SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN:

SACRIFICIAL VIOLENCE IN THE EVOLUTION OF TRAGEDY

by

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(Under the Direction of Ronald L. Bogue)

ABSTRACT

By re-examining traditional tenets of dramatic theory regarding tragedy, relying on Aristotle's *Poetics* and primary Greek and Shakespearean works to establish the codification and follow the evolution of tragedy, this study proposes that the persistent use of ritual sacrifice, particularly of children, through sexual and violent means, is a defining factor the genre. The origin of the tragic hero is traced to the priest of ancient ritual; victims, apostates, and disciples also are shown to be represented in tragedy. After deconstructing exemplary tragedies to delineate residual elements of sacrificial ritual in them, this study culminates by explicating *Saved* by Edward Bond. In demonstrating that *Saved* is a quintessential tragedy of the Millennial era, this thesis proposes that tragedy remains linked to ritual and is a viable genre in the 20th and 21st centuries.

INDEX WORDS: Aristotle, *Bacchae*, Edward Bond, Walter Burkert, Child Abuse, Criticism, Drama, Dramatic Criticism, Dramaturgy, Euripides, Incest, Infanticide, Intoxication, *King Lear*, Literary Criticism, *Medea*, *Oedipus the King*, *Poetics*, Ritual, Sacrifice, *Saved,* Shakespeare, Sophocles, Theater, Tragedy, Violence

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BA, State University of New York, 1988

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Georgia

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2011

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DEDICATION

This manuscript is dedicated to all children who have known suffering, and to those who have devoted their lives to caring, and pursuing justice, for them. It is also written in memory of Meredith Emerson, one of my first students at the University of Georgia, whose young, successful, and promising life was taken by a violent stranger.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the academy: the people associated with the Departments of Comparative Literature, Romance Languages, and Theatre and Film Studies; the Centers for Asian Studies, (Willson) Humanities and Arts, and Teaching and Learning; the Office of the Vice President for Instruction, the Writing Intensive Program, the Graduate School at the University of Georgia, and the International Comparative Literature Association who bestowed upon me invaluable experience and generous opportunities. Special thanks belong to my parents (biological and by marriage) whose material and spiritual benefactions made this accomplishment possible. I am humbled by your magnanimity. Thank you to students and mentors for making me wiser; to friends and foes for making me stronger; and to artists (especially the music makers) for making life worth living. Thank you, Athens, Georgia, blessed as well by Apollo and Dionysus, for welcoming me on both sides of Broad Street. Thank you all for your patience, support, and criticism, for your dedication to excellence, and for teaching me humility, compassion, and resolve. I would also like to acknowledge the people I will never meet who inspired me to do this work, and in lieu of those unrequited exchanges, say to you, the reader: trust that you too are an inspiration to someone. Finally, I pledge my deepest gratitude to the goddesses: Aphrodite, Artemis, Athena, Hecate, Hera, and Melpomene, all of whom endowed me with their gifts through my mother, Sara.

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CHAPTER 1

RITUAL RECAPITULATED:

THE MIMESIS OF SACRIFICE IN TRAGEDY[1]

The ultimate purpose of this study is to refute the oft-made claim that tragedy is no longer possible in the 20th and 21st centuries and to present the works of Edward Bond as clear evidence that the genre remains a viable form. In order to defend this hypothesis, I will establish the connection between sacrificial ritual and tragedy in ancient Greece, trace its modified but continued presence in Shakespeare, and then demonstrate the means whereby Bond brings this connection to bear in his tragic dramas. As I will show, the mimesis of sacrificial ritual in tragedy often depends upon violence against children. It is especially in this regard that Bond, in much of his work but particularly in *Saved*, regenerates tragedy as a viable genre in the Millennial era.

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[1] Anthropological studies of ritual in nearly every culture exist. A comprehensive list of ritual would be longer than the body of this study, but the sources of relevance to this work begin with issues of ritual sacrifice, of which the seminal studies include: Jane Ellen Harrison *Ancient Art and Ritual* (1913); Walter Burkhert *Homo Necans: The anthropology of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual and myth* (1972); Nigel Davies *Human Sacrifice in history and today* (1981); Jan Bremmer "Scapegoat Rituals in Ancient Greece" *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* (1983); Dennis D. Hughes *Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece* (1991); Jan N. Bremmer "Myth and Ritual in Greek Human Sacrifice" *The Strange World of Human Sacrifice* (1994).

Aristotle's *Poetics*[2] serves as the foundation of this study. Aristotle posits the origins of tragedy as stemming from Dionysian ritual.[3] This thesis is supplemental to the *Poetics,* supporting the proposition that ritual is the evident precursor to the dramatic form. This genealogy has long been accepted through antiquity and the Renaissance, to Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. Some classicists, however, have challenged and have reconsidered the relevance of ritual for understanding Greek tragedy.[4] Earlier modern studies of drama contend that drama can only be defined as an art form once it emerges as such and thus, ceases to be a form of ritual.[5] I contend, however, that ritual is an essential part of tragedy, and that the ritual dimension of the genre has continued into our new millennium. For purposes of this study we will consider original ritual to mean a

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[2] Of the many excellent resources I have consulted in the formation of my theories and the construction of this study, I cite in this study Stephen Halliwell's *The Poetics of Aristotle: Translation and Commentary* (1987). I must, however, include acknowledgement and gratitude for the precedent translations by Francis Fergusson (1961) and S. H. Butcher (1895). Additional works of interest on the topic of Aristotle's *Poetics* and tragedy include F. L. Lucas, *Tragedy: Serious Drama in Relation to Aristotle's Poetics* (1957); John Jones *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy* (1971); Bernard Knox *Word and Action* (1979); Gerald Else, *Plato and Aristotle on Poetry* (1987).

[3] In addition to the primary source of Aristotle's *Poetics* 1449a 10-5, salient commentaries on interpreting ritual as a link to tragedy are attributed to Jane Ellen Harrison *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1922); Sir Arthur Wallace Pickard-Cambridge *Dithyramb Tragedy and Comedy* (1927); *The Theatre of Dionysus in Athens* (1946); *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens* (1953); A. E. Harvey "The Classification of Greek Lyric Poetry" *Classical Quarterly* (1955); Karl Meuli *Herkunft und Wesen der Fabel* (1946); Oscar G. Brockett *History of Theatre* (1977); Robert Parker *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (1983); Patricia Easterling (1988); Christian Sourvinou-Inwood *Tragedy and Athenian Religion* (2003).

[4] Scholars who have questioned the link between ritual and drama include Richard Janko, *Aristotle*: *Poetics (Translation with introduction, fragments and commentary)* (1987); Richard Schechner, *The Future of Ritual* (1993); Eli Rozik, *The Roots of Theatre—Rethinking Ritual and Other Theories of Origin* (2002); and Scott Scullion, "Nothing to Do with Dionysus: Tragedy Misconceived as Ritual" *Classical Quarterly* (2002).

