upon God as his first work. The infinity of chaos appears to be strictly of space, though, as it is an unformed entity wanting the dignity of anything ordered about it. In its blurred and mutable formlessness, it is like the thought process itself, the preconceived abstraction that formulates, however discordantly, before being organized and articulated. This idea was not unheard of in Milton's time, as Nicholas Byfield remarked in 1626:

> God created all things. . . according to the Idea of all things in his owne minde: for as the

> Carpenter first conceives the frame in his head,
> and then builds according to that Idea in his minde:
> so did God build the world according to the eternall
> patterne which was in God's minde.[5]

Chaos is always indistinct, something forbidding expressed necessarily in negatives as

> the hoary deep, a dark
> Illimitable ocean without bound,
> Without dimension; where length, breadth, and highth,
> And time and place are lost.
> (II, 891-4)

It is a "something", but a something in an insubstantial state of flux, described as fluid but complicated by being devoid of space, time and size. The requisite components for ordered forms and essences are there, but are lost, absorbed into the infinite melting-pot of confusion that chaos appears to be.

It is out of this "melting-pot" that God manipulates the raw materials for creation, yet Milton refuses to attribute anything of the corporeal to God. The problem then becomes, how does matter (even the unformed matter of chaos) derive from the essential spirit of God? It was a problem that puzzled the patristic philosophers, but Milton finds it to be a more legitimate question than to ponder the possible emergence of matter ex nihilo. Milton caps the problem by stating:

> . . . spirit, being the more excellent substance, virtually, as they say, and eminently contains within itself what is clearly the inferior substance; in the same way as the spiritual and rational faculty contains the corporeal, that is, the sentient and vegetative faculty. For not even God's virtue and efficiency could

> have produced bodies out of nothing (as it is vulgarly believed he did) unless there had been some bodily force in his own substance, for no one can give something he has not got.[6]

Though Milton asserts the transcendence of God, he is willing to attribute to Him a "bodily power". Presumably this is the power invested in the Filial Godhead, or Word, that performs creation. God salutes him:

> . . . Son who art alone
> My Word, my wisdom, and effectual might.
> (III, 169-70)

We may corroborate this by reading in the New Testament, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1), or hearing Raphael report to Adam of

> The King of Glory in his powerful Word
> And Spirit coming to create new worlds.
> (VII, 208-9)

This is also the "bodily power" that allows God to create man in his own image, or allows the Son later to take on the form of man in the person of Jesus Christ. The scholastic terms "virtually" and "eminently" quoted above from Milton's Christian Doctrine refer us back to Aristotle's doctrine of potentiality which, in his Generation of Animals, sounds close to what Milton is saying: "Whatever is formed. . . , say X, is formed by something which is X in actuality out of something which is X potentially"[7]--and it is a feature of God's omnipotence, by definition, to have the potential for any thing.

It is through this potential, this "bodily power", that God is able to create out of the chaos of his own invention; to organize forms and essences out of the confusion of his raw materials. This omnipotence of God, combined with his dark unformed material-at-hand appears to be illumined in the Old Testament: "I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness" (Isaiah 45:6-7). From this it would appear that the thought of one twentieth-century theologian treats only part of the entire creative package: "The idea of Creation expresses the truth that God assumes complete and sole responsibility for the existence of the world."[8]

Not only does God create the world, but he creates all that is not the world too, and his responsibility for the very existence of chaos and darkness can be supported explicitly by the words of the apocryphal writers, considered by Milton as "closest to the scriptures in authority",[9] where we read of "thy almighty hand that made the world of matter without form" (Book of Wisdom 11:17), or in 2 Maccabees 7:28, "God made the earth and all that is therein of things that were not." In these instances "matter without form" and "things that were not" appear synonymous. Neither case describes an ordered entity, but rather furnishes us with a fairly accurate assessment of chaos.

On the other hand, and in keeping with Milton's opinion of creation ex Deo, perhaps the referents above point us even prior to

chaos toward an entity that is so ineffable as to be beyond sensible description, as in the Neoplatonic Proclus, whom Curry sees

> celebrat[ing] the emanation of a multifarious reality from a primal Unity sometimes called "the One" or "the Good". This principle of all things, God, is so ineffable that he is beyond all knowledge and comprehension; he is the first cause of all causes, the supreme unity of all unities, super-essential, transcending all being, the "thrice unknown darkness" to be venerated in silence.[10]

In these terms we should recall Erigena's proposition, quoted earlier, that God is the only being that is not a thing or object--He is beyond these categories. To Moses on Mount Horeb, God inexplicitly identifies himself as "I AM" (Exodus 3:14), while St. John the Divine relates, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8).

Chaos is an eternally void abyss. Its state of pure confusion is out there beyond the scope of our understanding. In its dark recesses are the shuffled blueprints God will arrange to create the order of Adam and Eve's paradisal existence. Upon gaining the attention of chaos, God commands, "Light!" and creation begins. Uriel in book III lays claim to an eyewitness account of the proceedings; he says:

> I saw when at his word the formless mass,
> This world's material mold, came to a heap:
> Confusion heard his voice, and wild uproar
> Stood ruled, stood vast infinitude confined;

> Till at his second bidding darkness fled,
> Light shone, and order from disorder sprung.
> (III, 708-13)

The notion of chaos as "this world's material mold" is in conformity with the idea of chaos as raw material existing independent from, but inferior to, God. Light is the perfect metaphor for order and creation, as the vast parts of chaos not illuminated remain utterly void; a dark waste without the divine gift of created forms of light. As soon as forms are bestowed, order is established and is subtracted from chaos. This is made clear at the very outset of Paradise Lost: "In the beginning... the heav'ns and earth / Rose out of Chaos" (I, 8-9).

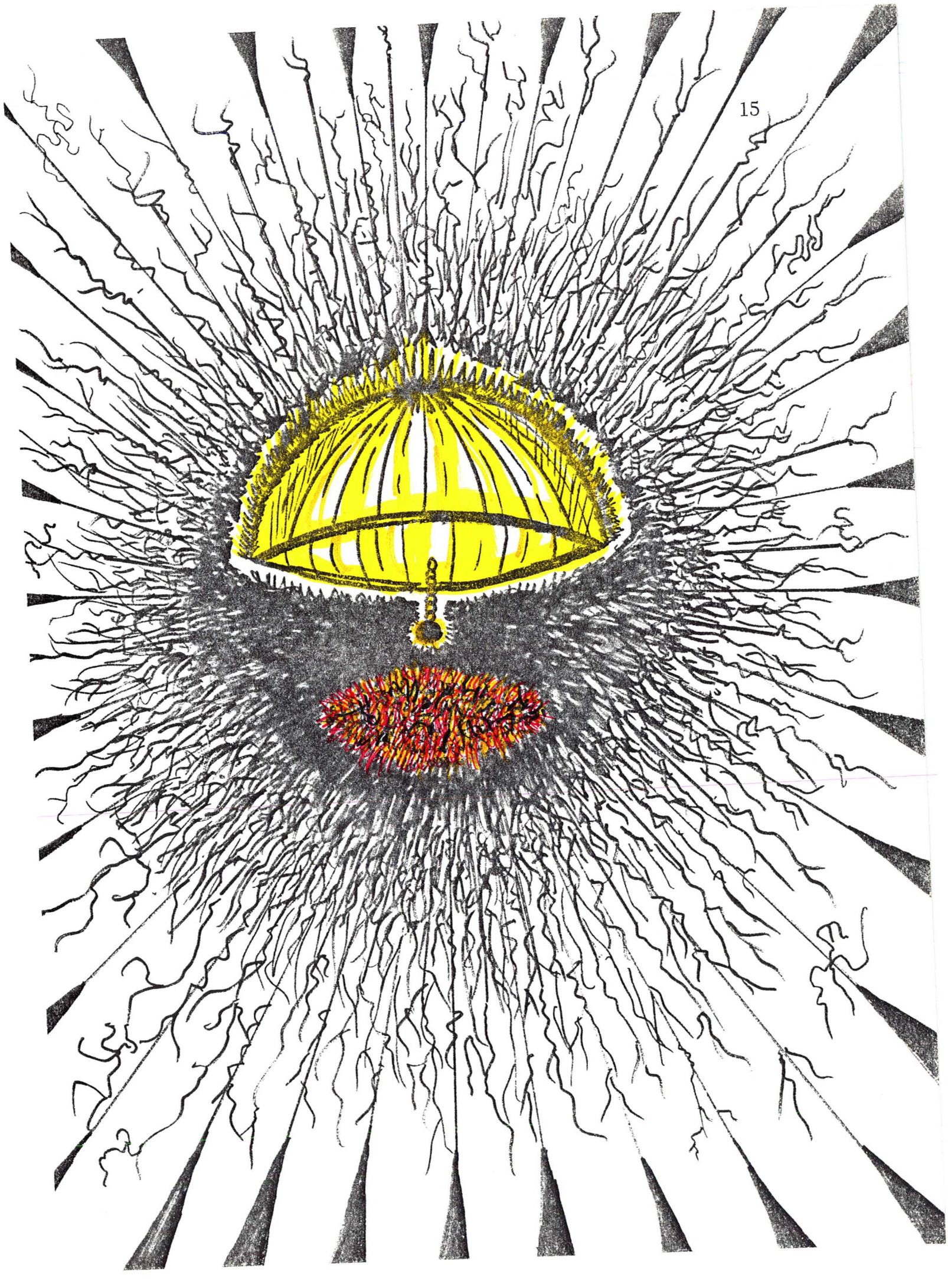
To gain a sense of Milton's cosmology, we must be willing to suspend all notion of distance. We are now dealing in a series of infinities. Chaos is the enormous void through which the rebel angels fell to "bottomless perdition" (I, 47), while chaos itself is "illimitable" and "without bound" (II, 892). We bring a perceived knowledge of God's infinite quality to the poem, where it is constantly reinforced, and even compared with chaos. In his own words God points out, "Boundless the deep, because I am who fill / Infinitude" (VII, 168-9), making it apparent that, when compared, chaos may be immeasurable, but omnificent infinity seems reserved for God.

We need only to look up on a starlit night sky to gain a sense of our notion of infinity, but it would seem that God's infinity includes all of chaos, heaven, hell and, indeed our "infinite" universe. It is

true that he mathematically--with all the images of precision reserved for such a science, and in conformity with Proverbs 8:27--"set a compass upon the face of the depth"--divides the world from chaos, declaring, "Thus far extend, thus far thy bounds, / This be thy just circumference, O World!" (VII, 230-1) yet what God encloses is considered infinity to us. Everything we can sense, imagine or hope to experience in mortal form is contained by our mortal notion of infinity; all else is reported through metaphor for our benefit by Raphael. All the one hundred billion galaxies that modern astronomers are certain exist, are out there in what we consider infinity; it's just that our sense of infinity is so much smaller than God's.

