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doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/35370482>

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“With Undiscording Voice”: Discord and Original Sin in Milton’s Poetic Imagination

by

Maggie Miller

Under the Direction of Paul Voss, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2023

ABSTRACT

Within his poetic imagination, John Milton frames the relationship between God and humanity around two cardinal doctrines: humanity's prelapsarian state of harmony with God and humanity's separation from God through original sin. Milton relies upon figurative language and images to articulate this binary of harmony and separation, or concord and discord. Although scholarship has devoted significant attention to images of harmony and discord in Milton's poetry, very little attention has been given uniquely to discord, and even less to Milton's many usages of the word in theological, interpersonal, allegorical, and musical or auditory contexts. Arguing for the significance of discord within Milton's poetic imagination, this thesis traces the persistent presence of discord across Milton's poetry; characterizes his understanding of discord with respect to its polysemy; and emphasizes that, despite relying upon varied usages, Milton insistently associates discord with original sin.

INDEX WORDS: John Milton, Paradise Lost, Theology, Poetry, Early modern, Seventeenth century

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2023

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May 2023

DEDICATION

For my mom, Lisa, my best friend and greatest champion. Thank you for always listening.
For my Grandmama and Granddaddy, for being present and encouraging me in everything that I
do.

For Cameron, for suffering alongside me. We made it.

For Cicero Bruce, my Virgil. Thank you for teaching Milton and for sharing with me the
permanent things.

Finally, for John Milton, the Lady of Christ's College, whose poetry transcends time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the members of my committee, Dr. Paul Voss, Dr. Stephen Dobranski, and Dr. Scott Lightsey, for your exceptional percipience and guidance. To attempt to convey the depth and value of the influence that your scholarship has had on my intellectual journey would take more pages than this thesis.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The relationship between God and his rational creation, humanity, finds frequent expression in Milton's poetic imagination.¹ In his poetry, Milton frames this relationship around two cardinal doctrines, humanity's prelapsarian state of unity with God and our postlapsarian separation from God through original sin. Beginning in the early poetry, Milton often articulates separation as "discord," literally and figuratively indicating a lack of unity, and this discordance infects the relationships between human beings as much as it does the relationship between a human and God. While frequently discussed in terms of music or its association with its counterpart, concord, discord alone has not been isolated for sustained discussion in Milton scholarship.² Yet, as this thesis will demonstrate, discord as an independent force generated by original sin proves fundamental to Milton's poetic imagination.

Milton begins conceptualizing discord within his poetic imagination as early as "At a Solemn Musick," penned during his time at Cambridge and again in "Epitaphium Damonis" in the 1630s-40s.³ In the former, Milton relies on the polysemy of "discord," its twin meanings of relational and musical disagreement, and he shapes discordance figuratively as a metaphor of "fair music" that humanity "Broke" with "disproportion'd sin" (lines 19-21).⁴ Before turning to this image of brokenness, Milton anticipates a future in which we, "with undiscording voice,"

¹ I define the poetic imagination in the Romantic sense, as an epistemic and creative framework by which a poet perceives, internally organizes, and then shapes reality through the act of poetic creation. Such a framework utilizes metaphor and other imaginative images alongside poetic language to articulate a natural or metaphysical reality.

² The Western philosophical and literary tradition articulates the relationship between discord and concord most notably as *Discordia concors* or *concordia discors*, in which discordant elements are blended harmoniously. Situating discord and concord together in this way puts forth discord as a necessary component in the natural, cosmological, and spiritual order of the universe.

³ Milton does invoke the word "discord" as well as instances of discordance outside of his poetry, for instance in his example of a man hoping for a loving marriage and yet finding himself "bound fast to an uncomplying discord of nature." See Milton, *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce*, 710. However, I will not deal with those instances at length here, as my present focus is on Milton's poetic imagination, specifically the language and poetic devices that he uses to conceptualize discord in his poetry.

⁴ Citations and line numbers from "At a Solemn Musick" and *Paradise Lost* are taken from Merritt Hughes (Hackett Publishing, 1957).

might “rightly answer that melodious noise” of harmonious worship in heaven, rejoining the eternal congregation of which we were once a part (17, 18). In the latter, more latently theological poem, the grieving shepherd, Thyrsis, characterizes “man” as *pectore discors*, “discordant in heart” (line 107).⁵ While this characterization isn’t distinctly Christian, locating discordance within the human heart suggests that human nature is inherently corrupt, a notion identified in the Judeo-Christian tradition as original sin. When Milton returns to the concept of discord in *Paradise Lost* in the 1660s, he aggregates the relational and aural connotations in the personified Discord, a figure he borrows from the classical epic tradition of Homer and Virgil. Milton’s “Daughter of Sin,” with her “thousand various mouths,” echoes her earlier, intangible figuration in “In quintum Novembris” as “*Efferā . . . Discordia*” or “savage Strife,” the mother of “grim Murder and double-tongued Treachery” (*PL* 2.967, 10.707; “In quintum” lines 141-42). The allegorical relationship which Milton develops in *Paradise Lost*, as scholars such as Earl Miner have shown, figures a relationship of causation in which Milton foregrounds Discord as the “Daughter,” or immediate and chief consequence, of sin. Predicated largely upon this relationship, this thesis consolidates Milton’s usages of discord, both personified and not, into a unified yet nuanced reading and argues that Milton repeatedly associates discord with original sin in his poetic imagination.

Concerning the personified Discord as a figure of the discordance that she embodies, I must acknowledge Jessica Wolfe’s recent book *Homer and the Question of Strife*, in which Wolfe evaluates how Renaissance writers appropriate Homeric ἔρις (*eris*, meaning “strife”; Latin counterpart is *Discordia*) in their poetry, particularly regarding their own spiritual and militaristic conflicts in the 16th and 17th centuries. Wolfe’s book provides not only a rich

⁵ Citations, line numbers, and translations of “Epitaphium Damonis” and “In quintum Novembris” are taken from Barbara Lewalski and Estelle Haan (Oxford UP, 2012).

background of Discord's classical history but also a detailed portrait of what discordance meant to early modern writers who were readers of Homer; her chapter on Milton's appropriation of the Homeric "razor's edge" with regard to choice and free will figures into my discussion of Satanic choice and responsibility in the civil war in heaven. Apart from Wolfe, Discord interests Miltonic scholarship only through her ties to the classical tradition that produced her. Patrick Hume interprets Discord's "thousand various mouths" as "a thousand different Opinions," and Milton's recent editors, namely Roy Flannagan, William Kerrigan, John Rumrich, Stephen Fallon, and Alastair Fowler, continue to suggest inspirations for her "mouths" in Virgil, Homer, and Spenser (Hume 92). Most recently, Stephen Dobranski echoes Hume in identifying Discord as Death's sister, which Dobranski clarifies comes from the Greco-Roman mythological tradition (407nn10.707-08). I will supplement these observations by drawing a connection between the personifications, particularly the Discord of Book 2 and the "Daughter of Sin" in Book 10 in *PL*, and by relating the unpersonified and personified usages.

Over three centuries after Hume, Miner struggles with the familial, albeit allegorical, relationship between Discord and her mother, Sin. Miner offers the most substantial exploration of Discord's allegorical purpose as well as her identity in *Paradise Lost*, and he challenges the familial relationship asserted by Hume by placing Milton's personifications on a "spectrum," upon which "at one extreme we have (as with the sole daughter of God's voice) what is only slightly a personified figure of speech and, at the other extreme, we have (as with Sin) an allegorical figure endowed with speech" (440). Miner's observation that a "relationship" that hovers between the literal and the allegorical, in this case between Sin and Discord, "takes on features of causation" figures prominently into my discussion as the most explicit conceptualization of discord in association with original sin (445). Miner's concerns augment

Stephen Fallon's notable discussions of Milton's allegory of Sin and Death, particularly considering Discord's encounters with both allegorical figures in the poem.⁶ Fallon does not comment on Discord, even in relation to Sin and Death, perhaps owing to her ambiguous categorization as an allegory. I aim to augment the work of Miner and Fallon by aligning the allegorical Discord with her unpersonified forms, both relational and aural, in the poem.

This thesis bridges discussions of allegory and symbol with formal interest in the use and function of sound in Milton's poetry established by T.S. Eliot in the early-20th century. Eliot was certainly not the first to express interest in Milton's "auditory imagination," but his influence carries significant weight in Miltonic scholarship (161).⁷ Interest in music relative to Milton's poetry continues to thrive throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century. Out of this interest came historical studies of Milton's own musical background as well as those that deal with music in the poetry directly.⁸ In my discussion I am largely concerned with the latter, beginning with foundational studies of early modern conceptions of music, especially as music intersects with cosmology and philosophy, and these include foundational studies such as Leo Spitzer's *Classical and Christian Ideas of World Harmony*, Gretchen Finney's *Musical Backgrounds for English Literature: 1580-1650*, John Hollander's *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700*, and more recently Diane McColley's *Poetry and Music in Seventeenth-Century England*. These book-length studies situate Milton's poetry amongst other poets and writers, but since even the early 20th century, a plethora of valuable articles, book chapters, and dissertations have emerged which isolate the music of Milton's

⁶ See Fallon, "Milton's Sin and Death: The Ontology of Allegory in Paradise Lost," *ELR* 17(3) (1987).

⁷ David Pascoe, in his essay "A Source for the 'Auditory Imagination'?" (*Notes & Queries* 41.3, pp. 374-6) locates the phrase "auditory imagination" earlier than Eliot in Egerton Smith's 1923 book, *The Principles of English Verse*.

⁸ For studies of Milton's musical background, see Sigmund Spaeth, *Milton's Knowledge of Music* (Dissertation, 1913); Diane McColley, "Music," in *Milton in Context*, ed. Dobranski (Cambridge, 2010); and John Harper, "'One equal music': The Music of Milton's Youth," *MQ* 31(1) (2007).

poetry for sole consideration;⁹ these interests are active today, evidenced most recently in Jason Rosenblatt's and Katherine Larson's discussions of music in *Milton Studies*.¹⁰

Out of these studies of music came discussions that deal with "At a Solemn Musick" at length in terms of its music as well as its themes and grammar, namely William Darkey's MA thesis, M. Christopher Pecheux's detailed study of the octave in the lyric poem, Haiduseck's dissertation in the late 1990s, Stephen Buhler's chapter concerning scripture and biblical history in the poem in *Spokesperson Milton: Voices in Contemporary Criticism*, and Nicholas Moschovakis' detailed essay concerning the poem's punctuation and syntax.¹¹ Toward the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st, popular analyses of speculative, harmonious, or "perfect" music become more nuanced and complex. For example, scholars such as Buhler, Eric Brown, and Andrew Mattison challenge the "perfection" of Milton's harmonies, and an interest in fallen or Satanic music emerged.¹² Mattison's essay is of particular interest, as it deals explicitly with what he sees to be an unachievable harmony in "At a Solemn Musick."