[5] This contention can be found in Northrop Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature" *The Kenyon Review* (1951); and in Janko (1987).

reverent codified act of supplication intended to foster communication with the gods. In its simplest form, that communication involved what Turner calls "humility and hierarchy," gratitude expressed by humanity in exchange for knowledge. In primitive ritual, that knowledge was concerned with issues of survival, but in the subsequent development of ritual and religion within society, questions of knowledge became more complex.[6]

The development and evolution of ritual into dramatic form is then deconstructed and considered in both literal and figurative terms as they pertain to tragedies selected from a broad span of time. These interpretations are a form of a comparative dramaturgy, written from an academic perspective. Although it would be ideal to see the effects of this research put to practical use on stage, this study is largely an attempt to counter the argument of scholars who contend that tragedy is now, or has always been, unrelated to ritual.

Here one may also engage the topic of the relationship between religion and politics, or more broadly, the sacred and the secular. I contend that tragedy is the locus in which existential considerations join with ritual, and that the transformation of this relationship in tragedy parallels a degeneration of the value of the sacred in society. It is widely accepted that ritual in ancient Greece was a religious practice, but it was also inextricably tied to politics, and I would argue further that religion and politics have been linked throughout the history of tragedy. Oedipus, in his political role, is considered to have a status somewhere between god and man. Medea, I argue is a demigoddess whose personal life is embroiled with politics. Cadmacean politics are determined by Dionysus in *Bacchae*. The relationship between religion and politics in *King Lear* is more

[6] Victor Turner *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969).

complicated as gods become representative of the question of fate or internal nature, and the extent to which humans create their own tragedies. While I argue that divine law is the ultimate authority in Ancient Greek tragedy, I also posit that divinity is subsequently disregarded and replaced in subsequent tragedies, at least by the characters within the play. In Renaissance tragedy ritual assumes secular properties. For example, *Oedipus* opens with the mimesis of an actual ritual, one that is known and enacted. *King Lear*, in contrast, opens with a base and informal conversation, after which follows a man-made perversion of conflated ritual that includes elements of a beauty contest, marriage, and coronation ceremony. As is often the case with opening scenes of Shakespeare's plays, this apparent degradation of the sacred is an allegorical commentary on the play. Greek tragedy acknowledges and maintains that reality is determined by the will of the gods. Shakespeare's tragedies, however, conflate a variety of religious ideologies and endow kings and warriors with authority. Although these characters were largely considered to be at least semi-divine during the Renaissance, this progression in the genre forces a reconsideration of the legitimacy of human authority. The plays of Sophocles and Euripides frequently reference the gods and ascribe to them the power and authority to control the actions of humanity. It is difficult to dispute the decisions of an authority figure with whom one cannot directly communicate, and whose will one can only interpret retroactively. Shakespeare's works also offer considerations of forces beyond the heroes' control, and brief allusions to the divine, but suggest as well that the characters themselves have much more autonomy than their ancient Greek counterparts. By the time tragedy re-emerges in the modern age, while one might argue for the omnipresence of the divine, it is not acknowledged or represented in tragedy. Any vague

allusions to ritual in *Saved* are usually perverse and ignorant misinterpretations of traditional practices by the majority of the characters. One argument for the deaths in *Saved* to be anything but murder is that they are presented in a drama. Situating the victims within a dramatic context and focusing on the victims' purity raise the events to the level of sacrificial ritual. And finally, there is at least one character who seeks transformation and redemption, and in so doing endows the sacrifice with its traditional, positive function.

Purists may contend that in the absence of the sacred, a play may no longer be considered a tragedy. I argue that secularity and existential considerations were always present in tragedy, and remain so today. Tragedy shares with ritual the positing of questions of justice and authority, whether that authority is divine, royal, or institutional. Whether these considerations are sacred/religious or secular/political is determined by the witness.

Aristotle's emphasis is on the characteristics specific to tragedy: action, character, thought, language, music, and spectacle; as well as the emotional goal of tragedy: the arousal of pity and fear and a catharsis of those emotions;[7] and the intellectual goal of tragedy, which is to witness overturned expectations and cognitively process matters of reversal and recognition.[8] These salient moments of reversal, recognition, and catharsis,

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[7] "Tragedy, then, is a representation of an action which is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude -- in language which is garnished in various forms in its different parts -- in the mode of dramaic enactment, not narrative – and through the arousal of pity and fear effecting the *katharsis* of such emotions." *Poe.* 6

[8] Aristotle on *peripeteia* (reversal) and *anagôrisis* (recognition): Reversal, as indicated, is a complete swing in the direction of the action; but this as we insist, must conform to probability or necessity. Take, for example, Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, where the person comes to bring Oedipus happiness, and intends to free him from his fear about his mother; but he produces the opposite effect, by revealing Oedipus' identity….

which occur in the plot of a successful tragedy according to Aristotle, can as well be applied to moments occurring in ritual sacrifice.

I intend to demonstrate that the peripety in tragedy is a mimesis of the essential reversal demonstrated through sacrificial ritual, that of the transition from life to death. The paradoxical factors shared by tragedy and ritual, I argue, are of great significance. There is an unexpected glory in dying as the sacrificial victim, and a combination of triumph and remorse by the priest who executes the rites. Through the process, definitions of strength and weakness are challenged, as is the relationship between celebration and mourning. Aristotle's basic categories of analysis remain a useful framework within which to situate my supplemental analysis of the ritual dimensions of tragedy. One of the primary goals of this examination is to connect the roles of ritual to those found in tragedy by discussing the themes and characters of tragedy in terms of their relationship to ancient sacrificial ritual.

My theoretical approach to the relationship between ritual and tragedy is shaped in large measure by the studies of Victor Turner and René Girard, in whose works one finds an implicit recognition of three fundamental components of ritual: those of priest,

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> Recognition, as the very name shows, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, bringing the characters into either a close bond, or enmity, with one another, and concerning matters which bear on their prosperity or affliction. The finest recognition occurs in direct conjunction with reversal – as with the one in Oedipus. There are, of course, other kinds of recognition, for recognition can relate to inanimate or fortuitous objects, or reveal that someone has, or has not, committed a deed. But the type I have mentioned is the one which is most integral to the plot-structure and its action: for such a combination of recognition and reversal will produce pity or fear (and it is events of this kind that tragedy, on our definition, is a mimesis of), since both affliction and prosperity will hinge on such circumstances….
>
> Well then, reversal and recognition form two components of the plot-structure; the third is suffering. To the definitions of reversal and recognition already given we can add that of suffering: a destructive or painful action, such as visible deaths, torments, woundings, and other things of the same kind. *Poe.* 11

victim and, to some extent, witnesses. I argue that the priest of ritual takes the form of the hero in tragedy, and that the sacrificial victim of ancient ritual has as its counterpart in tragedy a child of the hero and a victim of abuse. Other important roles in tragedy that have developed out of ritual include those of delinquents and witnesses. The internal and external witnesses are present in both ritual and drama (as well as theater), but perhaps the most original character corollary of my thesis is the delinquent. Although perhaps only implied in ritual, I suggest that the delinquent character is a defining and distinguishing factor of tragedy, who acts as a bridge between ritual and tragedy, in that the delinquent reinforces by counter-example the value and necessity of engaging in the ritual.