The top of the diagram (next page), then, has the light hell cannot hope for which is the "vault of heav'n" (I, 669), the highest of created things. At the bottom of created things hell exists as a "huge convex of fire" (II, 434). Man's universe hangs from heaven by a "golden chain" which, Douglas Bush notes, "had since antiquity been an especially Neoplatonic symbol of divine order in the universe, of the bond between heaven and earth."[11] The remainder of the diagram is utter chaos.

It is of note that the Neoplatonic chain is not attached directly to Earth, however, but rather to the starry universe, and in particular to the equivalent of the Ptolemaic primum mobile. This "firm opacous globe" (III, 418), in Milton's terms, gives our universe its shape in



God's eyes, and is the view Satan has as he approaches man's universe through chaos. "This pendant world" (II, 1052) that he sees is as the apparent size of a star in the sky compared to the moon, while our earth is inside, small as

> a spot, a grain,
> An atom, with the firmament compared
> And all her numbered stars, that seem to roll
> Spaces incomprehensible.
> (my emphasis; VIII, 17-20)

Note Adam's use of "seem" above. What "seems" incomprehensible to us is just a reflection of our limitations. In our mortal state it is impossible to grasp the magnitude of the distances involved. It is with this in mind that the "sociable spirit", namely Raphael, offers both the geocentric and heliocentric theories of universal organization to Adam by way of explanation in book VIII. This apparent waffling on the part of the angel is not so much Milton's refusal to commit himself, as it is Raphael's way of showing that either explanation is suitable for our meagre understanding, confined inside the starry universe. How things actually are organized in the total view of "heaven, hell, earth, chaos, all" is something understood only by God, as is evinced by Uriel's powerful question concerning the Creator and his creations:

> . . . what created mind can comprehend
> Their number, or the wisdom infinite
> That brought them forth, but hid their causes deep?
> (III, 705-7)

In view of this Raphael, through unmalicious subterfuge, serves to further complicate and revere an already ineffable deity.

NOTES

1. Hesiod, Theogony in Hesiod, ed. and trans. Richmond Lattimore (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1959), p. 130, l.116.

2. Walter Clyde Curry, "Milton's Chaos and Old Night", JEGP 46 (1947):39.

3. John Milton, "Of The Creation" in Complete Prose Works of John Milton vol. VI, ed. Maurice Kelley (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1953), I, chap. vii, p. 307.

4. Quoted in J. H. Adamson's "The Creation" in Bright Essence, ed. C. A. Patrides et al. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1971), p. 86.

5. Quoted in C. A. Patrides' Milton and The Christian Tradition, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 34.

6. Milton, Complete Prose vol. VI, I, chap. vii, p. 309.

7. Aristotle, Generation of Animals, ed. and trans. A. L. Peck, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1943), p. 153, II, i, 21f.

8. Emil Brunner, "The Creator and His Creation" in The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption vol. II, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), p. 10.

9. Milton, Complete Prose VI, I, chap. vii, p. 306.

10. Curry, JEGP, p. 39.

11. Bush, ed. Complete Poetical Works of Milton, p. 254, note to III, 1005.

II

INTESTINE BROILS

The one sure quality of chaos seems to be its unceasing confusion of elements. They cluster in the tumult of endless conflict instead of combining in formative order, as Uriel reports they did at creation: "Swift to their several quarters hasted then / The cumbrous elements, earth, flood, air, fire" (III, 714-15). Raphael speaks also of a joining of "like things to like" (VII, 240) when he explains creation to Adam, but the clarity of classical antecedents may more evenly shade our conceptions, as they must surely have defined Milton's.

Plato, in his "grain-cleaning" analogy, describes the sorting of what he calls "kinds" as if they were in a winnowing basket:

> . . . the four kinds were shaken by the Recipient, which itself was in motion like an instrument for shaking, and it separated the most unlike kinds farthest apart from one another, and thrust the most alike closest together; whereby the different kinds came to have different regions, even before the ordered whole consisting of them came to be. Before that, all these kinds were without proportion or measure. Fire, water, earth, and air possessed indeed some vestiges of their own nature, but were altogether in such a condition as we should expect for anything when deity is absent from it. [1]

In more violent terms, and without the deific underpinning, Lucretius presents the elements in "a fresh-formed storm,... whose discord was waging war and confounding interspaces." He goes on to report:

> ... mass parts began to fly off hither and thither, and like things to unite with like, and so to unfold a world, and to sunder its members and dispose its great parts, that is, to mark off the high heaven from the earth, and the sea by itself, so that it might spread out with its moisture kept apart, and likewise the fires of the sky by themselves, unmixed and kept apart. [2]

We appreciate the broadly descriptive terms used by the pagan commentators in presenting the germinal state of elemental formation. There can be no accident that Milton's succinct, perhaps purposely thrifty, descriptions of the same can be closely paralleled. But while the prevalent simile of war and storm-fury will have broader implications for the chaotic grip on reality later, here it is better to focus on the "embryon atoms" (II, 900) of the elements in their confused conflict.

The modern atomic theory dates only from about 1805, but we would be a little hasty in ascribing prescient genius to Milton on this point. He is actually referring back to ancient philosophers who held that matter consisted of tiny indivisible particles, too small to be seen. They called them atoms, and Lucretius, in book II of De Rerum Natura, goes on at length concerning their properties. No doubt Milton

holds this in mind in his descriptions of their qualities and violence.

The attention Milton pays to these tiny particles accumulates for effect at the end of book I where the demons are reduced to the significance of swarming bees so as to "pack" into Pandemonium. In this vignette the apparent confusion we witness in the survivors of a kicked ant-hill, or in the random quality of city traffic viewed from above, is exemplified. In fact, in "pandemonium" a new word is added to the English language synonymous with chaos or riot.

The reductive intent of this technique allows us to digest great quantities of number and confusion, but has another telling facet. There is a satiric quality about the "smallest dwarfs, in narrow room" (I, 779) that is to be seen at its fullest in the burlesqued presentation of the little people of Lilliput in Swift's Gulliver's Travels. This is married with a sinister aftertaste derived in the simile of the elves that some rustic simpleton "sees, / Or dreams he sees" (I, 783-4). The narrative voice is not exercising an elitist smugness here, but rather an indictment of the distortion and chimera that attends the disordered rationale of superstition. In classical terms, the introduction of elves is particularly apposite as, Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream notwithstanding, fairies were traditionally seen as sinister tricksters rather than the modern conception of delightful "little people".

Neither is ordered thought seen to be the rallying point of the

"great consult" that occurs in book II. The demons argue with each other, while a perpetually disgusted Satan sits disinterestedly twiddling his thumbs. Moloch epitomizes the blustering anarchy prevalent in the fallen angels. What is particularly fearful is his complete disregard for any consequence. The narrative voice points out that Moloch,

> rather than be less
> Cared not to be at all; with that care lost
> Went all his fear: of God, or hell, or worse
> He recked not.
> (II, 47-50)

Moloch simply doesn't give a damn, damned as he is, but what could possibly be worse than hell that he is willing to risk it? Surely his refusal to consider any consequence beyond momentary desire makes him a totally confounded spirit. At the mercy of chance, he will fragment as an entity, and that is the danger his nihilism leaves him subject to.

Belial argues against Moloch's purple rage with a vile insidiousness that, on the surface, may appear to be discretionary reason but

> all was false and hollow, though his tongue
> Dropped manna, and could make the worse appear
> The better reason, to perplex and dash
> Maturest counsels.
> (II, 112-15)

His suggestions run closer to Satan's already determined strategy, later proclaimed by Beelzebub, the Fiend's "companion dear" (V, 673).

In Belial's deception is to be seen Satan's early admission of hypocritical technique, when he says, "our better part remains / To work in close design, by fraud or guile" (I, 645-6).

While Moloch and others like him are made "more fierce by despair" (II, 45), the subtler, and infinitely more dangerous fiends adopt the Satanic dictum, "Evil, be thou my good" (IV, 110). In this case evil is not seen as a mere absence of good, but is totally misconstrued in the demons' disturbed minds. When evil becomes anyone's exemplar of good, that person is perverted and, when complicated by a hypocritical cover, totally unpredictable:

> For neither man nor angel can discern
> Hypocrisy, the only evil that walks
> Invisible.
>
> (III, 682-4)

Recruiting chaotic concepts like discord and confusion will be integral to Satan's clever technique of deception, while exchanging good for evil is at once an act of chaos. But good and evil are "amorally" intertwined in chaos, while they are "immorally" confused in hell. The demons take active delight in their misrepresentations, while, in chaos, the scattered components of good and evil mix in oblivious confusion.

Neither hell nor chaos is a pleasant place, clamor and dissension being integral to both. Hell is characterized by "fierce extremes, extremes by change more fierce" (II, 599), while in chaos "chance

governs all" (II, 910). The "doleful shades" and "utter darkness" (II, 65, 76) of hell are counterpointed by the fact that chaos is the seat of "eldest Night", and her dominion is darkness. Hell is an organized entity carved out of chaos where all the odious elements that make up hell are to be found, but does this mean chaos is intrinsically evil?

There is no doubt that chaos is threatened by the nature of form, so it is certain to be inimical to the good of order. The evil substance of chaos, however, is better considered a type of accidental evil in that it rages equally against heaven, earth or hell, ordered states that they are. Curry points out, "The dark materials of chaos can be considered good only in the sense that they are ordained by the Almighty Maker as necessary to his creation of the world."[3] Good and evil swirl with equal anarchy in chaos, while the darkness and mystery of the place make it necessarily suspect in any conception of good.