⁹ See, for just a few of innumerable examples, Lotys Benning's dissertation, *John Milton's Conception of Music* (Butler University, 1931); Nan Cooke Carpenter, "The Place of Music in L'Allegro and Il Penseroso" *U of Toronto Quarterly* 22: 1953, pp. 354-67; Donald Friedman, "Harmony and the Poet's Voice in Some of Milton's Early Poems," *Modern Language Quarterly* 30(4), 1969, pp. 523-34; Max Patrick, *Milton and the Art of Sacred Song* (U of Wisconsin P, 1979); James Brophy, "Milton's 'Warble': The Trill as Metaphor of Concord," *MQ* 19(4): Dec. 1985, pp. 105-9; Regina M. Largent, "A Multilevel Celebration: Milton's Morning Hymn," *MQ* 22(2): May 1988, pp. 63-6; M. N. K. Mander, "Milton and the Music of the Spheres," *MQ* 24(2): May 1990, pp. 63-71; Robert T. Fallon, "'Eve Dreams in Paradise': A Musical Setting for Milton," *MQ* 24(3): Oct. 1990, pp. 109; John Carey, "Milton's Harmonious Sisters," in *The Well-Enchanting Skill* (Oxford UP, 1990); and Marc Berley, "Milton's Earthly Grossness: Music and the Condition of the Poet in L'Allegro and Il Penseroso," *MS* 30: 1993, pp. 149-61.

¹⁰ Katherine R. Larson, "'Blest pair of Sirens . . . Voice and Verse': Milton's Rhetoric of Song," *MS* 54: 2013, pp. 81-106 and Jason Rosenblatt, "Milton's Timeless Music," *MS* 62(2): 2020, pp. 323-35.

¹¹ Darkey, "Milton's 'At a Solemn Musick': A Commentary," MA Thesis, Columbia University, 1949; Pecheux, "'At a Solemn Musick': Structure and Meaning," *Studies in Philology* 75(3), pp. 331-46; Haiduseck, *"Where more is meant than meets the ear": The Value of Music in the Early Poetry of John Milton*, Dissertation, Lamar University, 1997; Buhler, "Jubilee in Scripture and History: Reading Milton's 'At a Solemn Music'" in *Spokesperson Milton*, pp. 71-86; Moschovakis, "Great Period: Pointing, Syntax, and the Millennium in the Texts of 'At a Solemn Musick,'" *MQ* 36(4), pp. 199-200.

¹² Buhler, "Counterpoint and Controversy: Milton and the Critiques of Polyphonic Music," *MS* 36: 1998, pp. 18-40; Eric Brown, "'The Melting Voice Through Mazes Running': The Dissolution of Borders in 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso,'" *MS* 40: 2001, pp. 1-18; Andrew Mattison, "Sweet Imperfection: Milton and the Troubled Metaphor of Harmony," *Modern Philology* 106: 2001, pp. 617-47; Ann Ashworth, "Pandemonium and 'The Temple of Music,'" *MQ* 16(1): March 1982, p. 11.

Most recently, I am indebted to Katherine Cox's scholarship on the technical function and production of Satanic sound in Milton's poetry, in which she explores the combined influences of meteorology and theology on Satanic and fallen sound and acoustics.¹³ In dealing with mechanical and technical sound beyond music, Cox's work updates Eliot's interest in "Milton's auditory imagination." This thesis engages Cox's questions of the nature of fallen sound with Milton's descriptions of discordant sound in the Satanic, Chaotic, and earthly realms. Erin Minear, David Ainsworth, and Diane McColley contribute studies of ambiguity, the blurring of boundaries, and images of distinction and separation in Milton's harmonies, all of which are valuable to my analysis of the necessity of discord within harmony.¹⁴ To Ainsworth and James Brophy I am particularly grateful for their word studies of "rapture" and "warble," respectively, both of which not only gave me valuable models for my own study of "discord," but more importantly contribute to my discussion of metaphorical and polysemous language in Milton's poetry.¹⁵

Interestingly, even within Cox's focus on fallen and Satanic acoustical spaces and sounds, I have yet to find any examination of discordant sound in the realm of Chaos, although Cox's engagement with Pliny's *Natural History* provides a good starting point. Chaos itself has generated a significant amount of interest throughout the 20th century, with the focus shifting from debates of its morality to its nature, and, most recently, to its ecology, as Sarah Smith discusses in a recent essay for *Milton Studies*.¹⁶ Although Milton scholarship addresses discord

¹³ Cox, *The Science of Sound in Milton's Poetry*, Dissertation, UT Austin, 2014; "The Power of the Air in Milton's Epic Poetry," *SEL* 56(1), pp. 149-70; "'How cam'st thou speakable of mute': Satanic Acoustics in 'Paradise Lost,'" *MS* 57, pp. 233-60.

¹⁴ Minear, *Reverberating Song in Shakespeare and Milton* (Ashgate, 2011); Ainsworth, "Rapturous Milton and the Communal Harmony of Faith," *MQ* 47(3), pp. 149-62; McColley's book I've mentioned above, *Poetry and Music in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge UP, 1997).

¹⁵ Brophy, "Milton's 'Warble': The Trill as Metaphor of Concord," *MQ* 19(4), pp. 105-9.

¹⁶ For a few contributions to this conversation, see Chambers, "Chaos in *Paradise Lost*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24.1, pp. 55-84; Lieb, *The Dialectics of Creation* (UMass, 1970); Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating*

minimally, this thesis builds and necessarily relies upon a century-old critical tradition of music and sound in Milton's poetry, as well as innumerable studies of theology, cosmology, and philosophy, and I am indebted to these scholars who have dealt with what are broad and intricate fields within Miltonic scholarship.

Principally, I am concerned with the following three questions: (1) Perhaps most demonstrably, in what ways does "discord" serve social and auditory functions in these poems? (2) Combining the explicit and implicit instances of discord, how might we perceive discord with God individually as well as in relation to a larger, broken macrocosm? (3) Balancing the individual with the whole, what do these instances of social and auditory discord tell us about how Milton represents discordance between God and humanity in his poetic imagination? By foregrounding discord, I emphasize Milton's understanding of the polysemy of the term while consistently associating it with original sin, and I argue that its persistent presence demonstrates its significance in Milton's poetic imagination as representative of the human condition with respect to original sin.

I organize the two chapters of this thesis around two broader categories, social and aural, into which I have grouped instances of "discord" in Milton's poetry. In the first chapter, I borrow James Brophy's description of a particular sound in Milton's poetry as "the metaphoric embodiment of its context" and apply it to discord, emphasizing it as similarly figurative and representative of the broader scenes of discordance out of which the discordant sound arises (Brophy 106). I then turn to the three instances of discordant sound in *Paradise Lost*, the Creation sequence in Book 7, in which God commands the "troubl'd waves" to be silent and

(Cambridge UP, 1988); Rumrich, *Milton Unbound* (Cambridge UP, 1996); Teskey, *Delirious Milton* (Cambridge UP, 2006); Sugimura, "*Matter of Glorious Trial*": *Spiritual and Material Substance* (Yale UP, 2009); and Smith, "The Ecology of Chaos," *MS* 59, pp. 31-55.

demands that the “discord” of the “Deep . . . / . . . end” (7.216-17), then to the discordant sound in the realm of Chaos which “assaults” the ear of Satan as he makes his way to the throne of Chaos (2.953), and finally to Raphael’s recounting of the “Arms on Armour clashing” which “bray’d / Horrible discord,” an aural image that evokes the violent strife between the angel armies (6.209-10). In each of these instances, Milton offers sound that is concomitantly literal and metaphorical. Specifically, I trace how Milton develops and refines his conception of discordant sound as metaphorical, looking to how he begins with a relatively simplistic image of discordant sound standing in for spiritual discordance in “At a Solemn Musick” and then complicates this sound in *Paradise Lost* both in terms of instances of discord that specific sounds represent and in terms of presenting discord itself as a source of sound.

While my first chapter looks at discordant sound as a vehicle, my second chapter characterizes the relational discord that Milton conceptualizes using figurative language not only of sound and music, but also of the elements, specifically the image of a tempest. In this chapter, I emphasize the relational discord that drives Milton’s original metaphor of discordance in “At a Solemn Musick” and which he explores in more detail regarding unity and separation between individuals in *Paradise Lost*, and I argue that this form of discord equates isolation or alienation between humans one to another and between humans and God. This isolation results, as I will show, from individual choice and action, first evidenced in Satan’s choices and actions which then echo in Eve’s own choices and actions. These choices to rebel, for both Satan and Eve, result in isolation from others and from God. I explore Satan’s rhetoric and action in relation to the consequent physical and ontological alienation that torments him after his fall. Shifting to Satan’s endeavors on earth, I explore how he rhetorically glorifies isolation using terms of regality and divinity when he tempts Eve, and I contrast this misrepresentation of solitude with

the emotional isolation that Adam and Eve experience between one another, represented by the “high Winds worse within” that include “Discord,” as well as spiritual isolation from God after they sin (9.1122-24).

In tracing Milton’s usages of discord across his poetry, I hope to characterize and understand how each usage individually contributes to Milton’s larger, comprehensive understanding of spiritual discordance in his poetic imagination. Specifically, I hope to accentuate Milton’s multifaceted understanding of discord, as each of his usages reflects the term’s classical, theological, interpersonal, and musical meanings. Finally, I identify Milton’s consistent association of discord with original sin, and I argue for the significance of discord to Milton’s understanding of the human condition with respect to original sin in his poetic imagination. From understanding Milton’s comprehensive definition and usage of “discord,” we can appreciate how he defines what it means for humanity to be “discordant” with God.

2 THE SOUNDS OF DISCORD

Discordant sound in Milton's poetry is at once metaphorical and tangible, disembodied despite its physicality. In the early lyric of the 1630s, "At a Solemn Musick," Milton anticipates an "undiscording voice" with which humanity will one day sing and join the harmonies of heavenly music. His use of a negation, in which the adjective "discordant" is embedded, to describe the as-yet unrealized "undiscording voice" seemingly implies a discordant voice in the present. Gretchen Finney aptly names this implied, unharmonious voice "the resonant fugues of a fallen people," a corrupt sound that metaphorically represents a corrupt nature (178). This discordant sound hovers between the lines of the poem without being heard or even articulated, and, although I am primarily interested in the metaphor and not the presence of actual sound, Milton's ambiguous hint at discordant sound invites all sorts of speculation. For instance, is the sound purely metaphorical and applied here only to fulfill the image of humanity reuniting with God? Or might the sound, like the music of the angel choirs, be present and audible? If the sound is physically present here on earth, in the form of singing or worship, then it cannot be speculative in the same way that the music of heaven is, for Milton. Yet, like the music of heaven, we cannot hear our "undiscording voice" in the poem. I will return to these questions briefly later in this chapter but suffice it to say for now that discordant sound in "At a Solemn Musick" undoubtedly serves a chiefly metaphorical purpose, and the poem seems to evade an explicit description of it.