The role of the delinquent is perhaps less obvious than the others because he or she serves as a negative definition of the appropriate morality that ritual is intended to demonstrate and enforce. In conceiving of tragedies as rituals enacted for a witnessing congregation, the non-participatory, but affected witnesses are the audience of tragedy. Their role is important because it is for them that the performances are produced. Their role is to witness, to be affected and to respond intellectually, emotionally and perhaps, spiritually. The role of the delinquents, however, represents the apostates of ritual and are included as examples in tragedy to demonstrate their effect on the society. Delinquents stand in contrast to heroes by intentionally disengaging from necessary and appropriate action. While delinquents are obvious in tragedy, they are perhaps less evident in ritual because they are not active, but implied as the less enlightened and uninitiated in the congregation in contrast to the priest. The delinquent serves as an abstract cautionary character who demonstrates undesirable behavior. Delinquents are necessary components

of tragedy because their actions, in contrast to those of the hero, reinforce the extraordinary nature of the hero's actions. Delinquents are not necessarily villainous, but often exhibit apathy. One of the interpretive strategies of this study is to identify these four figures specifically, and to suggest how their ritual roles contribute to each exemplary tragedy as conceived in fundamentally Aristotelian terms.

This theory of tragedy operates on the assertion that the crucial aspects of celebrating life by enacting death are recapitulated in tragedy as having evolved from blood sacrifice[9] and ecstatic ritual. As the Oxford classicist Robert Parker explains, "In

[9] The research of Walter Burkhert on the subject of animal sacrifice has been codified by Andrea Koinski and Barbara Olsen along these lines: A sacrifice was presented on occasion for festivities in the community. In order to celebrate the sacrifice and separate it from everyday life, worshippers would bathe thoroughly and wear clean, or new, clothing to signify the occasion as sacred. They also adorned themselves, most commonly with a garland woven from twigs. The sacrificial offering (the animal sacrificed varied by divinity and by occasion) was presumed to consent to the sacrifice and to present itself willingly as an offering to the god. The animal is reputed to have been physically perfect - the healthiest and most beautiful animal of the herd, adorned with ribbons and its horns, if it had them, gilded. The most common offering was a sheep, though an ox was the most noble, especially if a bull were offered. Goats and pigs were also used; the piglet was the cheapest animal to offer. Poultry could also be offered, but other birds and fish were rarely sacrificed. The sacrificial participants (including priests and lay individuals) would escort the animal to the altar in a procession. A virtuous maiden carried the sacrificial basket, filled to the brim with barley grains or cakes that concealed the sacrificial knife. A water vessel was also carried, along with an incense burner. Musicians (typically a flute player) accompanied the procession as well.

During the procession, the victim was supposed to follow willingly, or at least complacently to an altar either constructed of stone or marked by a pile of ashes. Reluctant victims were considered a bad omen. In a ceremony prior to the sacrifice, a small symbolic fire may have been lit atop the altar. In order to delineate the sacred from the ordinary, a circle surrounding the altar, the animal, and the participants was inscribed in the turf. The sacrificial area became sanctified by the ritualized sacrificial basket and water vessel being carried around the circle. As the first communal action of the sacrifice, each participant would rinse his or her hands in water poured from a ewer. This action is known as *archesthai*, the verb meaning 'to begin,' because it indicates the moment the sacrifice actually begins.

The victim was also sprinkled with water, causing it to jerk its head. The movement was interpreted as a nod that signified the animal's consent to be sacrificed. Larger animals were given a drink of water in order to induce the requisite nod. Each participant then took a handful of barley from the sacrificial basket while silence descended on the gathering. Raising his arms to the sky, the priest ceremonially recited a

ancient thought, life and death were always closely connected; the one could not be conceptualized without the other, in a natural life cycle."[10] The symbolic action of blood sacrifice creates a victim (by publicly subjecting a weak, innocent, and powerless participant to death) and a hero (the priest) who commits the ritual act and delivers the appropriate message to witnesses (society/audience), thereby servicing a binding spiritual function by evoking communal responses. The paradox inherent in formalized responses to death occurs because, as Susan Letzer Cole remarks, "the bonds between the living and the dead are ceremonially acknowledged while the separation of the deceased from the

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prayer, invocation, wish, and vow. (The sacrificer was not necessarily a priest; kings, warriors, and even ordinary men could make offerings to the gods.) After the priest concluded the vow, participants tossed their handful of barley onto the altar and the victim. This was the second part of the beginning, known as *katarchesthai*. The priest would remove the sacrificial knife from the sacrificial basket, and, keeping it concealed, approach the victim.

Suddenly producing the knife, the priest swiftly would cut a few hairs from the victim's forelock. The victim's hairs were tossed onto the altar fire, so the victim was no longer inviolate. This sequence, called *aparchesthai*, concluded the beginning of the rite. Immediately after the symbolic violation of *aparchesthai*, the victim was raised over the altar and its throat cut. As the priest drew the blade across the animal's throat, the women present would utter a high-pitched ritual cry, marking the passage from life into death.

The blood of the victim was collected in a basin and then sprayed over the top and sides of the altar. To stain the altar with blood (*haimassein*) was considered a pious duty. Next, the victim was skinned and butchered. The inner organs, particularly the heart and liver (*splanchma*), were pierced with forks and roasted on the altar fire. These roasted delicacies were reserved for the most important participants, whose duty and privilege was to taste the *splanchma* first. The inedible remains of the victim, such as bones and hooves, were consecrated by laying them out in visible order on the altar. By repositioning the bones on the altar, the victim's life was recalled and celebrated. A sacrifice did not consist solely of meat and blood. Along with the bones, cakes, broth, and other food offerings were burned on the altar as offerings to the god. Most importantly, the priest would pour wine over the fire. The brilliant flame caused by the combustion of the alcohol was interpreted as signifying the presence of the deity. After the consumption of the *splanchma* and the subsiding of the flames, the actual meat of the animal was prepared and cooked, either by roasting or boiling. A feast followed; the meat was consumed by all the participants and the skin was dedicated to the sanctuary or the presiding priest.