In fact, because of its sheer unpredictability chaos is dangerous. Even the mighty Satan hesitates before venturing out into the wild abyss. This contrasts God's ability to quell chaos at will:

> "Silence, ye troubled waves, and thou deep, peace,"
> Said then th'omnific Word, "your discord end."
> (VII, 216-17)

Only God is capable of pacifying chaos, as only he is capable of creating out of it. To anyone else it is overpowering, but God is

able to manipulate it by virtue of his total omnipotence, as Mammon candidly declares:

> How oft amidst
> Thick clouds and dark doth heav'n's all-ruling Sire
> Choose to reside, his glory unobscured,
> And with the majesty of darkness round
> Covers his throne; from whence deep thunders roar,
> Must'ring their rage, and heav'n resembles hell!
> (II, 263-8)

This appears to be scripturally supported in Exodus 19:16-20 where God descends in a cloud of thunder. Elsewhere, in Deuteronomy 4:11-12, we read of God's fire, cloud and thick darkness, while the psalmist proclaims, "the darkness and the light are both alike to thee" (Psalm 139:12). We see, then, that while chaos possesses the overwhelming power of darkness and chance, God possesses the overwhelming power of totality plus order, as he himself says, "necessity and chance / Approach not me, and what I will is fate" (VII, 172-3).

Milton does give chaos due deference, though. In his subdued terms chaos is "no narrow frith" (II, 919), and we have had it well established that its attendant noise and tumult is utterly confounding. Hell is "restive" torment by contrast. The traveller through chaos can expect turbulence, but only superhuman strength (Satan is a spirit after all) could keep one on course:

> . . . nigh foundered on he fares,
> Treading the crude consistence, half on foot,
> Half flying. . .
> so eagerly the Fiend
> O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,

> With head, hands, wings, or feet pursues his way,
> And swims or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies.
> (II, 940-2; 947-50)

Besides cleverly aligning himself with Proverbs 4:19, "The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble", Milton's insistent listing of nouns and verbs above enhances the confusion of place with the helplessness of Satan's scrambling contortions through space. It is not unlike the loss of horizontal stability in a steeply banked and diving airplane. The technique Milton uses is reminiscent of the opening descriptions of chaos as a dimensionless ocean "where length, breadth, and heighth, / And time and place are lost" (II, 893-4), or in seeing the warring atoms, "Light-armed or heavy, sharp, smooth, swift, or slow, / Swarm populous, unnumbered as the sands" (II, 902-3). It also looks forward to similar word use in describing the scattered condition of the purgatorial misguided in the Paradise of Fools:

> . . . then might ye see
> Cowls, hoods and habits with their wearers tossed
> And fluttered into rags; then relics, beads,
> Indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls,
> The sport of winds.
> (III, 489-93)

In these examples chaos is presented through massive cataloguing, the enjambment of which makes the lines appear too small to contain themselves. The resultant spillover of listed qualities implies random inclusion relieved only momentarily by a caesura

before the one-syllable clamor begins again, to be finally subdued in an abstract blanketing concept like "unnumbered as the sands" or "the sport of winds." The relief, however, is merely directive, and the confused listing continues to echo as we perceive the deeper "anti-structure" of chaos in terms of the entire poem.

This "antistructure" reveals a tension between what appears logical through poetic treatment, and the actual illogic of it all through the intervention of chance. It is first seen in Satan's chance survival while running the cosmic gauntlet of chaos:

> . . . all unawares
> Flutt'ring his pennons vain plumb down he drops
> Ten thousand fadom deep, and to this hour
> Down had been falling, had not by ill chance
> The strong rebuff of some tumultuous cloud
> Instinct with fire and niter hurried him
> As many miles aloft.
>
> (II, 932-8)

Through Milton's perfect metre, we see that "ill chance" is the operational term. It is only through this type of "chance" that Satan's survival allows him to continue on his desperate mission. We see, then, that man's fall, though foreseen by God (III, 117ff.), is ultimately by chance too because, as the above passage clearly points out, Satan could still be struggling pointlessly in unbounded chaos, had not the chance combination of nitre and fire, in the right place at the right time, exploded to lift him on his way to the feet of Chaos. His arrival is through sheer coincidence--divinely

providential to be sure, but understood in terms of surprise and circumstance in reality.

Allegorically, Chaos rules with his consort Night, but his only rule is misrule. Chaos is not a monarch, but an "anarch" (II, 988). His decisions are, in fact, indecisions through which his realm becomes more confused. His government is a parody of real administration, and Chaos, who cannot even control his own features, effortlessly keeps everything in tumult and uproar.

His consort Night, though "eldest of things" (II, 962) and "uncreated" (II, 150), cannot be seen to precede Chaos in the allegorical hierarchy. She seems to have no positive qualities whatsoever, and is only concretely described once as "sable-vested" (II, 962). She is to be treated with respect, though, since all things come from her as the bearer of the classical Greek abstractions like sleep, death, deceit and sex. These qualities will be of key importance later, but to pay due attention to Night's age and worth is in strict conformity with ancient practice, as M. L. West points out:

> It is noteworthy that in the Theogony. . . the genealogies are basically matrilinear. The whole system of formulae with which the births are described places the emphasis on the mother, who is usually the grammatical subject. [4]

Directly under Chaos and Night is a bizarre collection of titles. Their sham court boasts a deranged entourage consisting of Chance as "high arbiter" (II, 909), Rumor, Confusion, Tumult, Discord and

the mystifying Demogorgon[5], whose powers to confound are so terrible that his name must not be pronounced. This is illustrated in Statius' Thebaid when Tiresias, in exhorting the divinities of Hades warns, "I know the name whose knowing and whose speaking ye so dread,... the high lord of the triple world, who may not be known. Him--but I am silent; peaceful old age forbids."[6]

Though it is defended in a recent article,[7] many critics seem to find Milton's allegory wanting in elegance and continuity. This is especially true of the character of Chaos seen, notably by Broadbent,[8] as ineffective if not farcical. Yet it is the only way to resolve such an inexpressive entity. Without the allegory, chaos' impact on the poem would be too impressionistic. The notion of chaos may be argued in prose or felt through poetry, but the terrible reality of it is better left to allegorical treatment.

Allegory is the best way to organize thoughts around chaos so as to make it understandable. Its total confusion is virtually incommunicable in language, but through allegory is given a shape within epic convention. Milton could no more let chaos float on its own, than he could let his patterned verse go wild in expressing it. In any case it features fresh and imaginative use by Milton of a rather vague classical source. As Osgood remarks, "There is... little or no classical authority for Chaos as a distinct divinity ruling and maintaining the great region of anarchy and confusion above Hell,"[9] and

any critic who sees in Chaos the childishness of talking horses or toys come-to-life is seriously missing the point of the method.

We meet the figure of Chaos, in the poem, with the same sense of relief that Satan must feel in finally standing upright and facing a realizable entity. This is our only chance even to conceive of total chaos as in any way understandable, and when Milton speaks of "the sceptre of old Night" (II, 1002), we know that this symbol of order in the hand of such anarchy is as substantial as a shaft of fresh air compared to God's mighty wand, described unequivocally to Satan: "That golden sceptre which thou didst reject / Is now an iron rod to bruise and break / Thy disobedience" (V, 886-7).[10]

The unholy alliance of Chaos and Satan is inevitable, as they have a common enemy--man's created universe. But while Satan's motive is one of revenge, Chaos is strictly unmotivated. True, he is upset at the reduction of his kingdom by the creation of the world, but hell was subtracted from his realm too. Though Chaos laments the establishment of order, he is a constituent of the natural process. Actual order is drawn out of Chaos so his hostility is not a declared hatred of God, as is Satan's, but rather a manic fervor for power which, in his case, is misrule.

He governs confusion by virtue of anarchy. Yet because his destructive and perplexing powers are so profound, Chaos is dangerous. In fact, the complete disinterest and lack of effort required of

him in maintaining total confusion makes him all the more terrifying. His whim-like evil makes him take on the chilling unfathomability of a motiveless psychotic killer.

In the face of this, Satan shows a regrettable naiveté. He says Chaos may reclaim the world and "once more / Erect the standard there of ancient Night" (II, 985-6), but is he aware of the overpowering implications? Chaos is completely devoid of self-control and would, without malice or forethought, move on to reclaim hell too. If Chaos were to reabsorb God's work completely, the random battering Satan experienced earlier would be his eternal fate. His revenge would be suicidal.

Chaos is well aware of Satan's identity and status of damnation. In his immensity he was able to both see and hear the demons thrown shrieking out of heaven. In fact, he seems to speak in barely guarded admiration of the "numerous host / . . . With ruin upon ruin, rout on rout / Confusion worse confounded" (II, 993. . . 6). Chaos is not about to show pity for what is, to him, a normal state, and though it is true, as Raphael reports, that

> Nine days they fell; confounded Chaos roared,
> And felt tenfold confusion in their fall
> Through his wild anarchy, so huge a rout
> Encumbered him with ruin.
> (VI, 871-4)

the more dissension and disorder you add to chaos, the more you increase its power. As Chaos himself proudly says, "Havoc and spoil

and ruin are my gain" (II, 1009).

A part of Chaos' "spoil" is to be seen in Milton's unique contribution of the Paradise of Fools. It is an unanticipated and somewhat grotesque corollary to chaos which acts as a cosmological "buffer zone" for the created universe. Satan first alights here "on the firm opacous globe / Of this round world" (III, 418-19). It is described in terms similar to chaos as "Dark, waste, and wild, under the frown of Night" (III, 424). On this "windy sea of land" (III, 440) the impression is one of barren immensity everthreatened with storm, later to be peopled by souls deserving "Fit retribution, empty as their deeds" (III, 454). This is not the devastation of chaos, but rather a limbo for the merely misguided. It shades into chaos eventually, though, making it an insulation of vacuity between the ordered world and total disorder.

The danger of chaos is real, and while Satan may gain a perverted type of revenge, Chaos truly will derive the advantage if the world is reduced to darkness once again. Satan, as the "Prince of Darkness" (X, 383), moves specifically toward this end, and it forces us to recall the evidence of his "dark designs" (I, 213) pointed out so early in Paradise Lost.

Though Satan's deceptive soliloquy at the outset of book IV gives the appearance of tragic potential, we realize that what we overhear is the self-reproach of a disturbed mind. He laments the

overpowering energy of his own ambition by deflecting the blame onto God: "he created [me] what I was" (IV, 43), yet was quick to deny his maker to the loyal Abdiel:

> "That we were formed then, say'st thou? And the work
> Of secondary hands, by task transferred
> From Father to his Son? Strange point and new!"
> . . . "We know no time when we were not as now;
> Know none before us, self-begot, self-raised
> By our own quick'ning power."
> (V, 853-5; 859-61)

The above passage illustrates Satan's prideful refusal to accept that his origins lay outside his understanding. Confusion attends on this type of misplaced identity. In fact he is deceived by his own ego, self-deluded to his own detriment; as C.S. Lewis adroitly points out: "A creature revolting against a creator is revolting against the source of his own powers."[11] Susan Roberts adds that because of Satan's rebellion he finds himself "in danger of complete alienation, non-being, the entry into chaos,"[12] and altering the facts of one's identity is the first step to total confusion.