In *Paradise Lost*, although Milton maintains discord's dual meanings of sound and disagreement from his earlier lyric, he complicates the context, meaning, and presence of discordant sound. Discordant sound in the epic seems more corporeal and is articulated more directly, even as it continues to act figuratively. Like Katherine Cox has shown of angelic speech

in the epic, discordant sound too “raises questions about the physicality of sound,” as it physically “assaults” Satan’s ear and “bray[s]” out from metallic “Arms on Armour clashing” (Cox 1; *PL* 2.953, 6.209). Yet, despite its new tangibility, Milton continues to employ discordant sound as “the metaphoric embodiment of its context,” although the context shifts from only representing separation between fallen humanity and God to embodying relational discord between angelic beings and between humans (Brophy 106).¹⁷ Further, discordant sound in *Paradise Lost* may be found apart from music most uniquely in the use of Michael’s trumpet as a signal in battle rather than an instrument of music or in the form of a verbal disagreement. In this chapter, I trace the development of Milton’s conception of discordant sound from the early musical metaphor of “At a Solemn Musick” to *Paradise Lost*. Relying on Brophy’s description while engaging with Cox’s discussion of acoustics in Milton’s poetry, I show that, although Milton in the later epic continues to use discordant sound metaphorically, *Paradise Lost* reveals Milton complicating his understanding of it as both a metaphor and a physical presence.

2.1 Classical, Musical, and Polysemous Discord

Long before signifying sound, whether embodied or disembodied, *Discordia* (Latin, from the Greek ἔρις [*eris*]) pervaded the classical world as a figuration of conflict both abstract and personified. As Jessica Wolfe observes, beginning with the proverbial apple of discord which, according to the mythos, ignited the Trojan War, “*Eris* pervades every aspect of the human and cosmic fabric in Homeric epic,” from personifying “love of conflict both for good and for ill” in the *Iliad* to her unpersonified presence in the *Odyssey* which becomes “something that might be

¹⁷ Although the articulation of it belongs to Brophy, he credits the idea to Joseph Summers, who shows “warbling” in Milton’s poetry “to be the metaphoric embodiment of its context” (106).

. . . more reconcilable with harmony” (7, 15). Whether of healthy competition or vicious conflict, her presence “represent[s] the starting point of a complex iconographic and intellectual tradition” beginning in classical poetry, epic, and philosophy and spanning across the English Renaissance (15). Apart from Homer, Discord appears in Plato, Aristotle, Hesiod, and Seneca; in Antoninus Liberalis, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Statius, Quintus Smyrnaeus, and Thucydides. Virgil’s *Fama* bears her mark even as he separates her from *Strife*, whom he also personifies. That the *Discordia* of Ennius’s *Annals* most likely inspired Virgil’s *Alecto* must not be left unacknowledged, as *Alecto* inspired Milton’s figurations of Satan’s whispering to the Pope of “In quintum Novembris” and to Eve in *Paradise Lost*. From the 14th to the 17th centuries, we find her presence in Boccaccio, Ariosto, Spenser, and, as this thesis concerns itself primarily, Milton.

Earlier, I broached Milton’s classically informed personifications of *Discordia*, both in “In quintum Novembris” (1626) and then in *Paradise Lost*. In the latter, unlike her gruesome relatives Sin and Death, Discord hovers somewhere between allegory and physical presence. As I established earlier, the personified Discord of *Paradise Lost* chiefly informs my discussion because, unlike her allegorical companions in the realm of Chaos, she seemingly reappears later in the poem. When Sin and Death make their way into Paradise in Book 10, Death introduces Discord, the “Daughter of Sin,” into the temporal world “through fierce antipathy” (708, 709). Milton relates Discord to Sin using a causal relationship that allegorically identifies Discord as a “Daughter,” or, as Miner shows, a natural consequence of Sin. I will return to this relationship more substantially in the third chapter of this thesis, but I mention the relationship here to acknowledge Milton’s continuation of a classical tradition in personifying Discord.

Discord's long heritage necessitates a distinction of terminology, one that circumscribes every usage of "discord" in Milton's poetry that I will discuss in this and the next chapter: as we see from the Latin and Greek roots, the names *Discord* and *Strife* are inextricable, and the names are often used interchangeably in translation, evidenced in Lewalski's translation of "Discordia" as "Strife" in "In quintum Novembris" (line 142). As unpersonified forces, both "strife" and "discord" denote conflict or separation, and, although Milton uses "strife" more so than he uses "discord" across his poetry, only "discord" can also connote sound.¹⁸ Conscious of both meanings, Milton frequently invokes discord's two connotations simultaneously, making the word perfect grounds for a metaphor.

The *OED* places the first musical usage of "discord" at the end of the 14th century in John Trevisa's translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus's *De Proprietatibus Rerum* as affiliated with "melodye" and again in the mid-15th century in the encyclopedic *Promptorium Parvulorum* as an official musical definition, "Dyscorde yn songe, dissonancia" ("discord," n.). The composer John Dowland defined discord in *The Art of Singing* (1609), his translation of Ornithoparcus's *Musicae active micrologus* (1515), as, according to Boethius, "the hard and rough thwarting of two sounds, not mingled with themselves," or "the mixture of diuers sounds, naturally offending the eares" (79). Renaissance writers and poets similarly understood discord musically, evidenced in Spenser's observance that "So oftentimes a dischorde in Musick maketh a comely concordance" and Shakespeare's reference to "discord in the Spheares" (*Shepherd's Calender*, dedication, 417; *As You Like It* 2.7.6). As both musician and poet, Milton recognized the polysemy of "discord" as rich material for his metaphorical lyric. This polysemy grounds

¹⁸ Cleveland records 14 usages of "strife" across *Paradise Lost*, *Samson Agonistes*, "An Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester," "At a Vacation Exercise in the College," and "Psalm LXXX" (257).

Milton's understanding, as a poet and a musician, of discordance, and without it, discord as a metaphor in his poetry collapses.

2.2 The “undiscording voice” of “At a Solemn Musick”

Just over a decade ago, Andrew Mattison observed that, particularly in the case of Milton's poetic intimations of prelapsarian harmony that are inaccessible to a postlapsarian reader, “Harmony falls apart when asked to be literal, but as a figure it is cohesive and powerful” (618). Mattison's observation, though dealing with harmony more broadly, echoes Gretchen Finney's earlier assertion that Milton's speculative music of the spheres must be understood in poetical terms rather than literal, because, as Finney asserts, Milton “did not confuse Pythagoreanism with Christian theology” (162). That Milton did not intend for these images to be taken literally we can affirm from his own argument in Prolusion II that Pythagoras intended the spheres to be a parabolic means of conveying truth.¹⁹ Mattison argues even for Milton's distancing his 1645 *Poems* from music, asserting that Milton considered poetry's power more triumphant, potentially due to hesitation about the limitations of earthly music that troubled radical Protestants like Joseph Brookbank, an anxiety that Mattison suggests is referenced directly in the “undiscording voice” phrasing (645). However, Mattison and Finney agree along with many others that, despite his Puritanism and because of his musical background, not only was Milton fascinated with emergent musical trends like counterpoint, but in terms of its poetic usefulness, “the terminology of music lends itself to metaphor” (Mattison 637). David Ainsworth too voices the utility of metaphor in Milton's poetry, which he suggests “becomes a means

¹⁹ “For what sane man would suppose that Pythagoras . . . would have brought forward so well grounded a theory? Certainly, if he taught a harmony of the spheres, and a revolution of the heavens to that sweet music, he wished to symbolize in a wise way the intimate relations of the spheres and their even revolution forever in accordance with the law of destiny” (603).

through which fallen humanity can approach the truth within the limitations of their fallen condition” (151). Figurative musical harmony offers Milton rich material for poetically conceptualizing, as he believed Pythagoras did, spiritual unity and separation.

Marrying discord’s relational and aural connotations, “At a Solemn Musick” takes shape around a metaphor in which musical concord and discord serve as vehicles for humanity’s unity and separation with God. In the lyric, we find discordant sound implicit only in our “undiscording voice,” a term comprising a “double negative” which M. Christopher Pecheux argues lends itself both to “positive meaning” as well as “disturbing potentiality” (377). The option for restoration or permanent separation arises from the “power of choice” that allows the human to restore unity but “renders him capable also of destroying the concord” (337). Milton uses the term “undiscording” only once across his poetry, and, apart from Milton, the term seemingly appears only once again, in Gilbert West’s *The Institution of the Order of the Garter: A Dramatick Poem* (1742).²⁰ The word, one of Milton’s many neologisms, represents the poet’s preference for litotes, particularly in the “formation of words through a negative prefixation” (Corns 84).²¹ The use of litotes, especially negative prefixations, allows the poet to emphasize the word that he negates, and, in this instance, allows Milton to imply a present condition while negating it. In abstaining from any description of relational or auditory discordance in the poem, Milton complicates his conceptualization of discord in two ways: he heightens the uncertainty of restoration generated by free will and the ability to accept or reject unity, as Pecheux argues, and

²⁰ West appropriates Milton’s usage in nearly the same context: “Attuning to the sweet harmonious Spheres / Their undiscording Lyres and Voice divine” (50).

²¹ Thomas Corns discusses Milton’s negations at length in *Milton’s Language* (1990). He emphasizes the poet’s “collocation of terms with the same prefix – particularly ‘un-’” (84) and even indexes thirty-four words beginning with the prefix, but, while he does discuss “At a Solemn Musick” briefly, he does not mention “undiscording.”

he creates even greater ambiguity concerning the sound of aural discord than he does in his evasive descriptions of speculative, heavenly music.

Mattison calls Milton's "undiscording voice" a "bizarre quasi-double-negative definition of consonance," one that, as Mattison argues, Milton uses to "refer" to the imperfections of literal music that presented an obstacle for its use as a symbol for perfect harmony: "that its ratios are not pure, that all instruments introduce variations that work against the simplicity of harmony, that music in itself has the power of obscuring rather than aiding the clarity of scripture" (645). Mattison's assertions are confusing at best and contradictory at worst. He goes on to say that "the voice of the concert," a voice which Mattison has just clarified is not only perfect but "exists outside of time and in the realm of light rather than sound," actually does possess sound and music, which, though it be "perfect," is "necessarily discordant" and in fact has "discord built into" it (645). This argument reflects Mattison's earlier assertion that "the word 'undiscording' refers to an unattainable ideal . . . which thrives on discord as well as consonance" (622-23). Yet, Mattison does not clarify either of these positions substantially, and his assertions seem to contradict the poem entirely. While it does make sense that an implied, discordant voice of postlapsarian humanity awaiting heavenly unity in the poem would reflect the imperfections of literal music, a future, "undiscording" voice would not reflect imperfection, as Mattison suggests, but rather perfection. He does offer that such perfection cannot be envisioned with literal music but rather only with symbolism in poetry, but accepting this argument doesn't necessitate that the imagined, "undiscording" voice has to be imperfect because this is all a postlapsarian reader can envision.