[10] R. Parker in Discussion with B.C. Dietrich's *Some Thoughts on Sacrificial Ritual and Meaning* from proceedings of the Sixth International Seminar on Ancient Greek Cult, organized by the Department of Classical Archaeology and Ancient History, Göteborg University, 25-27 April 1997.

survivors is all the while implacably accomplished."[11] From the perspective of the audience, "the evoking and purging of pity and fear are, in fact, the expression and release of ambivalent feelings, especially those feelings which death—and ghosts—call forth."[12] In ritual sacrifice, humanity acknowledges mortality through a form of fear and empowerment in which they play the role of fate by taking the life of a subservient being for which they simultaneously feel pity.[13] It is the ultimate conflation of fate and free will, using one's agency to immediately affect and determine the fate of another. The frenzied ritual ceremonies, like those depicted in Euripides's *Bacchae*, usually associated with specific cults and considered a different form of worship of Dionysus, are an augmentation of the genre, the practice of which has had ephemeral popularity but re-emerges as resonant motifs throughout the evolution of tragedy.

A functional tragedy questions the extent to which humanity, in the time in which the drama is performed, is fulfilling the vital moral imperatives of truth and justice, as compared to being utterly overwhelmed by forces beyond human control. If the consequences of a character's actions are retributive, the play is considered moralistic or didactic. According to Aristotle:

> Since then the structure of the best tragedy should be not simple but complex and one that represents incidents arousing fear and pity—for that is peculiar to this form of art—it is obvious to begin with that one should

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[11] Cole (1985) 21

[12] Cole (1985) 11

[13] Although it is a controversial position, Burkert asserts that guilt is part of the priest's experience in a blood sacrifice.

> not show worthy men passing from good fortune to bad. That does not arouse fear or pity but shocks our feelings. Nor again wicked people passing from bad fortune to good. That is the most untragic of all, having none of the requisite qualities, since it does not satisfy our feelings or arouse pity or fear.[14]

Legitimate tragedy, however, exists when four archetypes are represented, three of which have apparent analogues in sacrificial ritual: First, a shaman or a priest, who channels the appropriate compassion or contrition in committing an extreme act, classically known in tragedy as the tragic hero; Second, a relatively blameless character, analogous to the sacrificial animals of the original ritual, who suffers regardless of his or her innocence, which we will call victim; Third, the witnesses, both internal and external representatives of the audience and by extension society who are not necessarily part of the plot, but are indeed affected by it. Internal witnesses are part of the *dramatis personae*, external witnesses correspond to the modern audience. The fourth prototype of tragedy is the delinquent. This character illustrates the consequences of abstinence from social or natural behavior according to the philosophy of the playwright. The character usually portrays the absence of moral agency and often personifies denial.

Tragedy, as the dramatic and, collaterally, literary form having emerged from performative practices and ideologies, functions as a narrative ritual realization that the plight of mortality is inevitable and suggests that during one's lifetime there are events and circumstances over which one has no control; just as there are matters in relation to which one is ethically bound to take action. This distinction is crucial in tragedy. Failure

[14] Aristotle, *Poe.* 7

to take responsibility for that which is incumbent upon humanity manifests itself in the theme of denial. Denial's offspring, oppression and scorn, are prevalent attitudes in tragedy when essential human responsibilities are unfulfilled. Deficient achievement of moral obligation could also be described as injustice whereas tragedy differs in its delicate balance of immoral behavior with a reverent acknowledgement of that which extends beyond the purview of human dominion. One of the hallmarks of tragedy, with regard to integrity, is the resonance of the actions of an individual throughout society. One hypothesis often proven in tragedy is that personal immorality can have a greater effect on the community than it does on the individual. In this sense alone, there is a ritual aspect to the genre, in that the symbolic action of one character is a mereological representation of the society and politics. Tragedy, by its very nature, is political allegory.

Although this study recognizes the literary manifestation of the genre, it is well noted that in order for the effect of tragedy to be optimally realized, it must be witnessed as a live event among members of a community. Whether or not one ascribes to the magical force of words spoken in performance, there is a performative purpose of communal response in this ritual activity. Isolation undermines a form which is intended to create bonds and strengthen community through a shared experience. Although compassion and identification with the victim by the priest who slaughters the victim and by the congregation who witnesses it, may seem incidentally paradoxical, they are two of the genuinely salient results of the tragic process. A similar emotional bond can be forged among society members in the ecstatic model through more physical rather than intellectual means. These rituals build the collective emotional memory of a community, reinforcing roots in tradition, and acknowledging their place between heaven and earth as

sentient, yet carnal, beings. The success of the ritual is therefore based on the capability of an audience to emotionally process the event. Tragedy has appealed to audiences' intellectual and emotional response as a means to a spiritual end. As Palmer explains, tragedies often include a special event scene of heightened formality:

> [Theorists] agree that tragedy is, at its core, a painful experience that nonetheless contains some pleasurable component which they describe variously, depending on the system of values held by the particular theorist. The theorist who begins with the premise that emotion is bad reaches a conclusion different from one who argues that want of compassion is a human weakness. Behind the definitions of response, therefore, lie important differences in the assumed values of the responder, and theorists could be grouped according to their ethical premises, with the majority assuming an imperfect spectator in need of the tragic experience for the improvement of the mind, soul, or psyche.[15]

The defining features of the mimesis of life, particularly tragedy, persist because they are based on humanity's ubiquitous concern with issues of mortality, justice, individuality, and community. The challenge to unite a populace contradicts the intrinsic nature of art to incite a spectrum of emotions and allow intellectual ambivalence. Because tragedy illustrates themes through extreme polemics of the human condition, it is counter-intuitive to expect the shared experience to yield intellectual agreement among audiences. Drama is successful, however, when it actuates spiritual experience through

[15] Palmer (1992) 49

communal emotional and intellectual responses, the substance and value of which are subordinate to shared participation in the event.