Satan's confused state of talking to himself is elaborated even further, as the Fiend himself relates in an atypical moment of candor:

> . . . in the lowest deep a lower deep
> Still threat'ning to devour me opens wide,
> To which the hell I suffer seems a heav'n.
> (IV, 76-8)

This "lower deep" is, of course, <u>the</u> deep of chaos and dismay. It is the consequence worse than hell that the mad Moloch "recked not"

earlier. Not only is it true of Satan that he "from hell / One step no more than from himself can fly" (IV, 21-2), but his "gestures fierce" and "mad demeanor" (IV, 128,9) when supposedly alone reveal him in a disturbed and chaotic state.

In fact as he moves into the harmless, paradisal carnivores (IV, 401-8), he briefly invests them with the fury they will know after the Fall. Just fifty lines earlier they cavorted freely among each other, but Satan's very presence, however unperceived, gives them a taste of the hunter/hunted terror they will eventually know. It is the terror of capture and death coupled with brute survival. These are qualities Satan has learned to cope with on his trip to Paradise. The violence and disruption that attend on Satan he seems to have carried straight from chaos, and it infuses everything he encounters.

The eerie concluding image of book IV is the most telling, however, as we learn how Satan fled "Murmuring, and with him fled the shades of night" (IV, 1015). What is most alarming is that, along with his own evil, Satan carries the oblivious disruptive force of chaos with him. He is shrouded in the suffocating garb of Chaos as an agent of confusion bent on destroying the blissful order of Paradise.

Satan is intent on subverting the innocence of Adam and Eve, as Beelzebub had proposed earlier, "Seduce them to our party, that their God / May prove their foe" (II, 368-9), but the chaotic threat moving with him on his mission will engulf completely and obliterate.

Evil may be relative, but the horror of total chaos is sheer annihilation where ordered reality is counteracted by infinite possibility. Because of this God, at the moment of creation, was especially careful:

> . . . he the world
> Built on circumfluous waters calm, in wide
> Chrystálline ocean, and the loud misrule
> Of Chaos far removed, lest fierce extremes
> Contiguous might distemper the whole frame.
> (VII, 269-73)

Ordination of the heavens with chaos in mind seems to be something powerful enough to be grasped innately by Adam, as he explains the necessity of the stars to Eve:

> Minist'ring light prepared, they set and rise;
> Lest total darkness should by night regain
> Her old possession, and extinguish life
> In nature and all things.
> (IV, 664-7)

God tries to keep chaos "far removed" because of its threatening encroachment, and it is with the grimmest irony that Adam should innocently speak the above-quoted lines. He is unaware that Satan is on his way, and that the darkness of chaos comes with him.

The world, carved out of chaos, stands ever susceptible to return to its base elements if the organization of God's created nature is broken down. We apprehend that chaos is as opposite to nature as darkness is to the metaphorical perfection of light. Yet one can shade into the other in changes barely discernable, and it is impossible to determine the exact moment of darkness until it is fully upon us.

This is the insidious danger of chaos' approach, and total chaos is closer than we, or Adam, might dare to think.

NOTES

1. Plato, The Timaeus in Plato's Cosmology, ed. and trans. F.M. Cornford, (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1957), p. 198.

2. Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, ed. and trans. Cyril Bailey, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947), V, 432f., p. 455.

3. Curry, JEGP, p. 50.

4. M. L. West, ed., Hesiod's Theogony, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 34-5.

5. Interestingly, the young Milton supposed Demogorgon "identical with the Chaos of the ancients" in his early Prolusion, "Whether Day or Night is More Excellent", Complete Prose, I, chap. i, p. 222.

6. Statius, Thebaid in Statius, ed. and trans. J. H. Mozley, (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1928), IV, 514-17, p. 545.

7. Cherrel Guilfoyle, "Aspects of Death in Milton", Milton Studies, XIII, (1979), p. 35.

8. J. B. Broadbent, Some Graver Subject, (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1967), pp. 124-34.

9. Charles G. Osgood, The Classical Mythology of Milton's English Poems, (New York: Haskell House, 1964), p. 22.

10. Mammon obliviously expresses like sentiments in his worry that God may "over hell extend / His empire, and with iron sceptre rule / Us here, as with his golden those in heav'n" (II, 326-8).

11. Lewis, Preface, p. 96.

12. Susan Roberts, A Phenomenological Approach to Milton From Typology to Existentialism, (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1970), p. 83.

III

INTESTINE WAR

Chaos was not only formless and void prior to the creation of man's universe, but played a key if unknowing part in man's origins. Before even the necessity of hell's creation occurred, chaos thrashed against the perfection of heaven in the medium of war, "dispeopling heaven", and thereby making it feasible to God to create the world of men as a recruiting-ground for future angels (VII, 139ff.). Chaos is something existing mysteriously "long under darkness cover" (I, 659), and Raphael, in book VI, begins to speak of the revolt in heaven in terms that are grimly reminiscent of earlier descriptions of chaos:

> Now storming fury rose,
> And clamor such as heard in heav'n till now
> Was never; arms on armor clashing brayed
> Horrible discord, and the madding wheels
> Of brazen chariots raged; dire was the noise
> Of conflict.
>
> (VI, 207-12)

The "fury" above is the same tumult Satan experienced on his voyage through chaos (II, 938). In fact it is the coincidental fury of this circumstance that helps him find his way. The connection links war directly to chaos, as the only other place "fury" is mentioned in the poem, is later (VI, 591) in the terrible use of cannonry by the

demons. War and chaos betray an unmistakable congruity.

Noise disrupting the bliss of heaven is unprecedented, but this clamor roared in the formless state out of which God made heaven. Its power is enormous and Raphael, of this din in heaven, assures Adam that, "had earth been then, all earth / Had to her centre shook" (VI, 218-19).

In chaos noise is natural and encouraged by the mad "anarch" who sees disruptive cacophony as his strength. Prior descriptions of uproar in chaos prepare us for its surprising onslaught in heaven, and we recall the similes of horrible scope that describe what Satan heard in chaos:

> Nor was his ear less pealed
> With noises loud and ruinous (to compare
> Great things with small) than when Bellona storms,
> . . . or less than if this frame
> Of heav'n were falling, and these elements
> In mutiny had from her axle torn
> The steadfast earth.
> (II, 920-22; 924-7)

The "horrible discord" now being experienced in heaven is doubly horrible when we consider that the very figure has already been given significant allegorical representation in chaos--namely "Discord with a thousand various mouths" (II, 967). Discord sits as an integral part of the "anti-court" of Chaos, and yet is now seen to be invading heaven. Since we may assume that Milton had thought his allegory through completely, we find chaos, here, actually encroaching on the

very fibre of created perfection that heaven is. What chance does an afterthought like the world of men have against it?

Discord's thousand mouths starkly illustrate the multitudinous shout and riot of the warring angels. The furor and violence is immediately cognate with the conflicting elements and numberless atoms faced in chaos. Raphael's thought process seems to proceed directly to this analogy:

> Millions of fierce encount'ring angels fought
> On either side, the least of whom could wield
> These elements, and arm him with the force
> Of all their regions: how much more of power
> Army against army numberless to raise
> Dreadful combustion warring.
> (VI, 220-5)

As soon as Raphael begins to tell of war in heaven, he goes directly into the detail of "brazen chariots". And as soon as Sin opens hell's gate, the narrative voice speaks in images of military might, and especially of chariots:

> . . . the gates wide open stood,
> That with extended wings a bannered host
> Under spread ensigns marching might pass through
> With horse and chariots ranked in loose array.
> (II, 884-7)

This is precisely the scene Satan faces when he first sees the armies of God massing to oppose him:

> Chariots, and flaming arms, and fiery steeds,
> Reflecting blaze on blaze, first met his view.
> (VI, 17-18)

There is nothing ambrosial, gentle, or refreshing about the

images above, regardless of their occurrence within what is supposed to be the bliss of heaven. The crack of whips, grinding of wheels, and confusion of snapping harness, not to mention the stamping and steaming of horses makes the chariot simile especially powerful. The sitting reader is as dwarfed and overpowered by the brutality of the diction, as the footsoldier is by the swift and overpowering advantage of cavalry.

This makes the chariot the ideal "vehicle" for the Son to drive, in singlehandedly herding the rebels over the verge of heaven. Once more we see that because of God's ability to assume control over the terrible through terror, he is able to exert final mastery over chaos. The Son states plainly at this point, "whom thou hat'st, I hate, and can put on / Thy terrors, as I put thy mildness on" (VI, 734-5), lending further justice to his punishment of the demons. It was against the Son that Satan had originally turned his spite and malice leading to rebellion in the first place, as the Son tells the loyal angels:

> . . . against me is all their rage,
> Because the Father, t'whom in heav'n supreme
> Kingdom and power and glory appertains,
> Hath honored me according to his will.
> Therefore to me their doom he hath assigned,
> That they may have their wish, to try with me
> In battle which the stronger proves.
> (VI, 813-19)

Raphael characterizes the struggle as "Intestine war in heav'n" (VI, 259), while but four books before Chaos had lamented the

declining state of his "intestine broils" (II, 1001). The only thing surprising us more than the synonymous nouns, is the identical adjectives. The situations are congruent in terms of word choice and syntax. In terms of fact, being drawn into the similarity is unavoidable.

The descriptions of war in heaven have their direct counterparts in chaos. Consider in heaven "fiercest opposition" (VI, 315), "jarring spheres confound" (VI, 316), "foul disorder" (VI, 388) as well as "foul dissipation and forced rout" (VI, 598). Then compare the chaotic analogues, "endless wars" (II, 896), "universal hubbub wild" (II, 951), "causes mixed confusedly" (II, 913), and "fighting elements on all sides round" (II, 1015). The language of struggle and conflict seems to flow in and out of each place with disconcerting ease. God passes the most damning judgement himself, however, when he describes the situation in heaven as one of "disordered rage" (VI, 696).

Chaos and war are intrinsically linked, but the encroachment of disorder is seen to be even closer than this to heaven. After the initial battle the scattered aftermath lies like a ragged wound, open and unorganized

> With many an inroad gored; deformèd rout
> Entered, and foul disorder; all the ground
> With shivered armor strown, and on a heap
> Chariot and charioteer lay overturned
> And fiery foaming steeds.
> (VI, 387-91)

Milton's broad sweep of language yields the "wide-angled" view of a

massive renaissance fresco in splendid opposition to his earlier technique. The presentation in heaven is larger-than-life, while the situation in chaos and hell was reduced to "atoms" and "bees". In each case we absorb great quantities, but the method is peculiar to the relative notion of grandeur we are to discern.