Perhaps Mattison defines discord as difference only, and perhaps he means that the "undiscording voice" necessarily carries within it the separation of distinct, individual voices. If

so, he joins Ainsworth and McColley in this analysis. Ainsworth offers that “harmony relies upon difference and distinction,” and, “Concordance” in music “requires differentiation, in the sense that a note cannot be in concordance with itself” (150). He extends this necessity for separation to creation as a whole, which, within “a monistic cosmos . . . inherently involves a separation, a differentiation between creator and created” (151). Likewise, Diane McColley observes that the angels’ harmony in heaven “is a polyphonic web of being in which each voice is distinct, and made distinct by being part of the unity” (216). However, discordant sound does not equate harmonious sound separated by individual parts. Difference, or distinction, and discordance are not synonymous, as John Dowland explains in his *Art of Singing* (1609), in which he defines concord as “the agreeing of two vnlike Voyces placed together” and discord as “the hard and rough thwarting of two sounds, not mingled with themselues” (79). As difference, or discordance, is reconciled into harmony, such a chord formation becomes concordant and no longer discordant. While it does necessitate separation as Ainsworth and McColley have shown, music does not need discordance. Rather, discordance interrupts and is antithetical to harmony.

If, however, Mattison suggests that earthly music necessitates discordance because of its fallenness, then I agree entirely, and I believe that Milton does as well. Discordant voices must be reconciled (Latin *reconciliare*, “to bring back into . . . agreement, to bring back into harmony”). Mattison sees the wish for harmony as unachievable, characterizing “undiscording” as a “bizarre quasi-double-negative definition of consonance” (622). Puzzlingly, the “how” of reconciliation is absent from the poem. Ainsworth’s “Spirit” is nowhere to be found, and Christ, the means of reconciliation in the Christian view, does not appear. As Pecheux remarks, “man, still *in via*, lives in a world merely of potentiality” and, despite Milton’s personal views of salvation and predestination, initiates a “disturbing potentiality” in his “power of choice” (337).

Concerning our reconciliation, we are even given an unusual amount of autonomy, as Minear perceives, “Men cannot rejoin the heavenly tune by singing, but by behaving obediently and rightly” (194). Milton avoids describing the event of salvation in the same way that he avoids a description of discordant, fallen music in the poem: he is aware of it, but doesn’t seem interested in arguing or exploring the means. Unlike his later epic, this lyric is a metaphor and a celebration, not a theodicy.

Milton will continue to explore the relationship between original sin and discord in *Paradise Lost*, but in the epic he complicates and challenges the relatively simplistic yet frustratingly vague conceptualization of discord that we find in “At a Solemn Musick.” Exploring discord in *Paradise Lost* as it aligns with and deviates from musical discord in the early lyric, I modify the words of Katherine Cox, who recently questioned the nature of fallen sound in Milton’s poetry, by asking: what is discordant sound?²² In asking this question, I seek to identify not only what constitutes discordant sound for Milton but also what discordant sound represents in his poetic imagination.

2.3 The Chaotic Sounds of Discord

When Raphael recounts the events of the heavenly civil war to Adam and Eve, he describes two forms of discord. One, which I will explicate in more detail in the next chapter, encompasses the individual choices and actions which together amalgamate the relational “discord which befell” heaven. The other paints a picture of discordant sound: the metallic “clanging” of “Arms on Armor clashing bray’d / Horrible discord” at the outset of the conflict

²² Cox opens her dissertation with a depiction of the power of Raphael’s voice to remain in Adam’s ear when he is speaking. She writes: “Even as it teaches, as in the case of Raphael’s voice, sound deceives the sense. How then can we trust what we hear, and when should we stop listening? What enables sound to overpower the judgment? What *is* sound?” (5).

(6.209-10). Raphael's description of the battle is strikingly auditory; he says that the "dire . . . noise / Of conflict" is so loud, that "all Heav'n / Resounded, and had Earth been then, all Earth / Had to her Centre shook" (217-19). This scene, one of three instances of discordant sound in the epic, bears the most similarity to Milton's musical conceptualization of discord in "At a Solemn Musick" insofar as the sound in Raphael's account represents an actual disagreement or relational conflict. The "Armor clashing" produces a sound that, as Brophy suggests, "is the metaphoric embodiment of its context," meaning that in this one sound we can detect an image of the conflict in its entirety (106).

We are presented with a similar instance of metaphorically discordant sound earlier in Book 2. As Satan pauses on the brink of Chaos, "Pondering his Voyage" through the unknown substance which he must cross to enter the newly created world, his ear is "peal'd / With noises loud and ruinous" (2.921). As he makes his way through the realm, the sound intensifies and transforms into "a universal hubbub wild / Of stunning sounds and voices all confus'd," which, "Borne through the hollow dark assaults his ear / With loudest vehemence" (949; 51-54).²³ Stumbling through the realm, Satan "plies, / Undaunted to meet there whatever power / Or spirit of the nethermost Abyss / Might in that noise reside" and comes across "the Throne / Of *Chaos*," around which are scattered several demonic figures and among them "*Discord* with a thousand various mouths" (2.954-7, 959-60, 967). The image, acoustically speaking, is odd. Although the figures whom Satan encounters seem to be situated spatially at the center of the sound, a sound which intensifies as Satan draws closer to it, Milton doesn't offer the same clarity as to the sound's definite source as he does, say, with the angels' responsive "shout" of confirmation at

²³ Milton recycles the "hubbub" phraseology in the later description of Nimrod's tower and the confusion of Babel, when God sends "a various Spirit . . . To sow a jangling noise of words unknown" as punishment for humanity's arrogance (12.53-55). From this confusion "a hideous gabble rises loud / Among the Builders," which heaven looks upon "to see the hubbub strange / And hear the din" (56-7, 60-1).

the words and commands of God in heaven (3.345). No figure upon the throne is stated to be producing the noise, and the discordant sound isn't mentioned again once Satan reaches the throne.

The “voices all confus'd” invite comparison with Hume's interpretation of the personified Discord's “thousand various mouths” as representing “a thousand different opinions” (92). The voices also anticipate and contrast with the “multitude of Angels” who harmonize together, “No voice exempt,” and form “concord . . . in Heav'n” (3.345, 370-71). While Milton doesn't use the term “discord” within Chaos apart from naming the personification, I characterize the “voices all confus'd” as “discordant” by comparing this scene from within Chaos to God's command of Chaos in Book 7: “Silence, ye troubl'd waves, and thou Deep, peace . . . / . . . your discord end” (7.216-17). God's command for “Silence” over Chaos suggests that it produces a noise, a fact confirmed by the “assault” of this sound on Satan's ears. John Rumrich offers that the command for “peace” might also be related to the sound: “The peace he bids it is such peace as might quiet stormy waters” (1039).²⁴ Satan in Chaos is immersed and surrounded by discordant sound that “assaults” him. God too hears this discordant sound, although it does not assault or affect him in the way that it does Satan. Notably, Satan's lack of control over the Chaotic atmosphere that he demonstrates as he stumbles through it seemingly applies to the sound it produces as well. His inability to manipulate or to even defend himself against the noise that “assaults” him provides an interesting contrast to Cox's argument of his ability to manipulate sound in Paradise, an ability which Cox attributes to his “meteorological

²⁴ In demonstrating his omnipotence over the elements in this way, Milton's Creator validates Josuah Sylvester's characterization of God as the “Tamer of the Ocean,” “Whose mighty voice speaks in the midst of Thunders.” These descriptions come from Sylvester's “enormously popular translation of Du Bartas,” a work which Barbara Lewalski identifies as influencing Milton as early as his psalm exercises at school, and she specifically points to “unusual geographical” imagery in the terms that Milton uses which resonate both with Du Bartas and Homer (14). See 1605 translation of du Bartas' *La semaine, Devine Weekes*.

agency” and which she identifies as Milton’s nod to Satan as “the prince of the power of the aire” in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (“Satanic Acoustics” 235; Ephesians 2:2). Discordant sound in Chaos seems to be under no submission to Satan’s authority.

In contrast to Satan’s weakness before discordant sound within the realm of Chaos, God demonstrates complete control over it in Book 7. God’s act of ordering disordered elements at first seems an act of *concordia discors*, but by commanding discord to cease all together, God creates perfect concord and changes the fundamental makeup of the elements themselves. Because he fundamentally alters, or orders, the discordant elements into perfect concord, we can accept God’s creating from a seemingly imperfect substance, although this acceptance has generated much debate over the morality of Chaos.

Katherine Cox’s explorations into the mechanics and acoustics of Satanic and fallen sound in Milton’s poetry critically inform my interest in discordant sound in Chaos. While her more recent work deals with Satan’s manipulation of sound through technical instruments and meteorological forces, in her earlier dissertation Cox discusses earthly and fallen sound apart from the Satanic realm. She elucidates that “the air can give substance to the heavenly sounds that the soul perceives in its flights of fancy,” but in a fallen world, “atmosphere also captures and reflects Earth’s discordant acoustics,” prohibiting humanity and the poet from discerning heavenly sound through both muffling it and drowning it out with the sounds of our own voices (22). Cox defines “discordant acoustics” on earth as “sound that has been corrupted by sin,” and her discussions focus largely on either “satanically comprised” or fallen air on earth or in hell (22). I suggest here that the “aural contamination” that Cox later argues “may occur” in the context of a fallen world “on an elemental scale, where the actual material of sound and its

physical disposition are embodied” may also be present in the discordant sound that resonates throughout Chaos and disturbs those who hear it (“Satanic Acoustics” 235).

If, as Cox asserts, the presence of discordant sound in a fallen world indicates that discordant sound itself is “corrupted by sin,” then this characterization would extend to the personified Discord if we take her to produce or at least contribute to the “voices all confus’d” in Chaos. We might initially question how Discord and discordant sound, that Cox suggests is fallen, can exist in a realm that some would argue has to be neutral. One argument, as we see in Book 7, is that God demonstrates authority over the Chaotic elements, and presumably anything contained therein, and fundamentally alters their characteristics to achieve a perfect created product, Paradise. Even if the personified Discord is contaminated with original sin, her presence in Chaos wouldn’t prohibit or impact God’s ability to create from Chaotic elements. Further, as we see both with the sound of the war and the war itself in Heaven in Book 6, sinful discord clearly can occur even within perfection, although it must ultimately be expelled from that perfection.

Cox’s definition of discordant sound assumes that discordance and sin are synonymous rather than correlative. While the two may appear to be synonymous, particularly considering the implied discordant voice of sinful humanity and our anticipated “undiscording voice” in “At a Solemn Musick,” even in the smaller lyric Milton carefully clarifies that “disproportion’d sin” breaks the music, and implied musical discordance follows the severance. Milton again clearly distinguishes discordance from sin in Book 10 by naming Discord the “Daughter of Sin,” not making her synonymous with the personified Sin. It is important to ask, therefore, if Discord is sinful fundamentally, or merely a neutral byproduct of sin that can be good or bad.