This study accepts the traditional theory that tragedy evolved from a combination of myth and ritual, sometimes including blood sacrifice, and the lyrical dithyrambs performed to honor Dionysus. In discussing the relationship between myth and ritual Walter Burkert distinguishes them as separate forms but describes the similarities from which tragedy draws its constitution:

> …ritual is not a theatrical dramatization of myth….the function of ritual is to dramatize the order of life, expressing itself in basic modes of behavior, especially aggression. In its own way too, myth clarifies the order of life. It frequently explains and justifies social orders and establishments, and in so doing it is related to ritual, which occurs by means of social interaction. The most exciting themes in myth come from the realm of sexuality and aggression, and these are also prominent in ritual communication. The most fascinating stories concern the perils of death and destruction. These have their counterpart in sacrificial killing.[16]

Whether the inciting act is performing a sacrifice of animals to deities or engaging in ecstatic music and dance, the successful ceremonial experience achieves a catharsis through communal compassion or reverie. The rituals convey in themselves the message of what it means to be human: the central figure in a hierarchy that acknowledges forces beyond mortal control and assesses gods as superior and animals as inferior in terms of

[16] Burkert (1983) 33

consciousness and agency. The complex element of sacrifice in Greek sacrificial ritual is that the god himself or herself is often identical with the sacrificial animal. Burkert's studies share mythological examples of gods shifting their form, "Zeus, for instance, transforms himself into a bull, Dionysus into a kid. Behind the story that Pasiphaë copulated with an exceptional sacrificial bull are rituals in which a woman offers herself sexually to the victim…."[17] These rites symbolically draw life and death as closely together as possible in order to acknowledge them as part of the same fateful cycle. The mimetic enterprise of a priest as the agent of death, slaughtering his god in the form of an animal, is a ritualized act of supplication that is simultaneously dominant and submissive. The role of the animal, of the victim in this case, is a glorification and deep appreciation for the regenerative god who symbolically sacrifices himself or herself for the benefit of the people. However, as Burkert points out:

> [A]n extremely patriarchal society such as that of ancient Greece, where in honoring one's father was central to the conscious morality, patricide was almost unthinkable….Hence it was simpler to style the sacrificial animal an 'enemy of the god.' One interpretation of the goat sacrifice is that it is killed for Dionysus because it gnaws at the vine."[18]

This ritualized execution is not originally meant as a punitive or vengeful act but as a symbolic collective reverence and purgation by demonstrating the hierarchy and sincerity wherein the priest is privileged by his knowledge of the soteriological rite and

[17] Burkert (1979) 77

[18] Burkert (1983) 35

spiritual wisdom.[19] In his interpretation of the societal emotional response associated with ritual, Burkert links ritual to tragedy through sacrificial rites: "In the pictures showing the god and his sacrificial animal side by side in almost inner communion, we recognize that heartfelt ambivalence of sacrifice which made it possible for the Greeks to create tragedy."[20] This observant statement of art criticism reinforces the hypothesis that tragedy evolved out of sacrificial ritual. Burkert's research further reinforces the notion of the complexity and profundity of emotions attached to the ritualized procedures of ancient culture:

> As ethology has shown, a sense of community arises from collective aggression. A smile can, of course, establish contact, and a crying child touches our hearts, but in all human societies "seriousness" takes precedence over friendliness and compassion. A community bound by oaths is united in the "sacred shiver" of awe and enthusiasm—the relic of an aggressive reflex that made the hairs bristle—in a feeling of strength and readiness. This must then be released in an "act": the sacrificial ritual provides the occasion for killing and bloodshed. Whether in Israel, Greece, or Rome, no agreement, no contract, no alliance can be made without sacrifice. And, in the language of the oath, the object of

[19] Burkert's theories of Minoan and Mycenaean sacrificial rites corroborate the essence of guilt felt by the priests, which is similar, but not precisely my claim here. Whereas, Dietrich denies the presence of guilt in sacrifice, but bases these assumptions on a completely different cultural model and tradition in Africa.

[20] Burkert (1979) 78

> aggression that is to be "struck" and "cut" becomes virtually identical with the covenant itself.[21]

By taking the representative animal's life, the priest conflates his associations of obligation, dominance, and reverence in ceremonial formality for the benefit of the community. The priest's actions in ritual are recapitulated by the hero's efforts in tragedy. Classically, tragic heroes are, in fact, paradoxical in that they are guilty of either moral or societal transgression, and yet they survive without penalty of death. Although they may appear to have been divinely forgiven, in that their lives are spared, their survival may also be considered a curse.[22] Tragedy evolves both from a solemn sacrificial imperative based on reverence and hierarchy that illustrates a power structure based on strength and violence, and from a reverie of ecstatic songs and dances in worship to the regenerative god, Dionysus. The latter form of intoxicated worship was characterized by altered states of mind, body and spirit brought on by any number of activities, including drinking and dancing, which were exacerbated by group dynamics. These seemingly informal acts of worship demonstrated the human capacity for entrance into an arcane spiritual realm. Sexual forms of worship or supplication in ancient Greece were rare, less formal, and sometimes vaguely proffered.

Whether sacrificial offering comes in the form of violent or sexual sacrifice, it is the physical manifestation that metaphorically reinforces humanity's awareness of our central position in the metaphysical hierarchy of the universe. The sacrificial form allows

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[21] Burkert (1979) 35

[22] A continual theme of Greek teaching is that every gift is a burden as it requires reciprocal action and every curse is a gift in that it provides accelerated lessons resulting in profound knowledge and wisdom. (1979).

an audience to observe and be passive while ecstatic rites of inebriated celebration encourage active participation and physical communion. In these rituals of worship, the importance of sex and violence is their determinant role in inspiring and yielding compassion. In this study, sacrificial ritual is understood as the catalyst for determining the connection between ritual and tragedy as a dramatic form. Ritual, in its primitive form, involves actual violence which results in death. A crucial distinction between ritual and tragedy is what Aristotle calls mimesis: the imitation of an action and not the action itself. Aristotle refers to this action as a form of play and an instinctual action. Such play allows for the emergence of what Turner refers to as the idea of liminal space, where the representation of violence (as opposed to an actual violent act) can be taken seriously for what it represents without the consequences of actual violence. In this vein, one may also note that calling upon the gods was an act of prayer in both ancient ritual and tragedy, but that it was considered blasphemy to represent a god on stage in tragedy.[23] One of the most important shared attributes of ritual and tragedy is that they both actualize the quest for knowledge, which could be considered a sacred undertaking in and of itself in tragedy, regardless of the presence of a literal depiction of ritual or of direct communication with the gods. In establishing ritual's connection to tragedy, therefore, ritual is used in two ways throughout this study. First, ritual is literally materialized in the performance of a play as a ritual unto itself. Second, ritual is examined as metaphorically executed through mimesis within a dramatic work.