Night falls upon the scene of mass suffering but not without reverberations for the reader, who has already read of the rebel angels tossed out of heaven and lying dazed on the burning lake of hell, as the oppressive Pharaoh and his troops, in the Old Testament (Exodus 14), did on the Red Sea when

> with perfidious hatred they pursued
> The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld
> From the safe shore their floating carcasses
> And broken chariot wheels.
> (I, 308-11)

Satan and his followers lie in the same situation after the first skirmish in heaven, and it is just a sample of what they can expect in chaos and hell.

Night is the fitting cover for Satan to use in inventing his "devilish engines". The sinister darkness of night properly symbolizes the secrecy of the wicked, the mystery of the unknown and unexpected, and seamlessly shades the perpetual league of chaos and night. It is understandable that the depravity and energetic blackness of chaos and night should combine to facilitate Satan's cruel war plans, as Raphael reports:

Satan with his rebellious disappeared,
Far in the dark dislodged, and void of rest,
His potentates to council called by night.
(VI, 414-16)

Satan not only quarries the constituents of his gunpowder from their "dark nativity the deep" (VI, 482), but in so doing gives us a running commentary on chaos' dangerous proximity to heaven. In a propagandist's rapture he assures his cronies that heaven is a glorious picture, but scratch the surface and chaos will reveal itself:

Which of us who beholds the bright surface
Of this ethereous mold whereon we stand,
This continent of spacious heav'n, adorned
With plant, fruit, flow'r ambrosial, gems and gold,
Whose eye so superficially surveys
These things, as not to mind from whence they grow
Deep under ground, materials dark and crude,
Of spiritous and fiery spume, till touched
With heav'n's ray, and tempered, they shoot forth
So beauteous, op'ning to the ambient light?
(VI, 472-81)

The hyperbole of "deep under ground" above is strictly for Adam's benefit. There is no "ground" in the spiritual realm of heaven and, to spirits, the concept of "deep" does not denote relative distance either. The deep is a place; a place of terror and disorder simply too close for comfort. In the face of this it is small wonder that Adam and Eve were filled

With admiration and deep muse to hear
Of things so high and strange, things to their thought
So unimaginable as hate in heav'n,
And war so near the peace of God in bliss,
With such confusion.
(VII, 52-6)

The riot and thunder of Satan's cannonades enhance the chaos of the situation. This method of attack is something new and unexpected to the angels, but something Milton prepares us for, in book II, in connection with chaos where it is seen to be as overwhelming as

> when Bellona storms,
> With all her battering engines bent to raze
> Some capital city.
> (II, 922-4)

Certainly this suggests the devastation caused by cannon, the "ruinous" effect of which was well known to the seventeenth century. In fact Cromwell's patterned artillery put his armies at an advantage so marked and unprecedented as to be considered somewhat extraworldly. Hanford refers to the "intrinsic hellishness" of explosive artillery described by a seventeenth-century commentator as the "devilish invention of gunpowder,... the most damnable, and from hell itself invented" in support of his cogent observation of the episode, "The utmost refinements of scientific slaughter are but a mask of chaos and can only end in the disruption of the orderly civilization of which they are the product."[1]

The confusion of physical instability makes war in heaven a chaotic and macabre dance of terror:

> ... wide was spread
> That war and various; sometimes on firm ground
> A standing fight; then soaring on main wing
> Tormented all the air; all air seemed then
> Conflicting fire.
> (VI, 241-5)

Satan must have a feeling of déjà vu as he struggles through chaos in terms similar to those above, and which we have already quoted. [2] The impediment to physical motion while involuntarily thrust into a raging state of mass movement is unbearably restraining. One is manipulated by the chance emphasis of external pressure over which there is no control. Panic attends on this, the most sickening and deadly of carnival joy-rides.

Satan takes particular glee in parodying the contortions of exploded angels as a peculiar dance form, when he says to Belial that the opposing angels "into strange vagaries fell, / As they would dance; yet for a dance they seemed / Somewhat extravagant and wild" (VI, 614-16). This commentary is disgustingly ill-humored as anyone who has witnessed the graceless "flop" of a dead body can attest, but Satan is a true homicide, inured already to destructive evil.

The only counterattack for the god-like spirits is to uproot hills to crush the gun emplacements. This leads to retaliation in kind, and the scene is as wild in its inception as it is terrible in its description:

> So hills amid the air encountered hills,
> Hurled to and fro with jaculation dire,
> That underground they fought in dismal shade;
> Infernal noise; war seemed a civil game
> To this uproar; horrid confusion heaped
> Upon confusion rose.
> (VI, 664-9)

"Infernal noise" controls the passage above, and its sudden

introduction does cap the expression of war as a "civil game" by comparison. What we are presented exceeds war, just as chaos is a lower deep than the "lowest deep" of hell (IV, 76). In fact the combatants actually dig their own graves as they fight. Though they are immortal spirits, the imagery cannot be missed. They fight in the "dismal shade" of chaos, and the scene's unimaginable "jaculation dire" is the essence of turmoil. Arnold Stein says, "It is the approach to chaos, the result of the violence that heaven cannot brook, the strain to the point of cracking."[3]

Chaos does the approaching though. Its unknowing and confused emissary, Satan, introduces tumult and violence into the order of heaven through his revolt and his ability to delude others. Yet Stein persists in seeing what he calls a "physical ridicule"[4] pervading the entire presentation of war in heaven. What is in fact destruction, confusion, pain and terror--simply utter chaos--he prefers to see as humor bordering on farce. This includes the slicing of Satan and the mowing-down of the good angels by cannon fire. The mountain-throwing episode he describes as "epic comedy", leading us to believe that the fear of claustrophobic crush is something he is insensitive to, while the rebels' pitiful wish that "the mountains now might be again / Thrown on them as a shelter from his ire" (VI, 842-3) is the most desperate of futile hopes, and not cartooning.

Jackie DiSalvo agrees with Stein that the "absurdity of bodiless

creatures hurling mountains at each other" is somehow satiric,[5] and it is shrewdly correct in asserting that, as Dr. Johnson noted, the confusion of spirit and matter leads to general inconsistency in boundless spirits confining themselves in armor and lessening their spiritual might with material weapons. But isn't this material confinement what leads man to disregard his spiritual reason and fight in mud for deluded causes and negligible results? And isn't Raphael's story a lesson for man?

Isaac Asimov weaves delightful irony into his noting of the passage:

> The giants of the Greek myths, when fighting Zeus and the gods, lifted and threw mountains. The gods threw mountains back at them. Otus and Ephialtes, two later giants, thought to attack the gods by piling Mount Ossa on Mount Pelion, this combination to overpower Mount Olympus and give them the advantage. Ever since then, fighting with mountains is good form for heavenly battles. Thus, the improper use of artillery (not in accordance with epic convention) by the rebel angels is countered and defeated by the thoroughly proper use of mountains by the loyal angels.[6]

But surely the efficacy of Raphael's account is not to show Adam how the heavenly host handle dirty fighters. Nor is it in any way humorous as Adam, who has yet to suffer a hangnail, must surely recoil in horror at the thought of bodies strewn and dismembered. It is a lesson showing the ultimate chaos of conflict in terms that man can understand. Adam is a man and war is described concretely for his benefit, coming close even to what Douglas Bush calls "hideous burlesque" to warn him

of those "base" realities he must be on guard for.

We are not even to suppose there are hills in heaven, so much as we are to be worried by the outlandish confusion of the imagery. Raphael's entire description is metaphorical anyway, as he explains to Adam: "Thus measuring things in heav'n by things on earth" (VI, 893). He is effectively instructing Adam in the Christian habit, founded on Scripture, of applying physical terms to the realm of spiritual introspection. The lesson is simple: Hills flying through the air are physically unimaginable, but just a taste of what the chaos of war arising out of prideful disobedience can bring.

The total effect establishes that (to hedge General Sherman's oft-quoted remark) war is chaos. This may not be a particularly remarkable revelation on its own but, as we have seen, heaven was in a state of war. The transitive following assures us that heaven was in a state of chaos. This may be too terrible to contemplate, but Milton glosses over the circumstances with decorum, by assuring us that God, all-powerful, was never in danger of defeat as,

> the evil soon
> Driv'n back redounded as a flood on those
> From whom it sprung, impossible to mix
> With blessedness.
>
> (VII, 56-9)

We as men do not enjoy this security, though.

NOTES

1. James Holly Hanford, "Milton and the Art of War" in John Milton, Poet and Humanist, (Cleveland: The Press of Western Reserve University, 1966), p. 215 and quoting W. Neade, The Double Armed Man (1625), p. 85 on the following page.

2. II, 940-50. Quoted on page 25f.

3. Arnold Stein, "The War in Heaven" in Answerable Style, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), p. 25.

4. Stein, "War in Heaven" in Answerable Style.

5. Jackie DiSalvo, "The Lord's Battells", Milton Studies, IV, (1972), 63-78.

6. Isaac Asimov, ed. Paradise Lost, (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1965), p. 297, n. 420.

7. Bush, ed., Complete Poetical Works, p. 321, n. 44.

IV

STRANGE ALTERATION

Our ears perk up at the series of double-entendres used by Satan to describe his new-found weaponry. The demonic instruments of destruction are derived straight out of chaos, and Satan instructs his frenzied crew in terms of violent sexual imagery. What better way to remember a lesson as Satan sneeringly describes the cannons, in the archaic sense of urgent or pressing, as "pregnant with eternal flame" (VI, 483ff.). The "engines long and round" are "thick-rammed", while the triggering "bore" is with "touch of fire dilated."

Their objective is to "dash to pieces and overwhelm" (VI, 489) which, in conjunction with the harsh and deliberate sexual terms of the preceding lines, conjures up repelled distaste in the reader as much as it elicits joy from the attentive demons. Sensing this, Satan, shrewdly adroit in propagandistic dirt, takes his filthy spiel to its blasphemous extreme. Intimating emasculation, Satan snickers at how the loyal angels will "fear we have disarmed / The Thunderer of his only dreaded bolt" (VI, 490-91).