Unsurprisingly, Discord as an ambiguous personification leads us once more into Milton's Christianized Greco-Roman mythology. In the later Latin tradition, Virgil presents his *Discordia*, or *Strife*, as distinctly negative in both appearance ("Her snaky hair entwined with bloody bands") and positioning as one amongst multiple desolate figures in the "empty halls / Of Dis" (6.348-49; 335-36). However, her appearances in both Homer and Hesiod approximately 600 years earlier are more ambiguous. Hesiod distinguishes between two "Erides," the one a promoter of healthy competition between neighbors and the other a negative, driving force of "evil war and strife" (11, 14).²⁵ Both, according to Hesiod, are daughters of Night, a lineage which Milton references by situating Discord next to Night at the throne of Chaos, although Milton Christianizes Discord by swapping Night for Sin as Discord's mother in *Paradise Lost*. Homer's ἔρις exists as less of a personification than a hovering presence driving the conflict in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, although Homer references the judgment of Paris in which ἔρις figures as a personified goddess, the catalyst for the competition and for the war.

Because, classically speaking, ἔρις seems to exist on a continuum ranging from positive or at least healthy competition to violent and even "evil" conflict, Milton's Discord cannot directly equate sin, although the latter can and does generate the former. With respect to Cox's observation of "discordant acoustics," I think it would be more accurate to say that discordant

²⁵ "the genos of the Erides was not a single one, but on Earth
 there are two of them. One is to be praised . . .
 but the other is to be blamed. They have the opposite kinds of thūmos.
 One of them promotes evil war and strife . . .

 As for the other one, she was the first of the two to be born of dark Night.
 And Zeus . . . made her to be
 far better for men, rooted in Earth as she is.
 She rouses even the resourceless person to work.
 For when one man who needs work looks at another man
 who is rich, who strives to plow, to plant,
 to keep his household in order, then it is that neighbor envies neighbor,
 as the rich man is striving for his wealth. This Eris is good for mortals." See Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 11-24.

sound arises because the producer of the sound is corrupted by sin. In other words, the sound itself is not sinful, but a representation of the severance generated by sin. If discordant sound itself is sinful or corrupted, then this fuels the argument that Chaos, bearing and containing “discord” and discordant sound which God orders when he creates, is corrupted with sin.

Although I risk arriving at an anticlimactic resolution, I believe Milton’s Chaos to be neutral, to be a realm of “potentiality,” as Pecheux describes the fallen world (337). Although Pecheux’s description applies to a world that, theologically speaking, is fallen and sinful, the idea of “potentiality” applies perfectly to a morally neutral or ambiguous figure or concept like Homer’s and Hesiod’s ἔρις. If we think of ἔρις as existing on a continuum, then ἔρις may be either good or evil and isn’t decidedly one or the other. Note, for example, that discordant sound is both “confus’d” and “ruinous,” ranging from neutral to negative. If, as Milton seems to put forth in his own poetry and as Cox suggests, “discordant acoustics” are fallen or sinful, then how can discord, and discordant sound, exist in a realm that theoretically should be neutral? The answer lies in the semantic distinction between discordant acoustics as fallen in themselves and discordant acoustics as the result of fallenness.

The realm of Chaos is “an acoustical space,” to use Cox’s term as she applies it to Pandaemonium, filled to the brim with the sounds of discord (240). Cox, like Taylor, locates the influence of Pliny’s *Natural History* in Milton’s poem, and alongside the descriptions of Milton’s Chaos Cox reads Pliny’s description of earthly “nature,” which “swings to and fro like a kind of sling,” and “discord is kindled by the velocity of the world’s motion” (43). Pliny’s “discord” refers to an unsettled environment afflicted by natural forces like storms, earthquakes, or tornadoes, and we can certainly see such a disturbed atmosphere in the Chaotic realm. Much in the same way that sound in a large “acoustical space” might be ambiguous from far away but

becomes clearer as one nears it in proximity, the “noises loud and ruinous” of Chaos sharpen into distinct, albeit “confus’d” voices as Satan comes closer to the throne.

In a recent study of “The Ecology of Chaos in *Paradise Lost*,” Sarah Smith injects into the debate surrounding the morality of Chaos that Milton prioritizes “the disorder that reigns” in Chaos, and it is the “disorder,” Smith argues, that is “the greatest proof of its malignancy” (40). Smith reverses the causal relationship between Chaos and evil, arguing that “chaos is not disordered because it is evil but, rather, we know chaos is evil because it is disordered” (40). Smith’s observation aligns Chaos with evil but in such a way that prioritizes its discordance as a distinctly negative force, rather than a “neutral fact of chaos,” as some have argued, and this force causes Chaos to be evil, she argues. To validate her argument, she points to the Creation sequence in Book 7, arguing that a realm ruled by chance cannot be good because “where chance governs, God does not” (42). Therefore, “chaos is evil . . . because the matter there is disordered by chance, a force that is irreconcilable with divine providence” (43).²⁶ If we view Milton’s realm and its discordance, whether abstract or personified, distinctly through a Christian interpretation, a static view of discord emerges that identifies it as opposed to good, specifically the perfect and divine good that God embodies and which manifests as order in his created universe. This Augustinian view of perfect and rational order would validate Smith’s argument, but only if we reject Milton’s classical influences all together. The influence of classical *ἔρις*, a force and personification that may be either good or evil and is therefore neutral, complicates the Augustinian rational order and static definitions of good and evil in *Paradise Lost*. Because

²⁶ Smith attempts to further satisfy those who insist that Chaos cannot be evil because it is the matter out of which God created the world. She clarifies that the “distinction” between the disorder of the elements being accountable for opposition to God and not the elements themselves “is important because it explains why chaos is positioned as God’s opponent in the epic, but it does not force us to concede that God created the world from deficient, essentially evil materials” (43-44).

Milton's Discord appears as infrequently and ambiguously in Milton's epic as her classical influence appears in Greco-Roman literature, we might infer that Milton was aware of the complications that she presents. However, I depart from Smith's assertion that disorder must be evil and argue that it instead represents the sort of "potential" for evil or for good with which Pecheux characterizes the temporal world. In the same way that discord ranges from a positive to a negative force in Homer and Hesiod, discordant sound ranges from "confus'd" to "ruinous," and it may either exist in what I argue to be the theoretically neutral vacuum of Chaos or may stand in, musically, as a metaphor for sinful humanity's severance from God in "At a Solemn Musick."

2.4 Conclusion

Contrary to Finney's assertion that Milton "reveals in his late poems even less interest in the acoustics of sound than he does in the new astronomy," recent scholarship has revealed a rich and intricate "aural imagination" in his poetry (Cox 234).²⁷ From Milton's challenging depictions of discordant sound in *Paradise Lost* to his relatively simplistic metaphor of discordant sound in "At a Solemn Musick," we can make two observations toward characterizing discord as related to sound: 1) Discordant sound for Milton seems to be metaphorical and 2) it represents discord in both relational and auditory contexts, demonstrating Milton's simultaneous reliance on both meanings. Such a study of discordant sound augments a longstanding interest in the music of Milton's poetry while, along with the recent work of scholars such as Katherine Cox, updates this interest with explorations of sound and acoustics in Milton's poetry,

²⁷ While not pertinent to my present discussion, recent work from scholars such as Catherine Gimelli Martin, who demonstrates the depth of Milton's engagement with the New Astronomy, also challenges Finney's remark.

particularly fallen or Satanic sound. Discordant sound seemingly produced by Discord herself seems to embody the “potentiality” of fallen sound that Pecheux notes, particularly if we consider Milton’s classical influences which see ἔρις as vacillating between a positive or a negative force. Milton demonstrates a consistent association of discordant sound with original sin and evil in both “At a Solemn Musick” and *Paradise Lost*, but we must not overlook the fact that he carefully distinguishes discordant sound as sometimes representative of sin without being inherently corrupt.

Although we observe consistency in what discordant sound means for Milton, tracing it across his poetry reveals a development of what discordant sound encompasses categorically. Discordant sound in “At a Solemn Musick” stands in emblematically for the sinfulness of humanity and is weaponized by Death in Book 10 of *Paradise Lost*, but discordant sound in Chaos ranges from neutral confusion to outright ruination. To a young poet-musician, discordance equated musical disagreement, and met with his theology, makes for a suitable symbol for spiritual incompatibility with God. However, as we approach discordance in *Paradise Lost*, discordant sound branches into voices melding into an indescribable, speculative and ambiguous roaring of Chaotic matter in a state of disorder. As I will explore in the next chapter, discordant sound reveals only part of the discord that permeates Milton’s poetry, and relational discord transitions from the spiritual realm to the temporal realm as it manifests between people as well as between God and humans.

3 DISCORD, ISOLATION, AND CHAOTIC DISAGREEMENT

Thyrsis, the grieving shepherd of Milton's Latin elegy "Epitaphium Damonis," characterizes "man" as *pectore discors*, "discordant in heart," postulating discord as inherent to the nature and character of the human being (107). It is clear, even from this early poem and "At a Solemn Musick," in which discordant music figuratively represents the discord between humanity and God, that Milton understands discord to be a consequence of original sin. Even as he reshapes his figurations of discord in *Paradise Lost* much later, the causal relationship between sin and discord continues to drive Milton's poetic conceptualization of it. Complicating his conception of discord beyond the generalized *pectore discors* that encompasses humanity, Milton in *Paradise Lost* observes the immediate impact of relational discord between specific individuals. Further, he relocates relational discord from the spiritual realm to the temporal, placing it between humans as well as between God and humanity more broadly. As with Milton's discordant sound, the development of his poetic conceptualization of relational discord further solidifies the causal relationship that he posits between discord and original sin.²⁸

Because Milton understands original sin first as a singular act of rebellion before it displaces a larger universe, I suggest that he understands the relational discord generated by original sin as isolation between human beings one to another and with their God, before it ubiquitously corrupts the harmony between all creation and the creator. "That earth 'felt the wound,'" Sarah Smith observes, "suggests that Milton imagines the Fall not merely as a human tragedy but as one that affects the entire universe" (31). We see this global consequence in the

²⁸ As with discordant sound, I base my argument for Milton's association of relational discord with original sin on the causal allegory that I explicated in the previous chapter. In christening the personified Discord as Sin's "Daughter," whom "Death introduc[es]" into Paradise "through fierce antipathy," Milton clearly associates discord with original sin, the former being the consequence of the latter, a relationship conceptualized musically in "At a Solemn Musick" and fulfilled through allegory in *Paradise Lost*.

aural metaphor comprising “At a Solemn Musick.” But before it reaches “the entire universe,” it is first “a human tragedy,” and the discord that arises from this tragedy centrally affects those who enacted it.

The sort of relational discord between individuals that Thyrsis laments accompanies the two falls, first of Satan and then humanity, that frame the narrative of *Paradise Lost*. In the epic, discord first appears as a force that “befell” heaven prior to civil war, engendered by Satan and precipitating his fall into hell (6.897). Discord later re-emerges out of humanity’s fall from perfection as one of many “high Passions” including “Anger, Hate, Mistrust,” and “Suspicion” that fill Adam and Eve after their act of disobedience and “shook sore / Thir inward State of Mind” (9.1123-25). Importantly, both episodes of discordance begin with independent acts of rebellion characterized by individualized and selfish desire. Individual culpability through choice and action, which Satan enacts and then transposes and transfers onto Eve, underpins relational discord in the epic, though this individual action is not revealed in the early poetry, in which discord has no defining characteristics other than separation from God.²⁹ By foregrounding the individual in *Paradise Lost*, Milton refines and explores figuratively the effects and implications of discord, namely isolation.