From its inception, tragedy has been characterized by violent action, and throughout its history most tragedies end in the violent deaths of one or more characters. Equally important, however, are the questions of relations between men and women—

[23] Carlson (1984) 21

love, jealousy, anger, and so on—which are also essential to tragedy and evident in the most successful works. The plays reviewed in this study are obviously concerned with women's roles, but other conspicuous standards for this claim begin in ancient Greece with the tragedies of Aeschylus's *Oresteia,* both Sophocles's and Euripides's treatment of the story of *The Trojan Women,* and the attention paid in a variety of perspectives to the story of Iphigenia. The observation of the importance of relationships characterized by sexuality between men and women continues through the Renaissance and into the Enlightenment with Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, Corneille's *Le Cid,* and Racine's *Andromache*, and *Phaedra.*[24] Since Freud, the significance of sexuality between men and women has been noted in the critical literature on tragedy. The link between violence and sexuality, however, has not been given as much attention as it deserves. I argue that the relationship between violence and sexuality is the central theme of most tragedies, and that the ritual dimension of tragedy involves rituals of violence and sexuality. The theme of utmost importance for this study, however, is that of child abuse. I argue that abuse of children and adolescents is pervasive throughout the evolution of tragedy because of the form's connections with sacrificial rites. One may observe that child abuse is one of the most common subjects of tragedy and extend the proposition by insisting that truly successful tragedies treat the subject of child abuse. This study suggests that the evolution of tragedy is a version (or, perversion) of the sacred idea of the sacrificial victim, and that children's suffering at the hands of their parents is and has been a main subject of tragedy. The subject of child abuse has only slowly entered the domain of public discourse—indeed, there has been a

[24] It may also be noted here that Molière's *Tartuffe*, in particular, is but for the *deus ex machina* and absence of death, a nearly perfect tragedy.

pronounced aversion to the subject among the general populous, as well as professionals, especially with regard to the topic of sexual abuse.[25] One of my goals is to demonstrate the importance in tragedy of the inextricably linked themes of violence, sexuality, and abuse.

The three periods of tragedy examined in this study are Ancient Greek, Shakespearean (representing the English Renaissance), and Millennial. I have chosen to focus on a small number of plays to explore the dynamics of this thematic triad, rather than offer a broad survey of the theme, primarily because its significance cannot be demonstrated without offering a close reading of individual works. I have chosen three works from ancient Greece, one Shakespearean tragedy, and one drama by Edward Bond.

Tragedy in this study is being treated as a western form, having been established by the Greeks in 6th-century BCE Athens. The inclusion of Ancient Greek tragedies, therefore, is imperative since the genre cannot be understood without reference to its Greek roots. In each of the Greek tragedies examined in this study, the victims are collateral damage in retaliation for the actions of another party. The guilty parties, in each case, are the victims' parents. The children, the innocents, suffer for their parents'

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[25] Geoffrey Hartman questions the validity of studying abuse through literary criticism in "On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies," *New Literary History* (1995), by claiming that such trauma cannot be "fully retrieved or communicated without distortion." Barbara Schulman's article addresses the phenomenon of the reluctance and failure of our academic culture to address meaningfully serious issues of abuse in, "The Unsettling Subject of Violence in Women's Lives: Encouraging Notes from the Classroom Front" *Women's Studies Quarterly* Spring – Summer, 1999. Hawaiian writer, Lois-Ann Yamanaka has written candid fiction describing horrific circumstances of child abuse and neglect (*Saturday Night at the Pahala Theatre* (1993), *Blu's Hanging* (1997*), Heads by Harry* (1999) only to become the center of a controversial argument about racism because of the nationality of the abusers. This state of willful ignorance and denial in academic culture demonstrates in real life my example of delinquency in tragedy.

actions. Some of the evidence used to make this argument is tacit information, either implied within the primary text, or else, based on dramaturgical research.

The choice of Shakespeare as an object of analysis is likewise inevitable since he is perhaps the best-known and most successful writer of tragedies, if not in the world, then certainly in the English language. In the Shakespearean tragedies examined here, one can see clearly that the adult children of the elder characters are ill-equipped to contend with the environments in which they live; and that those environments were created by their elders. There is evidence that Shakespearean children have either been abused outright, or neglected to the point that their resultant dysfunctional behavior contributes to the demise of their society.

These assertions lay the foundation for the ultimate argument found in the Millennial chapter—and indeed, the primary object of this study is to demonstrate the validity of this thesis: that tragedy is not a dead form in the 20th and 21st centuries, as many have claimed, but remains a viable and powerful dramatic form.[26] I contend that Edward Bond resurrects the genre of tragedy by examining the deaths of three children in one of his earliest works, *Saved*. Although it is modern compared to the previous periods of tragedy, Bond carries forth elements of ritual into the Millennial era. One of the strongest ritual symbols in *Saved* is in the proximity of each example of a child's death to the park. For this and many other reasons, I argue that Bond is an eminent practitioner of

[26] The argument in defense of tragedy in its pure form began with the original codification of it in Aristotle's *Poetics* wherein he lauds Sophocles, suggesting by comparison the illegitimacy of other dramatists. Friedrich Nietzsche continues the trope and elaborates on the notion with his philosophical theory in *The Birth of Tragedy: Or, Hellenism and Pessimism* (1886). Among the essays discussing the evolution or cessation of the genre that continue well into the modern age are arguments by George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (1961); Frank Kermode, "Review of Modern Tragedy" *Encounter* (1966); Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (1966) and Normand Berlin *The Secret Cause* (1981).

the genre who maintains tragedy's viability in the millennial era. By including one contemporary dramatist in my analysis, I hope to show that tragedy is not only possible in modernity, it is thriving, at least in the works of Bond. And, as I will show, the themes of violence, sexuality, and child abuse remain just as central in Bond as they were in ancient Greek tragedy and Shakespeare. The historical dimension of this argument would obviously be strengthened were I to analyze dozens of plays over the course of Western history, but to do so would require a tome of several thousand pages. If my selective analysis does not conclusively prove the continuous presence of violence, sexuality, and child abuse in tragedy into the modern era, I hope that my treatment of Bond will at least invite others to examine these themes in tragedies in a variety of eras and national traditions.

Naturally, and in homage to Aristotle, this study begins with the story of Oedipus,[27] discussing its relevance and importance in the canon of criticism regarding tragedy as a genre, and producing dramaturgical evidence that supports the thesis that child abuse is and continues to be a ubiquitous theme of tragedy. The explications of two seminal works by Euripides follow; after which an iconic tragedy by Shakespeare solidifies the foundation of my hypothesis so that it can be applied to *Saved* by Edward Bond.

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[27] Since 421 BCE when Aristotle lauded Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* as the prototypical tragedy in the *Poetics*, Oedipus has served as the central iconic figure of the genre and has launched countless studies in a variety of disciplines. Both commentary and translation mingle among the works essential for a solid introductory study including Gilbert Murray (1911), Francis Storr (1912), William Butler Yeats (1928), Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald (1949), Bernard Knox (1959), H. D. F. Ditto (1962), Stephen Berg and Diskin Clay (1978), and Robert Fagles (1984).