These thoughts inform Adam after the Fall in speaking his thoughts to Eve: "So inflame my sense / With ardor to enjoy thee"

(IX, 1031-32). Ardor is not love, though, and the idea of "enjoying" her in these terms is something Adam could not have conceived of in his innocence. The violence, hitherto unknown in Paradise, creeps in subtly in a term like "inflame," while it is all "well understood / Of Eve, whose eye darted contagious fire" (IX, 1035-36). This is a stark change from Adam's description of her, just one book before, as having "heav'n in her eye" (VIII, 488).

The linkage of fire to fallen sex is a typical metaphor for violent passion, but it also makes us hearken back to the chaotic "touch of fire dilated" (VI, 485), as well as to the eternal flames of hell, while the narrator assures us "in lust they burn" (IX, 1015). So too, Adam's seizing of Eve's hand (IX, 1037) is brutal compared to their prelapsarian embraces. This is a solid illustration of the "strange alteration" (II, 1024) the narrator had warned us to expect, and shows Adam seeming to have forgotten completely Raphael's crucial point:

> . . . love refines
> The thoughts, and heart enlarges, hath his seat
> In reason, and is judicious.
> (VIII, 589-91)

It is only proper to Milton's technique at this point, that we should recall Satan's first approach on Eve as a base toad in book IV. He tried to reach the "organs of her fancy" (802), to "forge illusions" (803), and "inordinate desires" (808). Satan's repulsively warty shape coupled with the sleeping and vulnerable Eve combine as images to

present a disturbing sense of depraved sexuality. What prepares us early for this is Satan's expressed effort to degrade man to his own level, along with his voyeuristic frustration at first sight of the blissful couple:

> 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.
> (IV, 505-11)

These "torments" complicated by "fierce desire" are part of what Adam must learn to live with in his fallen state, and it is only fitting that Satan should personify our preview of them. They become the constant desire/guilt flux of fallen sexuality; something Adam watches himself do, instead of the mutual consummation of innocent love it was in Paradise. It all ties in with the fallen confusion of seduction, rejection, impotence and deception that attends fallen intercourse, allowing Adam and Eve to awake unrefreshed and earthy for the first time:

> . . . each the other viewing,
> Soon found their eyes how opened, and their minds
> How darkened.
> (IX, 1052-54)

Milton uses "darkened" to perfect effect here. It augments the ominous sense of shadow we discerned in Raphael's exit "from the thick shade" at the concluding line of book VIII. Its effectiveness in

concluding a book reinforces a brooding gloom felt, as night approaches both the scene, and Adam's future. The encroaching darkness consistently serves to usher in chaos, as we detected in Satan at the concluding line of book IV, and we now witness it seeping into the fabric of human reality.

Chaos approaches with Satan, but bound by his allegorized attributes Sin and Death. Sin even calls Death "my shade" (X, 249) before explaining her irresistible pull toward earth, "so strongly drawn / By this new-felt attraction and instinct" (X, 262-3). To expedite the spread of chaos manifested in Sin and Death, the two evils build a bridge from hell to earth via the "palpable obscure":

> Sin and Death amain
> Following his [Satan's] track, such was the will of heav'n,
> Paved after him a broad and beaten way
> Over the dark abyss, whose boiling gulf
> Tamely endured a bridge of wondrous length
> From hell continued reaching th' utmost orb
> Of this frail world; by which the Spirits perverse
> With easy intercourse pass to and fro
> To tempt or punish mortals.
> (II, 1024-32)

The created order of hell, however evil, is now connected to the created order of the world. To get to hell one must go through chaos, and the bridge ominously admits two-way traffic. Small wonder then that the world is described as "frail" above as chaos is bridged. This access, an ordered object in chaos, is "endured" because of the perverse advantage to be had. As abstracts of Night,[1]

Sin and Death will work to further the darkness and shadow that approaches to enshroud the world. In any case, allowing the "Spirits perverse", purveyors of confusion and discord that they are, a bridge for easy travel is certain to be an asset to Chaos, as we have already heard the old Anarch himself tell Satan, "Havoc and spoil and ruin are my gain" (II, 1009).

The bridge transcends allegorical farce when we experience the smothering loftiness of sinister power evoked when Sin and Death later make use of the crossing. They move as gloomily and malevolently as a cloud:

> Then both from out hell gates into the waste
> Wide anarchy of Chaos damp and dark
> Flew diverse, and with power (their power was great).
> (X, 282-4)

On earth the way has been metaphorically paved already by Satan. His scouting mission allows ready access for Sin, Death and their inevitable chaos. As a result, confusion sets in quickly, and we see it hauntingly illustrated in Satan's infiltration "like a black mist low creeping. . . on / His midnight search"(IX, 180-81).

Satan's distorting sophistry succeeds in seducing Eve to eat the apple. Immediately she experiences an inebriated state, "heightened as with wine, jocund and boon" (IX, 79), which she shares with Adam after counselling in drunken bravado, "freely taste, / And fear of death deliver to the winds" (IX, 988-9):

> As with new wine intoxicated both
> They swim in mirth, and fancy that they feel
> Divinity within them breeding wings
> Wherewith to scorn the earth.
> (IX, 1008-11)

The "divinity within" that they feel is a heightened self-confidence, a lowering of ordered inhibitions delivered rashly "to the winds". The exhilarated sense of vertigo they experience is staggering.

We have been prepared for this earlier in Eve's ominous dream at the outset of book V. Upon tasting the succulent fruit, she rocketed above in a realistic dream-shift to survey a gaspingly wide-angled view of earth. She becomes a satellite set apart from terrestrial paradise, rather than a dynamic part of it. The implications are grossly disturbing, and it is at this point that God briefs Raphael for his mission on Earth:

> "Raphael," said he, "thou hear'st what stir on earth
> Satan, from hell scaped through the darksome gulf,
> Hath raised in Paradise, and how disturbed
> This night the human pair."
> (V, 224-7)

In the passage above God is not reticent as to what is happening. "The darksome gulf" is mentioned purposely between the "stir" and disturbance that Satan brings by night. Wherever he is, trouble is certain to ensue. It adds up to indirection, alienation and chaos. In fact God, omniscient, had already spoken of how Satan will "By some false guile pervert; / . . . For man will hearken to his glozing lies" (III, 92-3).

Eve's original lapse of reason combines with what God had earlier determined as "false guile" to allow deception into Paradise. She tells her story to Adam with "countenance blithe" (IX, 886), imitating precisely the expression Satan, in the serpent, had used on her (IX, 625). If we are not sure she is acting, the narrator even confides, "But in her cheek distemper flushing glowed" (IX, 887). Eve had worried earlier, "to Adam in what sort / Shall I appear?" (IX, 816-17), and upon her return we shudder at her cool subterfuge juxtaposed with Adam's blissful ignorance:

> Hast thou not wondered, Adam, at my stay?
> (IX, 856)

She takes on the look of a child molester viewing a suitably innocent victim in Adam. In light of her newly acquired experience, the understanding with which she poses the question quoted above is chilling.

Yet Adam felt something amiss even through her secrecy, and prior to her return. The disturbance wreaked by Eve's act of disobedience is so far-reaching and immediate as even to make Adam's heart skip a beat: "his heart, divine of something ill, / Misgave him; he the falt'ring measure felt" (IX, 845-6). The auscultation of Adam's chest will have broader implications as order begins to fragment. Here, however, his personal sorrow, as well as the imminent breakdown of paradisal perfection itself, is compressed splendidly in the symbol of the scattered roses:

> From his slack hand the garland wreathed for Eve
> Down dropped, and all the faded roses shed.
> (IX, 892-3)

The brightness of perfection fades in the gathering gloom; what was interwoven in naturally ordered beauty is still beautiful, but fallen apart.

The consequential breakdown is seen first in Eve herself. She stupidly rationalizes by thinking "Heav'n is high" (IX, 811), conjecturing thereby that perhaps her act has not been witnessed by God because of the vast distance between her and Him. If there is anything she should be aware of, however, it is that God is an all-seeing god, and C.S. Lewis adroitly calls her reasoning "the doom of nonsense". [2]

Her shocking misconception of God as "our great forbidder" (IX, 815) is only surpassed by her "low reverence done" (IX, 835) to the tree that has destroyed forever her ordered paradisal life. God is anything but a "forbidder", and the idolatry of bowing down to the knowledge in potentia that she thinks the tree holds is a blasphemous error. From the moment of the Fall, man's placement between his God and his world is undercut by misconception and uncertainty.

After their misguided euphoria Adam and Eve come "back to earth" in fallen rationality. Their new reason is complicated by isolation and despair in a type of compulsive self-reflection. It cuts Adam and Eve off from each other, as they seek to cover their vulnerability with fig leaves. They are no longer externally secure, while internally

the destruction of their actions is felt even more strongly. "Within himself / The danger lies" (IX, 348-9), Adam had poignantly stated earlier, but now he begins to live and understand that very dictum in terms that are anticipated by the chaos of fallen distress:

> . . . but not at rest or ease of mind,
> They sat them down to weep; 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.
> (IX, 1120-26)

Above we feel the storms of chaos again, along with their consequent shaking and rage, implying that more than just simple transgression is involved. Frank Kermode quotes part of Milton's De Doctrina Christiana I, XI at this point, and it reads like an avalanche of chaotic criminality:

> The tasting of [the] fruit was an act that included all sins: "it comprehended at once distrust in the divine veracity, and a proportionate credulity in the assurances of Satan; unbelief, ingratitude, disobedience; gluttony; in the man excessive uxoriousness, in the woman a want of proper regard for her husband, in both an insensibility to the welfare of their offspring, and offspring of the whole human race; parricide, theft, invasion of the rights of others, sacrilege, deceit, presumption in aspiring to divine attributes, fraud in the means employed to attain the object, pride and arrogance.[3]

One step out of Paradise is a complete change where perfection no longer holds sway. God's "Vicegerent Son" (X, 56) approaches the fallen pair and how they look to Him, reported by the narrator,

occasions a disturbing list of attributes, something like we have seen before[4]:

> Love was not in their looks, either to God
> Or to each other, but apparent guilt,
> And shame, and perturbation, and despair,
> Anger, and obstinacy, and hate, and guile.
> (X, 111-14)

When these indictments are internalized and metaphorically aligned with such discordant elements in the fallen psyche as spite, mistrust, and jealousy, serious contention is certain to ensue. Ordered reconciliation is virtually impossible to achieve because the ordered sense of Adam and Eve's once coupled perfection is broken down. A latent grudge endures:

> Thus they in mutual accusation spent
> The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning,
> And of their vain contest appeared no end.
> (IX, 1187-89)

Paradise is a living memory for Adam and Eve, fueling their accusatory invective. Our disputatious present is reducible to this point. Their arguing, above, is like chaos' "noise of endless wars" (II, 896-7) and the passage is doubly effective in appearing at the end of a book--the crucial book of the poem at that. The order of reasoning breaks down in endless conflict, and "endless conflict" shades into the very state of chaos by definition.