3.1 A Natural State of Discordance

As he observes the animals around him, Milton’s Thyrsis contrasts their lives with those of human beings. Animals’ lives are brief, and ours are “long-suffering”; “chance” kills living

²⁹ I focus exclusively on the actions of Satan and Eve for two reasons, the first being that Satan directly influences Eve to rebellion in the same way that he provokes Beelzebub in heaven. Although Adam makes the decision to partake of the fruit as well, his decision occurs after the primary scene of temptation and is spurred on by a desire not to rebel but to reconcile and recover the unity he shared with Eve before she ate the fruit. In desiring to be more than what she is, Eve’s decision to rebel mirrors Satan’s.

wildlife, while we are “harried by cruel fates”; Animals exist in groups and are “all comrades in like-minded accord,” whereas men are “alien of mind and discordant in heart” (lines 95-107). The adjective, “discordant,” (*discors*), not only describes the human heart but also carries the image of a heart in its etymology. To be concordant is to be of one heart with another (Latin *con-* “with” or “together” and *cord* “heart”); when *con-* is exchanged for *dis-*, the *cord* separates (Latin *dis-* “apart” or “asunder”). Thyrsis thus identifies the human heart as inherently separate from others, in contrast to the animals that strive together toward one purpose. The elegy, written not long after “At a Solemn Musick,” already demonstrates Milton relocating discordance from global humanity to the individual heart.

John Garrison observes that, in the elegy, “animal sociality throws human relations into relief,” and he argues that the poem presents an idealized form of friendship in which “Milton’s speaker places a positive valence on the formation of virtuous groups bound by the terms of amity” (154). Garrison’s word, “valence,” appropriately evokes the image of chemical elements that are measured on the basis of their ability to interact and meld with the elements around them. Thyrsis’s criticism against humans anticipates that of the poet-speaker in *Paradise Lost*, who observes the amity between the fallen angels as they group together in hell and rebukes humans in contrast for being the “only . . . / . . . Creatures rational” to “disagree,” who create “hatred, enmity, and strife / Among themselves” while “Devil with devil damned / Firm concord holds” (2.497-8; 500-01; 496-97). Although, through the mouth of Thyrsis, Milton distinguishes discord between humans from the concord of both animals and devils, he finds much common ground between humans and devils throughout *Paradise Lost*.

3.2 “Author of Evil”

Ironically, the “Firm concord” uniting the rebellious angels before their fall precipitates the “discord which befell” heaven, resulting in “War . . . / . . . Among th’Angelic Powers,” as Raphael recounts to Adam in Book 6 of *Paradise Lost* (897-98). Behind this “discord,” we find Satan, its sole instigator. When Satan seeks out Michael on the battlefield, the latter addresses him “Author of Evil,” accusing him of engendering the “Acts of hateful strife” occurring all around them (6.262, 264). Before the conflict erupts, Satan “infus[es] / Bad influence into th’unwary breast” of Beelzebub, and “th’Eternal eye” of God names Satan as a single “foe” who conceives “malice . . . and disdain” against God’s authority (5.694-95, 711, 724, 666). I am not suggesting that Satan controls the actions or ensures the choices of the fallen angels to rebel alongside him, nor does he singlehandedly manipulate the course of the ensuing battle. Rather, my argument echoes Arnold Williams’ assertion that “Satan’s action *initiates* the whole sequence of the expulsion of the rebel angels” and the subsequent fall and redemption of man that follows (253, emphasis mine). I wish to position Satan as the nucleus from whose individual choices the global “discord which befell” heaven originates.

When Sin invites Satan to recall her conception and birth, Milton again emphasizes Satan as the individual source of discord in heaven. As Satan stands with “all the Seraphim . . . combin’d / In bold conspiracy against Heav’n’s King” (2.750-51), Sin springs forth from Satan’s head in a burst of flame, an allusion to the mythological Birth of Athena. John Mulryan calls Sin’s birth an “independent cognitive act,” emphasizing Sin as a conscious decision or thought and Satan as solely culpable in her conception and birth (20). After he births her, in a display of ultimate narcissism, Satan sees his own “perfect image” in his daughter and immediately “Becam’st enamor’d” and “took’st” her “in secret” (2.764-66). Mulryan further emphasizes the

individuality of this allegorical episode, arguing that “Satan is self-impregnated, or self-raped, making love to himself and then to his daughter, the product of his incestuous mind,” and he calls Sin’s birth “a form of self-abuse” (18). Particularly remarkable to the allegorical nature of Sin’s birth is what R. A. Shoaf identifies as “the phenomenon of false or pseudo-duality or difference” inherent in narcissism; Satan, looking upon Sin, sees “the illusion of one as two” which “confers upon the one, the narcissist, a parody of identity” (24). This parody mocks God’s command for a man and wife to “be one flesh” (Authorized King James Version, Gen. 2.24).³⁰ While a husband and wife “are nor more twain, but one flesh” (Matt. 19.6), Satan and his “wife,” the product of his own flesh, are “twain” only illusory.³¹ In the presence of “all the Seraphim,” Sin emerges from the mind of one individual in an act of self-violence, and global discord spreads outward from this independent act of conception.

Satan actively resists personal responsibility in heaven by relying on rhetoric of camaraderie. He frequently situates himself within a group identity, motivating others to promulgate the discord that he sows while evading personal responsibility. However, Abdiel voices Satan’s unaccepted responsibility, isolating Satan from the group and acknowledging Satan’s “place . . . so high above [his] Peers” and reminding the host of angels that all were created by and for the Son, the manifestation of the Father’s “Word” (5.812, 836; 3.170). Continuing to speak as the voice of a group, Satan counters that the angels very well could have been “self-begot, self-raised / By our own quick’ning power,” and he unites himself with his fellow angels in alienation from their creator, “Our puissance is our own, our own right hand / Shall teach us highest deeds” (5.860-1, 864-5). Abdiel later challenges this “puissance” on the

³⁰ “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

³¹ “Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”

battlefield when he lands the first blow (6.119), but here he verbally reinforces Satan's role as architect of the rebellion, emphasizing the individuality of Satan's "perfidious fraud"; by his "contagion spread" the "hapless crew involv'd" shall fall as well (5.879-80).

Out of this scene, Milton positions two images of individual discordance in direct opposition: Acting as a foil for Satan's individual "contagion" which he transfers onto his "hapless crew," Abdiel stands "Among the faithless, faithful only hee" and his mind remains "constant . . . / . . . Though single" (5.897, 902-903). Abdiel challenges Satan's false image of unity by isolating Satan from the group and then by separating himself in "loyalty" to God (900). At the center of the discord, and consequently the "War in Heav'n," lies Satan as the sole "Author of evil," who alone births Sin, the product of his own pride and narcissism.

As Raphael's account shifts to the war itself, Milton situates Satan's individual actions and choices, contrasted with Abdiel's, within the broader conflict, demonstrating that broader relational discord ultimately consists of individual choices to sow discord or dissent from it. Complicating these choices, as Stephen Dobranski has suggested, is "Milton's use . . . of a *deus ex machina*," the scales of God which appear in the sky and weigh the outcome of the erupting conflict, which "seems to encroach on Satan's and the angels' free will" (36). Dobranski suggests that, rather than indicating "Satan's victory (or defeat) against the defeat (or victory) of Gabriel's squadron," the scales convey the more significant choice posed to Satan: "whether to obey or defy God" (60-61). Alternatively, Jessica Wolfe resolves this potential conflict of free will and divine intervention by asserting that Milton's God imitates Homer's Zeus, "who grasps his scales 'by the middle' . . . a detail that . . . transforms Zeus's scales into a metaphor for divine foreknowledge and judgment that does *not* convey God's foreordaining of human actions"

(323).³² Even as it is impartial, however, Wolfe does assert that the image “illustrates to its audience . . . the ‘sequel,’ or consequences, of the choices available to them” (324). In her book, *Homer and the Question of Strife*, Wolfe foregrounds moments of choice and deliberation amid conflict in heaven and contextualizes them through the lens of Homeric war in the *Iliad*. Arguing for “the central and persistent power of choice in *Paradise Lost*” (323), Wolfe isolates the image of “the razor’s edge” as one of Milton’s Homeric scenarios that “dramatize morally and spiritually the precipitous moments” of choice and free will in the epic (307). Wolfe’s discussion of the choices of Satan and the other angelic beings echoes M. Christopher Pecheux’s observation of human responsibility in “At a Solemn Musick,” that “the very power of choice which makes him capable of answering rightly renders him capable also of destroying the concord” (337). Within the discord of “undiscording,” Pecheux reads a tentative balance of possibility between a “positive meaning” of redemption and the “disturbing potentiality” of corruption (337). As Wolfe acknowledges, despite his seeming intervention, “Milton’s God . . . labour[s] to preserve the human liberty,” or in this case angelic liberty, “upon which divine justice rests” (321). These moments of choice, in addition to emphasizing free will in cooperation with God’s intervention, as Wolfe points out, emphasize individual culpability in sowing discord (321).

Because “Milton’s God allows each angel to decide for himself whether and how” to move and position himself in battle, Satan, like all the rest, is given “the opportunity for internal deliberation even in the midst of a hectic *melée*” (Wolfe 321). Mirroring his earlier confrontation, Abdiel confronts Satan once more on the battlefield and invites Satan to look on

³² On the significance of God’s hands in relation to the scales, Dobranski observes that Milton never clearly “never refers to God’s hand raising his golden scales,” a notable omission that might evoke the image of a “more modern type of hanging or free-standing” scale that began to replace the more traditional hand-held scales that “could easily be tipped to one side or the other” (57).

the “thousands” that “err” from Satan’s attempted coup (6.148). Abdiel challenges Satan’s misconception that Abdiel “alone / Seem’d . . . erroneous to dissent / From all,” and he demonstrates that he remains free under a God who, as Wolfe asserts, “labour[s] to preserve . . . liberty,” while Satan stands “not free, but to [him]self enthrall’d” (145-47, 181). Individuals choose to dissent, whether courageously like Abdiel or sinfully like Satan, and discord results from that choice. As Catherine Gimelli Martin points out, “Through a clearly chosen will-to-power,” Satan “cling[s] to a self-imposed delusion that [he has] no choices,” and, although this “is patently untrue,” Satan’s “illusions nevertheless have real consequences,” namely that he “abandon[s] reality for reductive solipsism” (“Radical Evil” 181). Satan ultimately isolates himself through his own “mind-forged manacles,” as Blake put it (112), his “self-imposed delusion,” fulfilling Abdiel’s proclamation that Satan is “not free, but to [him]self enthrall’d.” Humanity hovers in a realm of “potentiality” (Pecheux 377) because we, like Satan, have the ability to choose; we sow discord with God and are “enthrall’d” to ourselves.