CHAPTER 2

REVENGE COLLATERAL:

CHILDREN OF ANCIENT GREEK TRAGEDY

Oedipus, Medea's children, Glauce, Dionysus, and Pentheus

Oedipus the King

At its inception in ancient Greece, tragedy was a predominantly masculine art form, with roots in the choric dithyramb.[28] As Nietzsche explains in *The Birth of Tragedy*, "…originally tragedy is only 'chorus' and not 'drama.' Later the attempt was made to show the god [Dionysus] as real and then to represent the visionary figure together with its transfiguring frame as something visible for every eye—and thus 'drama' in the narrower sense began."[29] The origin of state-sanctioned ritual drama, which was ostensibly performed in celebration of or in an effort to elicit favor from the gods, can be traced to 534 BCE:[30] Pisistratus, having seized the castle and power of Athens by a *coup d'état* in 560 B.C., decided to enlarge the artistic scope of the City Dionysia by including plays in the official program of the festival.[31] The Lenaea festivals also included dramatic performances but were never as important as those held at the City

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[28] Nagler (1952) 3

[29] Nietzsche (1872) 8.66

[30] Murray (2004) lvix

[31] Nagler (1952) 3

Dionysia.[32] In addition to its religious roots and spiritual goals, theater was as well political and social, encouraging competition among artists, and gathering citizens in the cities of ancient Greece. Thus, Greek culture developed a new art and method of communicating shared stories and ideas to an ever-broadening audience by dramatizing legends. Rather than sharing stories in small, intimate groups, theater widened the scope of societal influence. When Thespis first innovated the rituals that became theater, he met some opposition and was accused of public lying.[33] Nevertheless, a connection can be made between ritual and theater, especially through theater's characterization, action, thought, and intention. Although disputed by some classicists, Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, contends:

> The tradition is undisputed that Greek tragedy in its earliest form had for its sole theme the sufferings of Dionysus and that for a long time the only stage hero was Dionysus himself. But it may be claimed with equal confidence that until Euripides, Dionysus never ceased to be the tragic hero; that all the celebrated figures of the Greek stage--Prometheus, Oedipus, etc.--are mere masks of this original hero, Dionysus.[34]

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[32] Hathorn (1967) 195

[33] In an account attributed to Plutarch Nagler writes, "Solon addressed Thespis and asked him if he was not ashamed to tell so many lies before such a number of people; and Thespis replying that it was no harm to say or do so in a play, Solon vehemently struck his staff against the ground: 'Ah,' said he, 'if we honor and commend such play as this, we shall find it some day in our business'" Nagler (1952) 3.

[34] Nietzsche (1872) 10.73

Using Dionysus as the primary source of worship for this study makes the mythology and rites of worship associated with him of particular interest. The same aspects found in ritual are found in theater, especially in the genre of tragedy. Most important, however, is the pervasive allegorical presence in tragedy of familial child abuse, either by violent, neglectful, or sexual means, that parallels the myths of Dionysus. This phenomenon, I believe, is connected to the motivations behind sacrifice and humanity's relationship to the gods, which rely on an accepted order based on temperance and hierarchy.

In the *Poetics*, Aristotle bases his definition of tragedy on Sophocles's version of the Oedipus myth in *Oedipus the King,*[35] but Aristotle's analysis of the character element, I argue, should be supplemented by a differentiation of characters as hero-victim, delinquent, innocent, and witness, or congregation, all of whom are the supposed participants of ritual worship. As a character, Oedipus fulfills the roles of hero and victim, and serves some of the same functions as would both the priest and the sacrificial victim of a ritual. He guides the inquiry and discovery for the congregation (i.e., Chorus, citizens of Thebes and theater audience) as well as himself and the other ignorant characters. Presumably the majority of citizens are innocent because they are truly ignorant, whereas even Creon is guilty of intellectual and judicial laziness. Some Thebans have been innocent victims of the plague, suffering for the crimes of others, but other characters in the play, namely, Jocasta, Tiresias, the shepherd, and the messengers, are delinquents. The play reveals the delinquents' varied roles in obstructing justice by

[35] In this thesis, *Oedipus* will be understood to mean the play by Sophocles translated alternatively as *Oedipus Rex*, *Oedipus the King* and *Oedipus Tyrannus*; whereas Oedipus will refer to the eponymous character. The 1982 translation by Robert Fagles is cited throughout this chapter.

withholding knowledge or by obstinately refusing to engage in cognitive thought at all. They ignore truth in an attempt to avoid punishment for crimes of which they are aware.

A patriarchal dynamic is allegorically realized at the start of the play when the Priest of Zeus entreats Oedipus for his help. *Oedipus* opens with a meta-ritual of priest imploring king. The entire action of the play is set before the palace of the Theban ruler, where an altar is situated. Oedipus speaks the first lines of the play, "Oh my children, the new blood of ancient Thebes, / why are you here? Huddling at my altar, / praying before me, your branches wound in wool. / Our city reeks with the smoke of burning incense, / rings with cries for the Healer and wailing for the dead…." (*Oed*. 1-5). The first visual message of the play is that of temple-altar surrounded by suppliants laying laurel branches and burning incense on the altar. The characters within the play are performing a ritual which is framed within the ritual of the play itself. That is to say, performing a play historically is itself an act of ritual, and even if one were to argue against a play as intentionally ritualistic, the rites written into the performance of the play make it so. According to the logic of performative action by which Solon questioned the effect of lying onstage, if rituals have power when they are enacted for their own sake, they have power whenever they are performed. The king is immediately recognized as the priest's source of power and the community's primary means of finding a solution to the problems of Thebes. The citizens of Thebes accept Oedipus as their superior. Having proven himself as a hero by solving the riddle of the Sphinx, he is regarded as an exceptional individual, placed somewhere between man and god. That the plea for salvation comes from a priest, and that fulfillment of the request would require divine intervention, implies that the king has attained a god-like stature, although the priest is

careful to thwart this assumption: "Now we pray to you. You cannot equal the gods, / your children know that bending at your altar. / But we do rate you first of men, / both in the common crises of our lives / and face-to-face encounters with the gods" (*Oed*. 40-3).