The most alarming alteration in Paradise, however, is seen in nature itself. The extremes seen before only in hell and chaos are

now launched onto the world. Nature obtains the capacity for cruelty as God applies punishment in sweeping terms:

> . . . the Creator calling forth by name
> His mighty angels gave them several charge,
> As sorted best with present things. The sun
> Had first his precept so to move, so shine,
> As might affect the earth with cold and heat
> Scarce tolerable, and from the north to call
> Decrepit winter, from the south to bring
> Solstitial summer's heat. To the blank moon
> Her office they prescribed, to th' other five
> Their planetary motions and aspécts
> In sextile, square, and trine, and opposite,
> Of noxious efficacy, and when to join
> In synod unbenign, and taught the fixed
> Their influence malignant when to show'r,
> Which of them rising with the sun, or falling,
> Should prove tempestuous. To the winds they set
> Their corners, when with bluster to confound
> Sea, air, and shore, the thunder when to roll
> With terror through the dark aerial hall.
>
> (my emphasis; X, 649-67)

Again, the confounding violence of chaotic intrusion is emphasized. Never, in Paradise, could nature "join in synod unbenign", but it is a fact of life now. Because of this, man must temper his lowly wisdom with study of the skies. To ensure his safety he must try to predict accurately the raging torrents of rain, wind, or snow that hitherto had no basis in reality, but are now capable of death and disaster. This change is morbidly sniffed out at will by the "meager Shadow" (X, 264) Death, who vows,

> "I shall not lag behind, nor err
> The way, . . . such a scent I draw
> Of carnage, prey innumerable, and taste
> The savor of death from all things there that live."
>
> (X, 266-9)

Throughout the poem we have been reminded of the "ever-threat'ning storms / Of Chaos blust'ring round inclement sky" (III, 425-6), and we see these storms on earth now; both physically in the external world, and internally in man's solitary emotional instability. In fact confusion and dismay seem to "zero in" on man. Kester Svendsen points out, "first come the alterations in the skies; then discord in animals is described; and, finally, Adam also in chaos":[5]

> These were from without
> The growing miseries, which Adam saw
> Already in part, though hid in gloomiest shade,
> To sorrow abandoned, but worse felt within.
> (X, 714-17)

Adam is conscious of this new-found condition within, and shouts it to the world in anguish:

> "O Conscience, into what abyss of fears
> And horrors hast thou driv'n me; out of which
> I find no way, from deep to deeper plunged!"
> (X, 842-4)

Man's pain is internalized, but a mirror image of the pain Satan first felt: "Then Satan first knew pain, / And writhed him to and fro convolved" (VI, 327-8). In fact the first concrete description of Satan, in the poem, reveals him in much the same state in which we have just witnessed Adam: "Vaunting aloud, but racked with deep despair" (I, 126). Both Adam and Satan find themselves plunged into an "abyss of fears" and, more significantly, share the experience of a "lower deep".[6] These pains followed by despair were unimaginable in the prelapsarian

state of bliss. They are perpetual possibilities now.

Connected with pain and fear is the unbearable mystery of impending death. God adjures Adam not to taste of the tree lest he surely die (Genesis 2:17) but, upon tasting, he is not struck down dead. Instead, he continues living with the chance of death everpresent and, ultimately, inevitable. Adam is shocked to realize that he is now identified with death, "both Death and I / Am found eternal" (X, 815-16), while we are assured in the New Testament, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3).

Death is the common denominator of fallen reality. Man now dangles before it, fighting off attacks of pride, lust and avarice--shadows cast upon him by Death. Adam, in combating this, adopts a strategy of tender mutual respect, a type of stoic love:

> "Let us no more contend, nor blame
> Each other, blamed enough elsewhere, but strive
> In offices of love, how we may light'n
> Each other's burden in our share of woe."
> (X, 958-61)

Life is no longer paradise. It will be a "state of woe", redeemed only through man's good works in a constant struggle over sin. We have already determined the implications of "constant struggle" and Adam, upon rejecting Eve's suggestion of retreat by suicide (X, 1001-6), decides correctly that the proper plan for fallen survival is to be found in introspective endurance, hard physical labor, the rearing of children, and prayer to God for forgiveness.

NOTES

1. See West's introduction to Hesiod's Theogony on page 35 where Night is described as the mother of all the dark and intangible Greek abstractions, and an analysis of Night's progeny explains the curious logic that influenced the ancient composition of the genealogies.

2. Lewis, Preface, p. 125.

3. Frank Kermode, "Adam Unparadised" in Milton, Paradise Lost: A Casebook, ed. A. E. Dyson and Julian Lovelock, (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1973), p. 195.

4. Quoted and discussed in II, pp. 28-9.

5. Kester Svendsen, "Adam's Soliloquy in Book X of Paradise Lost" in Milton: Modern Essays In Criticism, ed. Arthur E. Barker, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 333.

6. cf. Satan at IV, 76.

V

ONE FAITH UNANIMOUS THOUGH SAD

Adam realizes the perfect order of his paradisal honeymoon is over when he sees Michael approach "as man / Clad to meet man" (XI, 239-40). The angel's military vest presages trouble, and Adam senses that this lecture is not to be at all like his former conversation with that "affable archangel" Raphael. Instead, this will be somewhat more "solemn and sublime" (XI, 236). Michael even warns him, "good with bad / Expect to hear" (XI, 358-9).

Adam is allowed to see what the future holds in store for mankind as a result of his Fall. He first sees death in Cain's brutal fratricide, and then witnesses a horrifying vignette of sickness and disease (XI, 475ff.). The intense suffering of body and mind that he sees is not reducible to symptomatic study, but is an object lesson suited to show the corrupt condition of fallen man. Heavenly immunization appears to have worn off or been withdrawn. It is the termination of a vaccine known as perfection. As a result, chaotic contagion will rage, as it would have anyway in the matter-of-fact sway it held over preformed matter.

One look at the new state of things is enough to make the

narrative voice describe the fallen situation as moved "from cups to civil broils" (XI, 718). Immediately we identify matters with Chaos' lamented "intestine broils" of the second book (II, 1001). Man's fallen lot in life is spoken of by the Son, who sees "his days / Numbered, though sad, till death" (XI, 39-40). It takes on attributes of Satan's gauntlet-running through pure chaos. Man will be tempted and pushed from all sides; humiliated and kicked by shame and circumstance, he will live a life of disorder with his only hope residing in a perfection he no longer comprehends. This will be a "joy, but with fear yet linked" (XI, 139), and is the only alleviation from a life of total despair that man can hope for. It will always be easier to slip into the oblivious flow of disorder, though, and chaos will constantly surface and, to a substantial extent, influence fallen reality.

No clearer illustration of chaos at work can be shown than the curse of the Tower of Babel, and mankind is seen to revert constantly to chaotic brutality, in terms of war and hatred, in the history-before-the-fact lesson that Michael teaches. We see early in book XI (ll. 58-62) that "all in a rage... they storm". God sees the unmistakable "hubbub strange", which is allied to the "universal hubbub wild" (II, 951) of pure chaos. The "din" he hears conjures up the confusion of war in heaven, as much as it does the tumult and uproar Satan met in his voyage out of hell. The place is Babel--"Confusion" (XII, 62) in other words--a concrete example of man's failure in the guise of achievement.

If these sentiments appear paradoxical, it is because with the fallen world come complications and considerations superfluous in the perfection of Paradise. They bewilder Adam in his new state of instability and constant change. He is delighted by the sexual presentation of the sons of Seth enjoying the daughters of men (XI, 574-627), but is told this is bad sex: the chaos of incontinent orgy. Similarly, he is miserable over the chaotic destruction of the Flood (XI, 738-62), but is encouraged by Michael to look on the bright side of things. Matters are no longer determined in plain good and evil, white and black, but wrestled with in complicating shades of nebulous grey.

Adam must learn to take the good with the bad and rely on faith, in the assurance that all is for the best. Unlike paradise, however, his situation, while teleological, is no longer understandable, and it is with some doubt anyway that he would ever want to emulate someone like Enoch: "The only righteous in a world perverse, / And therefore hated" (XI, 701-2). Adam has already failed to grasp the precept of Abdiel as single-minded order amidst the chaos of revolt, so it is to be hoped that his Fall will make him a wiser as well as sadder man. He is uncomfortably on his own now but, while human history will have to rely on the heroism of men like Enoch, Noah and Moses in the Abdiel-like position of knowing when thousands err, God has not withdrawn completely.

Internally, man must now face up to his own serious personal

flaws. "Before is all abyss" (XII, 555), cries Adam. This is the same "abyss of fear" (X, 842) he had discerned earlier, and the very word "abyss" has been tied to chaos throughout the poem. Without God to prop him up, Adam sees the abysmal void stretch out before him, yet this same internalization of thought is how Adam will repair himself. He says:

> Henceforth I learn that to obey is best,
> And love with fear the only God, to walk
> As in his presence, ever to observe
> His providence, and on him sole depend.
> (XII, 561-4)

In saying this, Adam has attained "the sum / Of wisdom" (XII, 575-6). Because of his realization of obedience he can develop an internal faith of prayer, of meditative communion with God in charity. This will be man's "paradise within" in a hostile world.

This "paradise within" must be clarified by recalling Mammon's "our own good from ourselves" (II, 252). Both cases amplify a purely subjective stance in a state where external pressures have gone mad, but while "good from ourselves" is a perversion of the "good" of God, the "paradise within" is not. Satan and the fallen angels cope with total despair by, what is, for them, the eradication of good. Man, on the other hand, faces only a thwarting of good through his own action, and must now focus on an otherworldly paradise while dwelling in a fragmented mortal one, "from shadowy types to truth" (XII, 303).

Because of the radical changes in both their internal and external

worlds, we see "our ling'ring parents" (XII, 638) hesitate at the eastern gate. They view the desiccated plain before them with the same apprehension that made Satan hesitate before venturing into chaos. They are alienated here, and their lost and confounded descendants, described in books XI and XII, will have more in common with the spiritually homeless Satan, than with an unimaginable Edenic pair for whom Paradise was once home.