3.3 “Whom has thou then or what to accuse”: Satan’s Physical and Ontological Isolation

After his fall, Satan’s rhetoric noticeably reverses to emphasizing the individual over the group, and he attempts to manipulate the other fallen angels by emphasizing his isolation. No sooner than Pandæmonium is built, Satan places himself into a monarchical position, “High on a Throne of Royal State,” and Milton again points to Satan’s culpability in the fall, through his own “merit” he is “rais’d / To that bad eminence” of the throne of hell (2.1, 5-6). With “Monarchal pride / Conscious of highest worth,” Satan, feigning reluctance, accepts his power, “not refus[ing] to Reign” nor “to accept as great a share / Of hazard as of honor” (428-49, 451, 452-53). In asserting that his position entails an equal “share / Of hazard,” Satan justifies his own

position, cautions the other rebellious angels against another coup, and most importantly, distinguishes himself as a Christ-like, courageous individual who will travel across “Coasts of dark destruction” and “seek / Deliverance” for the fallen angels, a journey that “None shall partake with [him]” (464-6). Such courage through separation from the group Satan mocked earlier in Abdiel, but he now appropriates such a distinction for himself using rhetoric of sacrifice.

Satan’s valiant rhetoric belies the brittle reality of alienation exacerbated by a severed sense of belonging and a corrupted ontological purpose that he must confront when alone. In Book 4, “conscience wakes despair,” and Satan probes his own culpability in a Faustian soliloquy in which he soberly acknowledges his prideful disdain of “subjection” and desire to be “highest,” questions if he too possesses “the same free Will and Power to stand” as those who chose not to rebel, and toys with the idea that he “could repent and could obtaine / By Act of Grace [his] former state” (23, 50-51, 66, 93-94). Ultimately rejecting the possibility of redemption in his belief that “reconcilement [cannot] grow / Where wounds of deadly hate have pierc’d so deep,” Satan again evades responsibility, placing the blame for his forthcoming temptation on God, whom he dubs his “punisher” (103). Turning his attention to Adam and Eve in an apostrophe, Satan invites the couple to “Thank him [God] who puts me loath to this revenge” for the corruption he is about to inaugurate, characterizing his action in terms of compulsion for the sake of “public reason just,” which “compels” him to action and “excuse[s] his devilish deeds” (386, 389, 391, 394).³³

³³ As Hughes notes, Satan here distorts the “Ciceronian principle . . . that the good of the people is the supreme law,” a juridical principle invoked in England by Parliamentarians and Royalists and, according to Bacon, condemned in Italy “by Pius V as an invention ‘against religion and the moral virtues’” (287n389).

Martin identifies Satan's attempt to vindicate his actions as a unique characteristic of "radically evil individuals" who "may not be wholly selfish before their falls," but ultimately "reject" a peaceful pursuit of "glory . . . by pleading the 'necessity' of their illicit choices" (171). Again fulfilling Shoaf's observation of "pseudo-duality," Satan ultimately realizes "that the punitive Other he had sought to defeat is really the punitive self," and his "misconception of freedom has progressively destroyed his autonomy and disconnected him from his own emotions, from the sympathies of others, and from the mutuality of heaven" (Shoaf 24; Martin 180). In recognizing this "punitive self," Satan once more becomes "a parody of *himself*" without a "punisher" to "accuse" (Shoaf 24). Where Abdiel stood "unmov'd, / Unshak'n, uneduc'd, unterrifi'd" in his courageous dissent, Satan rides the vicissitudes of regretful torment and obsessive, prideful resolution (PL 5.898-9; Martin 180). If, by "disconnected," Martin means that Satan is not in control of his emotions, then this is clear by the irregular and extreme oscillations that he displays between commitment and regret. However, he certainly isn't cut off or distant from his emotions, but rather too deeply immersed in them to be of one mind as Abdiel is. In Satan's fragmentation, Milton develops Thyrsis' earlier characterization of the human as "*pectore discors*" by demonstrating internal discord with oneself as well as external discord with others.

After his rebellion, Satan finds himself physically isolated from his surroundings. Not even in the newly created world does he find "refuge," but rather enters as "a Thief" or "a prowling Wolfe" (9.119, 4.188-89). Even more insulting than his banishment and displacement is his replacement: "Into our room of bliss thus high advanc't / Creatures of other mould" (4.359-60). Satan's architectural language, a "room of bliss," that he uses to figure the volume of space vacated by the fallen angels invites a possible allusion to Christ's promise in the Gospel of John

to “go and prepare a place” for his followers in one of “many mansions” contained within his “Father’s house” (14:2). Dobranski suggests that “the few tantalizing visual details” that Milton offers us of heaven “suggest a much more physical space,” so perhaps Milton’s potential figuration of a physical space is not quite as metaphorical as Christ’s image seems. Andrew Scott, in a discussion of Milton’s monist universe, points out the importance of heaven as a physical space for Satan’s mission: “for Satan to make at least some sense as a hero, he must be so to speak *locked out* of Heaven . . . rather than situated in a dimension categorically different” (75). He is indeed locked out, made even more insulting by Dobranski’s perception that Heaven’s structures “separate and distinguish” through “boundaries but not strictly enforced limits” (64). Satan is locked out by the consequences of his own actions, not by any inherent characteristic of heaven that renders it impenetrable. Looking upon these gates, Satan is taunted with his self-enacted isolation.

Satan’s is a rebellion against his own *ontos*, his created purpose as an adorer of God, and insofar as he refuses to do so he rebels against his own being, creating torment, and discord, within himself. As “his griev’d look . . . fixes sad” upon Eden, Satan recants his earlier taunt of self-creation, and he acknowledges the Creator whom he abandoned—“he created what I was”—and created purpose, “What could be less then to afford him praise, / The easiest recompence” (4.28, 43, 46-47). Boasting that he “in one Night freed / From servitude inglorious welnigh half / Th’ Angelic Name, and thinner left the throng / Of his adorers,” Satan fails to acknowledge that he is one of the “adorers” who has been “freed,” and in being “freed” no longer accomplishes or possesses the ability to accomplish what he was created to do (9.140-3). Like his dwelling place, he has lost his purpose, and in Adam and Eve God finds not only a substitute for physical space but for adoration as well. In “undoing” his created purpose, so to speak, Satan in essence undoes

the created order in terms of purpose, and disorder or discord takes it place. If “chaos is evil because it is disordered,” as Smith argues, so too is Satan (40).

3.4 “A Goddess among Gods, ador’d and serv’d”

While internally confronting and denying his culpability in his isolation, Satan outwardly exchanges rhetoric of the noble, solitary figure of sacrifice that he presented in Pandæmonium for rhetoric of the noble, solitary divine figure that he offers to Eve. Like he did with Beelzebub, Satan whispers into Eve’s ear, and, “Assaying by his Devilish art to reach / The Organs of her Fancie,” reprises his role as “Author of evil,” transferring “distemper’d, discontented thoughts” into Eve’s ear as she sleeps (4.801-2; 807).³⁴ In her dream, he appeals to her vanity with images of individual pride and glory, calling her “Natures desire” and telling her that to eat of the Tree of Knowledge will place her “henceforth among the Gods / Thyself a Goddess, not to Earth confin’d,” omitting the reality of his own confinement within himself and, ultimately, hell (5.77-78). When he approaches Eve, Satan employs terms of solitude and isolation in multiple ways, first in presenting himself to appear nonthreatening: “Displeas’d that I approach thee thus, and gaze / Insatiate, I thus single” (9.535-6). He then negatively misrepresents Eve’s isolation in Paradise, which he cleverly terms an “enclosure,” insofar as no one sees her, “one man except,” when she “shouldst be / A Goddess among Gods, ador’d and serv’d / By Angels numberless” (543, 545-48). Finally, using language of divinity, perverting her “Divine / Semblance” to her Maker as indicative of her own divinity (606-7), Satan resumes his regal rhetoric from Eve’s dream, naming her “Empress of this fair World,” “Sovran of Creatures,” “universal Dame,”

³⁴ As I discussed in the previous chapter, sound in *Paradise Lost* takes on a new physicality. Katherine Cox characterizes Satan’s whispering to Eve as an “acoustical attack,” and emphasizes the pun on “organ” in Satan’s whispering: “Eve’s fancy is an organ being played by Satan” (235-6).

“Queen of this Universe,” and “Goddess humane” (568; 612; 684; 732).³⁵ Stoking Eve’s pride with such rhetoric of royal or divine exaltation, Satan characterizes isolation in appealing terms, implying separation that maintains connection through love, reverence, and worship rather than that which generates discord with others and within oneself. However, after sinning and then provoking her husband to sin with her out of fear of isolation, Eve embodies both the tempted and “The Tempter” herself, and she stands, neither “Goddess humane” nor a revered “Queen of this Universe” as Satan promised, but rather “th’accuser” of her husband (4.10; 9.1182).³⁶

Reconciliation will occur once God judges Adam and Eve for their sin, in anticipation of the restorative sacrifice of the Son that Milton references (“th’ instant stroke of Death denounc’t that day / Remov’d far off”), but Eve, immediately after her sin, temporarily stands alone (10.210-11).

In contrast to Eve’s awareness of her own isolation in her dream—“And on, methought, alone I pass’d”—and her being conscious of Satan, her “Guide,” abandoning her in the dream after she tastes the fruit, Eve doesn’t notice her isolation when Satan “Back to the Thicket slunk” (5.50, 91, 9.784). Eve, “Intent now wholly on her taste, naught else / Regarded,” as she gorges herself (9.786-7). When she finally does notice her solitude, her first duplicitous impulse is to weaponize it by hiding from Adam her change: “shall I to him make known / As yet my change, and give him to partake / Full happiness with mee, or rather not, / But keep the odds of Knowledge in my power / Without Copartner?” (9.817-21). Like Satan’s own objection to replacement, Eve involves her husband out of fear that Adam will be “wedded to another Eve” and she herself will be “extinct” (9.828-9). She appeals to Adam in the belief that, for Adam to

³⁵ Milton’s poet-speaker foreshadows Satan’s exaltation by describing Eve’s “Goddess-like deport” as she withdraws from Adam to go off alone to work (9.389).

³⁶ In naming Eve “th’accuser,” Milton identifies Eve directly with Satan, “The Tempter ere th’ Accuser of man-kind” (4.10).

sin with her will reconcile them to one another once more: “Thou therefore also taste, that equal Lot / May joyne us, equal Joy, as equal Love” (9.881-2). Adam too desires to preserve their unity: “How can I live without thee. . . . I feel / The Link of Nature draw me: Flesh of Flesh, / Bone of my Bone thou art, and from thy State / Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe” (9.908-16). In their desperation to remain joined together, Adam and Eve do not realize that the rift, already torn, will not repair even when both are fallen. As Thyrsis laments in Milton’s earlier elegy, the two are *pectore discors*, and discordance constitutes a physical and emotional separation consequent of sin. Further, like Satan appears outwardly to his followers, neither Eve nor Adam are “self-condemning” after their fall, and instead “in mutual accusation spent / The fruitless hours” (9.1187-88, 258).

