

*Ex-position* Feature Topic Call for Papers

## Harmony and Chaos: The Dialectics of Order and Disorder

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*The journal is pleased to collaborate with The Seventeenth International Conference of the Taiwan Association of Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Studies (TACMRS) and publish a feature topic on the theme of their October 2023 conference. Submissions from scholars not participating in the conference are also welcome.*

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The ideas of order and disorder are universal conceptual categories found across diverse disciplines and cultures. They often emerge as a pair of opposites that help humans characterize observed phenomena, experiences, and imagination. Changes in regimes, the development of societies, and the evolution of cultural trends, for instance, are sometimes comprehended through the filter of order and disorder. Representations in arts and literature may also be examined under pairs of similar attributes, such as symmetry and asymmetry, harmony and disharmony, unity and disunity, and so forth.

It is by no means an accident that the creation of the world is often conceived as a process of bringing formlessness into order, as can be found in creation myths in various cultures. Hesiod in *Theogony* and Plato in *Timaeus* both described the world as originating from chaos, the primordial condition of disorder. In Genesis, the earth was first “without form and void” upon creation (Genesis 1.1). God then brought divisions into the world—the divisions of light and darkness, Day and Night, the Sun and the Moon, the land and the seas, and vegetation and wildlife. The formless darkness was characterized as Chaos in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. The harmony of Eden—the established order created by God—crumbled after the Fall as Satan brought distrust, discord, and disgrace into the world. Moreover, the ancient Chinese divination text *I Ching* similarly denotes the formation of the world as a process of differentiation from the undivided mixture of original elements.

The waxing and waning of order and disorder may also be found in works involving romantic relations, spiritual struggles, or political conflicts, either as explicit metaphors or underlying structures. In Donne’s “Elegy XIII,” the poet described the emotional turmoil generated at the loss of love as falling into the darkness of “old Chaos.” Similarly, Shakespeare’s Moor in *Othello* associated the dissolution of love with perdition and Chaos (*Othello* 3.3: 90–95). In *The Faerie Queene*, as the Redcrosse Knight was separated from Una under the deceptive

schemes of Archimago and Duessa, he fell into a state of spiritual confusion and encountered a series of chaotic perils. Only by the rescue of Arthur and the help of Una (who symbolizes truth and unity) could the knight recover and finally attain holiness. In *The Tempest*, having escaped the political storm in his dukedom, Prospero established a new order on the formerly uncultivated island where untamed creatures and spirits like Caliban and Ariel resided. Apart from the above more well-known instances, numerous illustrations concerning the conflicts, interactions, and syntheses of order and disorder may be explored in different fields under different disciplines.

This feature topic calls for research from scholars working in art history, literature, philosophy, history, geography, religious studies, cultural studies, classical studies, anthropology, social sciences, and beyond. We also welcome studies on the cultural dialogue between East and West. Topics for consideration might include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Explorations of cosmology, creation, or world views in relation to systems and/or chaos, entropy and/or negentropy, etc.
- Analyses on art and visualization that involves symmetry, asymmetry, or elements concerning order and/or disorder
- Explorations of musical compositions in terms of harmony and/or cacophony
- Examinations on issues of religious doctrines, spirituality, heresy, or moral values with regard to unity and/or anarchy, moderation and/or excess, or other aspects in close relation to order and/or disorder
- Critical interpretations of specific works addressing issues of concord and/or discord, *discordia concors*, or other related aspects

**\*\*For information about TACMRS and the conference:**

<https://tacmrs.org.tw/>

<https://sites.google.com/view/tacmrs2023>

**\*\*In addition to themed sections, each issue of Ex-position also includes a “General Topics” section, which welcomes submissions year-round.**

**\*\*For submission guidelines of the journal:**

<http://ex-position.org>