Stanley Fish suggests that, by this point in the poem, "The direct involvement of the reader in the experience of a problem is no longer the function of the verse",[1] and this is quite true as we passively receive the tableaux presented to Adam as matters of history to us. But the reader is still, as Fish determines, "confronted with evidence of his corruption and becomes aware of his inability to respond adequately to spiritual conceptions."[2] Even with centuries of hindsight we still misapply the lessons derived from Old Testament stories, and stubbornly debate the finer points of Revelation. We are every bit the backsliding mortals viewed by Adam in the final two books, and it is difficult to remain detached as Adam's cry of remorse for paradise lost touches a chord of homesickness strung somewhere innate in the fallen psyche:

> . . . all places else
> Inhospitable appear and desolate,
> Nor knowing us nor known.
> (XI, 305-7)

The joined hands of Adam and Eve reveal a fallen concord at the end of the poem. They will have to rely on each other for survival, yet hand-in-hand they serve as a symbol, not of a new order, but of a precarious state of order. Just as they can never again know perfection, so too can they never again know each other perfectly. If the incommunicable bliss of paradisal marriage can be subverted, are not the fallen possibilities of treachery, infidelity and deceit to be considered perpetual fears in people we can never <u>really</u> know?

The fallen pair take their way in the simple dignity of outcasts wholly dependent on mutual support, and their steps cannot help but be "wand'ring steps and slow" (XII, 647). Wasn't it Satan after all who attempted the abyss "with wand'ring feet" (II, 404), and the demons who, upon dissolving the "great consult", disbanded "wand'ring each his several way" (II, 523) in similar dismay? Adam and Eve do not depart, as Bentley would have it, "with heav'nly comfort chear'd",[3] because, regardless of God's unending providence, we have not witnessed the working-out of a divine comedy. They are guilty of their past and completely uncertain of their future. What lies in store stretches out before them in an empire of chance, choice and danger. Each step they take will be a mystery, an experiment of faith over fear. Robert Adams characterizes this fallen empire well:

> It is not an empire to be fought by ranked battalions; it is discord, passivity, weakness--Chaos in other words, seen not from the outside

> as a stuttering, moping old man with a facial tic, but from the inside, as a constant ingredient of the Christian life.[4]

The chaos of doubt and uncertainty is what Adam and Eve must learn to live with, and it is a legacy that we endure today. Irrational choice, surprise and circumstance shape reality within a set of ostensible rules. The rules appear to be purely subjective because God has withdrawn direct communication, and there is no umpire like the Son present to stop Satan's warmongering. Because of this, warfare supervenes in its watered-down guise of fallen experience. Michael even assures Adam, at this point, that there is no infallible earthly authority (XII, 527-9). Those freakish members of Chaos' court we have seen described earlier (II, 959-67), Rumor, Chance, Confusion and others, have infiltrated the fallen world, and they are everywhere.

These troublesome wrinkles on experience keep our lives from unfolding smoothly, but they are not overtly evil. Because they break down order, though, they allow evil to rush in without a qualm. There is always an evil side to rumor or chance, or any other chaotic counterpart because of the uncertainty, because of the mystery. We have seen throughout the poem that darkness symbolizes just this type of evil enshroudment, and the psalmist warns us, "the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty" (Psalm 74:20).

Notice that the darkness itself is not evil, but evil resides there. Again, these malevolent shadows may be of the mind: "The

mind is its own place, and in itself / Can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n" (I, 254-5), or in the visible external world of "night, not now as ere man fell, / Wholesome and cool and mild, but with black air / Accompanied with damps and dreadful gloom" (X, 846-8). In both cases the metaphor at work is one of brooding perversity coupled with anarchic breakdown.

Chaos of itself is not evil, but its terrible ability to confound and distort what must now be taken on faith for reality, makes it the basis of aversion and horror that is attached to evil. Evil supplants good through the medium of chaos because, by the time we arrive at evil through chaos, we already are at a profound remove from good, which is to be found only in a state of order. We see this process illustrated in Satan's nine-day fall to hell. With the breakdown of the ordered state the fragments easily mutate to evil instead of good, because their "good" was only to be had in a state of order. We see this illustrated in man's fall and disobedience. The situations are irreversible in themselves, because only God possesses the power to draw ordered good out of chaos.

We are no longer in a state of ordered control, as Michael's lesson in books XI and XII exemplifies. Adam receives an overdose of chaotic reality in the same way we receive it daily on the broadcast news. In the space of two books Adam is given highlights of Old Testament history, concretely related to his original Fall, leading up to the

ministry of Christ; in the space of ten minutes every evening we are informed of worldwide unrest and tumult leading into the mystery of tomorrow. Both cases evince a heightened awareness that reinforces the chaos of fallen reality. It is a disturbing reality, similar to the effect Milton achieved in the encompassing view of the demons in Pandemonium, or in the warring of microscopic atoms in chaos.

We refer back, at this point, to what Bush calls a "blind anarchy of spirit"[5] in the demons (II, 521-628), and its anticipation of fallen man's errors and presumptions. The technique in book II presents clever, fast-paced enjambment describing the demons in their "restless thoughts" (l. 526) and "irksome hours" (l. 527). The poetry's rapid shifting of focus moves the lines faster with a nervy "look here, look now" type of confusion, culminating in the blanket description of finding "no end in wand'ring mazes lost" (II, 561).

This, of course, points forward to the "blind anarchy" of the various creeds and factions that abound politically, religiously, socially and in any other conceivable banding-together one might expect today. It includes esoteric societies, cults, terrorists and manic devotees of lunatic fringe groups spouting "vain wisdom all, and false philosophy" (II, 565) like the baffled demons. Only faith in God as source of all is tenable, and we are not to forget the Israelites' periodic slinking off to worship in "gay religions full of pomp and gold, / And devils to adore for deities" (I, 372-3). In connection with this, the

golden calf incident (Exodus 32) and the rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16), are to be seen as prime examples of our "perverse and crooked generation" (Deuteronomy 32:5).

Of course all this is inevitable in fallen mankind, and Michael assures Adam, "Doubt not but that sin / Will reign among them" (XII, 285-6). He also points out that "Law can discover sin, but not remove, / ...So law appears imperfect" (XII, 290...300), lending credence to a passage in Plato's The Laws that is surprisingly expressed in the identical examples of storm, war and disease that Adam digests in fallen corruption, and at Michael's knee:

> Athenian: I was going to say that no man ever legislates at all. Accidents and calamities occur in a thousand different ways, and it is they that are the universal legislators of the world. If it isn't pressures of war that overturn a constitution and rewrite the laws, it's the distress of grinding poverty; and disease too forces us to make a great many innovations, when plagues beset us for years on end and bad weather is frequent and prolonged. Realizing all these possibilities, you may jump to conclusions and say what I said just now, that no mortal ever passes any law at all, and that human affairs are almost entirely at the mercy of chance. ... --but at the same time there's another point that could be made about all these examples, and with no less justification.
> Cleinias: What?
> Athenian: That the all-controlling agent in human affairs is God, assisted by the secondary influences of "chance" and "opportunity". [6]

"Man's first disobedience" sets the trend for the perplexing disappointment of the way things are. Every setback and lapse of

judgement since is an extrapolation from the original mistake, and is an inevitable part of fallen experience. We must not forget there is a core of order--God planned it that way--yet systems fall apart, order is constantly thwarted.

In this connection chaos is not opposite to reality, but is seen to seep into reality. From utter chaos to pandemonium to fallen reality is a transition of degree only. This diffusion is subtle at some points, radical at others. While the chaos of total war is periodic, the pandemonium of crime and violence never stops.

It all points toward a logical conclusion--the world of ordered nature will inevitably be reduced to that from which it came, as man inevitably is: dust to dust, ashes to ashes, chaos to chaos. Milton ensures this by giving us the final word on chaos, both cosmologically and metaphorically, early in the poem. In an unforgettable line, impressionistically stressing the case for infinite possibility, he tells us chaos is "The womb of nature, and perhaps [my emphasis] her grave" (II, 911).

NOTES

1. Stanley Fish, Surprised By Sin, (Toronto: Macmillan and Co., 1967), p. 295.

2. Fish, p. ix.

3. Quoted in Joseph Summers' The Muse's Method, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1962), p. 188.

4. Adams, p. 85.

5. Bush, ed. Poetical Works, p. 243; note to l. 521.

6. Plato, The Laws, ed. and trans Trevor J. Saunders, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1970), sec. 709, p. 164.

CONCLUSION

We exist in a state of uncertainty where nothing is secure--a state of chaos in fact, and have, ever since the Fall. To be sure it is not the chaos Satan travelled madly through, nor the chaos of war in heaven. These are extreme examples recounted, in the first place, for our benefit, in the second, for Adam's. This everpresent danger is something illustrated early in Paradise Lost, where we are presented the danger of Leviathan who,

> haply slumb'ring on the Norway foam,
> The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff,
> Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
> With fixèd anchor in his scaly rind
> Moors by his side under the lee, while night
> Invests the sea, and wishèd morn delays.
> (I, 203-8)

Sinister night "invests the sea" above which is the unwary seaman's doom. His misconception is typical of fallen man's condition where one moment does not necessarily follow from another. We exercise our free-will and, in so doing, leave ourselves at the mercy of chance. As Virginia Woolf so succinctly put in in The Waves, "the door opens and the tiger leaps."

No mortal mind can comprehend the bizarre circumstance, coincidence and, even, terror of reality. Senseless violence, criminal

negligence and deluded understanding are facts of life encountered daily. Our actions today may have direct bearing on what happens tomorrow, but there is room for infinite possibility in the interim. Dare we be so bombastic as to consider ourselves in complete control? "Nobody's perfect," we often rationalize, and a little dose of chaos ensures this in a world where nothing is obvious, everything merely apparent.

We have seen the squabbling demons in the "consult" at Pandemonium. While the fallen angels are decidedly deranged, marital strife or total war are but pale reflections of the same. In fact all our incompetence and adversity is prepared for as extrapolations following directly from the Fall, and every circumstance, from the hell of mental breakdown to the irritation of pushing the pull-doors, is comprehended in the implications of chaos in Paradise Lost.

The only thing ultimately certain is death. Of course it is platitudinous to say so, but it is not the platitude of understanding; death is totally incomprehensible. Rather it is like a joke turned stale from overuse, where the absurdity is intact but so certain as to be numbing. Death moved into the world with Sin on a bridge through chaos. It is the medium through which they came, but while death is a relief from immortal sin (XI, 57-61), chaos is a perpetual state of perplexing torment to be endured as a part of man's definition here on earth.

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