3.5 Chaotic Disagreement in *Paradise Lost*

As is the case with the “discord which befell” heaven, we can observe relational discord generated through individual choice in Adam’s and Eve’s interactions after the Fall. As I suggested in the previous chapter, Adam and Eve descend into variations of selfish impulses, Eve into gluttonous hunger and Adam into lust, before they fall into discord with one another.³⁷ Discordance only sets in after the initial effects of the fruit fade, when they grow cold and sit “down to weep . . . but high winds worse within / Beg[i]n to rise,” among them “Discord” which “shook sore / Thir inward State of Mind” (9.1121-25). Milton figures “Discord” amongst the internal emotions as “high winds” that disturb the internal state, formerly “a calm Region once /

³⁷ Adam’s lustful impulse mirrors Satan’s when the latter beholds Sin after he births her (2.762-6).

And full of Peace” but “now toss’t and turbulent” (1125-6).³⁸ Evoking the image of a tempest, this language invites comparison with two similar passages earlier in the poem.

In the Creation sequence, the Son and “overshadowing Spirit and might” of the Father alight upon “heav’nly ground” and view a “vast immeasurable Abyss / Outrageous as a Sea, dark, wasteful, wild” (7.165, 210-12). We first encounter this “Boundless . . . Deep” in Book 2, when Satan, Sin, and Death look upon Chaos, “a dark / Illimitable ocean without bound” (7.168; 2.891-2). The question of the morality of Chaos, that Smith notes has the potential to “undermine” Milton’s theodicy, persisted throughout the 20th century: if the matter from which God creates opposes him, how can his creation be good?³⁹ As I discussed earlier, Smith reconsiders Chaos as “a realm defined more by its disorder than by its material” and asserts that Milton emphasizes “the disorder that reigns” in Chaos rather than merely identifying it as simply matter by which God creates the world (37). I reiterate that I don’t accept Smith’s argument for an evil Chaos, although it is certainly characterized by disorder as she demonstrates. Instead, Chaos, like Pecheux’s characterization of the temporal world, might be defined best by “potentiality,” and it is this potential for either good or evil that reappears in Adam and Eve after their fall. When we examine the “high Winds worse within” Adam and Eve, Discord among them, a similar image of a tempest arises that evokes the “discord” of the “Deep” in Book 7 and the disordered Chaos of Book 2.

Building upon my own explication of the role and presence of Discord in Chaos in the previous chapter, I suggest here that Milton reiterates the image of a tempest in relation to

³⁸ After Eve’s foreboding nightmare in Book 4, prayer restores the minds of Adam and Eve to “Firm peace . . . and wonted calm,” but the fulfilment of the nightmare undoes this restoration (5.210).

³⁹ Smith points to A. B. Chambers, Michael Lieb, and others who mediate with the idea of Chaos’ neutrality, whereas Regina Schwartz argues firmly for an evil Chaos. See Chambers, “Chaos in Paradise Lost” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24.1, pp. 55-84; Lieb, *Dialectics of Creation* (UMass 1970); and Schwartz, *Remembering and Repeating Biblical Creation* (Chicago 1988).

Discord to remind the reader of a characterization established earlier in the poem. The similarities of the descriptive language in all three passages are quite remarkable: As both an “illimitable ocean” in Book 2 and a “vast immeasurable Abyss / Outrageous as a sea” in Book 7, Milton imagines Chaos as a water-like body disturbed by tempestuous disorder, or discord, manifested in “waves” on its surface. When God alights upon Chaos to organize it into creation, he commands it to be quiet and still: “Silence, ye troubl’d waves, and thou Deep, peace, / Said then th’Omnific Word, your discord end” (7.216-17). As God speaks and “circumscribe[s]” the disordered matter into a uniform shape, discord is brought into accord, and the “troubl’d waves” change to “wat’ry calm” (226, 216, 234).

In Book 9, Milton echoes and upends this description: the prelapsarian “inward State of Mind” was a “calm Region . . . / . . . And full of Peace,” but after the Fall, “high Winds” of emotion perturb it, “now toss’t and turbulent” (1124-26). Milton doesn’t stop here, however: whereas the Deep, before it is brought into accord with God’s act of creation, is “*Up from the bottom* turn’d by furious winds / And surging waves,” Adam’s and Eve’s state after stepping outside of accordance with God’s will is ruled by “sensual Appetite, who *from beneath* / Usurping over sovran Reason claim’d / Superior sway” (7.213-14, 1129-31, emphasis mine). The similarities at first seem troubling. If we consider creation as an act of generating from nothing, then Adam and Eve literally speaking cannot be and are not “uncreated” when they sin. However, if we consider Milton’s portrayal of creation as an act of ordering, of God’s organization of disordered elements, then the image of Adam and Eve as internally tempestuous makes sense. If, as Milton demonstrates, God creates not by generating a substance but by ordering or organizing a disordered substance, then Adam’s and Eve’s internal state is not one of nonexistence or being “uncreated” but, as Milton shows, one of disorder or disorganization. This

disorder arises from the separation of sin, of Adam and Eve stepping outside of God's created order and reverting back to a state of disorder. This state, most importantly, can be reversed or reconciled as it is the first time God creates in Book 7. Milton's portrayal of creation as a continuum between disorder and order, between Chaos and organization, allows for reconciliation as an act of organization and accord.⁴⁰

3.6 Conclusion

As he narrows the focus from broader humanity to individual human beings, Milton's conceptualization of discord becomes more intricate; yet he consistently identifies discord as the natural consequence of original sin across his poetry. By returning to the site of original sin, at which point our discordance with one another and with God began, Milton locates first in Satan the physical and emotional isolation that Adam and Eve experience after their Fall. Within scenes of discord in the epic, Milton foregrounds individual culpability and choice; despite characterizing himself as a courageous dissenter in the face of tyranny in heaven, Satan must confront his own isolation because of his rebellion. On earth, Eve permits and believes Satan's isolating rhetoric that names her a regal or divine figure, but she and Adam inevitably alienate themselves from one another and from God until God restores and reconciles this separation in Book 10. In each of these circumstances, Milton nuances his straightforward characterization of discord from the early poetry and explores means beyond sound and music to convey

⁴⁰ I am entirely aware of the problems that this interpretation poses for the morality of Chaos, and I have not arrived at a definitive answer to these problems. If, by sinning, the consequence is disorder, then would a disordered Chaos be in an inherently sinful state? Smith's reading of Chaos suggests that it would, and the complexities and potential problems with Milton's representation of Chaos have understandably generated much debate in Milton scholarship. I will offer that it is important again to consider the distinction between discord equating sin and discord being generated by sin. If sin causes Adam and Eve to revert to a state of disorder internally and temporarily, this doesn't require us to concede that a disordered state equates sin but rather that it is one of sin's consequences, one of many "high Winds."

discordance, namely, the image of a tempest, as I have elucidated. Tracing the development of Milton's poetic conceptualization of discord reveals Milton carrying with him metaphors that he crafted as a young poet while reinventing and shaping new language with which to convey humanity's separation from God, and this explication of discord in Milton's poetry solidifies the significance of it to Milton's poetic imagination.

4 CONCLUSION

Borrowing from an extensive mythological, classical, and philosophical tradition, Milton understands discord foremost as a consequence of sin. In his poetry, he explores this consequence literally in terms of relational discord between individuals and figuratively in using discordant sound as a metaphor for the discord that it embodies. Figuratively, in “At a Solemn Musick,” Milton unifies music and prosody in shaping musical discord as a metaphor for humanity’s fallen state. In revisiting auditory discord in *Paradise Lost*, I have shown how he complicates discordant sound by looking at it more closely and placing it in precise locations, namely in Chaos and amid the battle in heaven. This discordant sound, rather than standing in as a simple image, has a physicality to it that allows it to ring out, pierce, and “assault.” Concerning relational discord, Milton expands its contexts beyond broader separation between God and humanity to relational disagreement and isolation between angels and between human beings. We see this isolation play out centrally in the character of Satan, who isolates himself from God, from his fellow angels, and ultimately from himself. He then transposes this discord onto Eve as he works his way into her mind, mimicking the rhetoric of the noble, solitary figure that he also uses to manipulate the other fallen angels into allowing him to journey to Paradise alone. In each of these instances, both relational and auditory, Milton continues to rely on the polysemy of the word “discord” by invoking its auditory and relational meanings, and he continues to associate each of these usages with original sin, a relationship that he realizes most concretely in the allegorical mother-daughter relationship between the personified Sin and Discord.

Isolating “discord” in Milton’s poetry contributes an unusual facet to a longstanding interest in harmony, both musical and spiritual, in Milton’s poetry. In this thesis, to compliment studies of the evidence of harmony in Milton’s poetry, I have attempted to examine the

implications and consequences of the absence or corruption of relational and musical harmony in the form of discord. Additionally, as I have shown, “discord” is one more of many words that Milton understands and uses in multiple contexts, relying on both its auditory and relational connotations. Taking apart the word linguistically continues the valuable lexical studies of scholars like James Brophy and David Ainsworth. My thesis further bolsters contemporary interests in sound and acoustics in Milton’s poetry, specifically in recent studies of Satanic and fallen sound. While the speculative music of the fallen angels in hell or actual fallen music on earth may provide straightforward examples of corrupted harmonies, my thesis puts forward a relatively unexplored facet of fallen sound in Milton’s verse, and one that offers a connection between his early and late poetry.

Prioritizing Milton’s poetic imagination, this thesis does not explore Milton’s usages of “discord” outside of his poetry, although it certainly lays the foundation for such studies. For instance, as I briefly noted, Milton invokes the word in his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* in describing the marriage bond between an unhappy couple as “an uncomplying discord of nature” (710). Interestingly, in this usage, in contrast to Thyrsis’ characterizing human nature as inherently discordant, Milton argues that such discord in marriage goes against nature, or the natural union between a husband and wife. Like we see in *Paradise Lost* with Adam and Eve, discord springs up as a force of separation and discontent. In this thesis, I demonstrate Milton’s consistent interest in discord throughout his poetry, and his awareness of discord as being a violation of a natural order clearly carries into his prose as well.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, throughout this thesis I have repeatedly pointed back to the association of discord with original sin. In doing so, I emphasize the significance of original sin, the corruption of the natural order, and the relationship between God and humanity

within Milton's poetic imagination. Driving my interest in discord in Milton's poetry is the argument that his poetic imagination revolves itself significantly around humanity's separation from God and the restoration of that relationship. Such a focus sits at the center of much Milton scholarship concerning Milton's own theology and heresy, but I have shown the pervasiveness of these core doctrines to Milton's poetic imagination. In the context of his poetry, Milton allows himself to explore these doctrines creatively through figurative language and involvement of his musical knowledge while dealing with their complexity. This study can readily develop into broader discussions of language, imagery, allegory, and other poetic devices that Milton uses to engage in a poetics of human nature and the human predicament. Moving forward, I intend to use this thesis as a cornerstone for a larger project exploring what I refer to as "salvific poetics" in 17th-century Protestant verse, meaning poets' uses of theological and philosophical traditions, language, and poetic conventions to shape expressions of sin, salvation, and selfhood.

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