According to history professor, F. S. Naiden, the manner in which Oedipus hears the appeal from the Priest of Zeus follows the codified pattern of Ancient Greek ritual supplication:

> …the first three steps [presented] in order: approach, gesture or word, request and argument. That is how suppliants performed them, and what supplicandi (and ancient readers and listeners) expected…The prevailing view has concentrated on the second step, especially gestures, and some literary critics have concentrated on the third, especially on appeals to pity….In Greek tragedy, suppliants devote hundreds of lines to their requests and arguments, and so any mere list of them may give a misleading impression of brevity. In addition, a list does not acknowledge that a suppliant may make more than one request and that many suppliants make more than one argument. The first act of supplication in the *Iliad*, by Chryses, includes appeals to the gods and to reciprocity…Tragedy features combinations, too: in the *Children of Heracles*, the suppliant argues about kinship, reciprocity, and fairness; in *Oedipus at Colonus*, about fairness, kinship, solidarity among *xenoi*, and reciprocity. We do not know the arguments used by the paradigmatic Roman suppliant, Metellus Pius, but he surely said that to ask for help in bringing his father back to Rome was

> only fair, since his father did not deserve exile, and he surely asked that the supplicandus respect the wishes of a dutiful son.[36]

The act of supplication by itself establishes a hierarchy in which the suppliant perceives the supplicandus as having a power greater than his own to solve a problem that the suppliant's capabilities cannot solve without his help. This relationship plays out as a trope throughout tragedy and in *Oedipus* becomes significant when Tiresias enters. At the opening, the Priest makes his appeal to Oedipus in an act of ritual supplication: approach, gesture or word, request and argument. The first lines of the play announce that the priest has approached and gestured:

> You freed us from the Sphinx, you came to Thebes
> And cut us loose from the bloody tribute we had paid
> that harsh, brutal singer. We taught you nothing,
> No skill, no extra knowledge, still you triumphed.
> a god was with you, so they say, and we believe it--
> You lifted up our lives. So now again,
> Oedipus, king, we bend to you, your power--
> we implore you, all of us on our knees:
> find us strength, rescue! (*Oed*. 44-52).

The priest's argument centers on praising Oedipus and recounting his accomplishments. Oedipus is king and one of the rulers of Thebes, but a priest of Zeus

[36] Naiden (2006) 103

would also hold an elevated position in the ancient world.[37] Given a hierarchy of respect that acknowledges the importance of a priest's connection to the divine, one does not automatically assume that a priest would solicit a ruler. In fact, in a traditional hierarchy one could expect a king to seek counsel from a priest. This opening exchange presents a fundamental consideration: the management of divine authority by humanity. This scene marks Oedipus as a special being and emphasizes his super-human if not divine conquest of the Sphinx. Oedipus is a benevolent ruler, but in his capacity as protector of the people he must bolster his confidence in his own capabilities, and overcome his own self-doubt. His words of declamation are meant as much to convince himself as they are to assure those who look to him for resolution. That is why Oedipus becomes so belligerent when Tiresias denies Oedipus his help. In terms of moral integrity, Oedipus is correct to force Tiresias into disclosing information. Tiresias demonstrates his delinquency in this scene, for he is almost proud of having withheld information. In fact, by maintaining his secrecy, Tiresias is one of the most culpable characters in the myth. In terms of the Sophoclean tragedy, however, he is the quintessential priest in that he makes the pronouncements and shares the knowledge requisite to rituals of death and sacrifice. In terms of hierarchy, however, Oedipus wrongly assumes his authority over Tiresias. As Tiresias says, " You are the king no doubt, but in one respect, / at least, I am your equal: the right to reply. / I claim that privilege too. / I am not your slave. I serve Apollo. / I don't need Creon to speak for me in public" (*Oed*. 464-7). Not only is Tiresias a man of god, he has the information that Oedipus needs.

The ritual aspect of a priest calling down a curse upon himself in order to save his people from suffering is recapitulated in *Oedipus*. The ritual of self-sacrifice is seen in a

[37] Dumont (1970) 72-9

number of ancient and renaissance tragedies. It follows the Dionysian ritual of fertility and rebirth. One expects to hear priests and heroes call upon the gods for help and guidance. In some cases, characters call upon darker forces to help them with revenge, and in still others, they call for their own punishment. This is what Oedipus does, not once, but three times. Throughout the earliest lines of the play, without realizing what he is doing, he curses himself by vowing to punish Laius's murderer.

> …I'll be a traitor
> if I do not do all the god makes clear…
> I order you every citizen of the state
> where I hold throne and power: banish this man--
> whoever he may be--never shelter him, never
> speak a word to him, never make him partner
> to your prayers, your victims burned to the gods.
> Never let the holy water touch his hands
> Drive him out, each of you, from every home.
> Now my curse on the murderer. Whoever he is,
> a lone man unknown in his crime
> or one among many, let that man drag out
> his life in agony, step by painful step--
> I curse myself as well…if by any chance
> he proves to be an intimate of our house,
> here at my hearth, with my full knowledge

> may the curse I just called down on him strike me! (*Oed*. 88-9, 269-75, 280-7).

If one had no prior knowledge of the myth, the murderer's identity would remain unknown until the denouement. But even when the play was first performed, the myth was well-known, and Oedipus's curse was a clear instance of dramatic irony.

Another notable aspect of Oedipus's words of unwitting self-condemnation is their embedded reference to ritual. When Oedipus orders his people to exclude the murderer from their prayers and ritual sacrifices, "your victims burned to the gods" (*Oed*. 273), he incidentally offers anthropological insight into the standard rites of ancient religious worship. In an attempt to reach deities presumably residing in an unseen world above mortals, methods of communication would include attempts at sending messages outside the human realm. Language and music could be heard by the gods, but material offerings had to be physically moved or changed. The death of a living being would presumably move the spirit of the sacrificial one into a world other than the human world. The ritual burning of any material entity is meant to facilitate communication with the gods by changing the entity's form and giving it passageway via smoke. Smoke, which naturally rises in a gaseous form, disappears into a place outside the realm of humanity, presumably into the world inhabited by the gods. Burning is thus a common practice of worship and sacrifice in many cultures because it functions as a physical form of communication. Even if one is skeptical about the thesis that theater evolved from ritual, it is undeniable that early drama contained within itself ancient ritual gestures.

Upon Creon's return from the Delphic oracle, Oedipus learns that the problems of Thebes will be resolved once Laius's murderer is found and exiled. Oedipus is soon informed of Tiresias's prophetic talent and ability to convey the will of Apollo. He summons Tiresias who admits he is guilty of denial: "How terrible-to see the truth / when the truth is only pain to him who sees! / I knew it well, but I put it from my mind, / else I never would have come" (*Oed*. 359-62). When Tiresias responds to Oedipus's request for information by saying he will tell Oedipus nothing, Oedipus insults the prophet: "Nothing! You, / you scum of the earth, you'd enrage a heart of stone! / You won't talk? Nothing moves you? / Out with it, once and for all!" (*Oed*. 380-3). To this, Tiresias replies with subtle, yet noteworthy incredulity and with his own accusation: "You criticize my temper…unaware / of the one *you* live with, you revile me" (*Oed*. 384-5). In his annotated translation, Robert Fagles notes, "in the Greek the veiled reference to Jocasta is more forceful, because the word translated 'the one' has a feminine ending (agreeing with the feminine noun *orgê*, 'temper')."[38] Clearly, Sophocles is indicating that Tiresias is accusing Jocasta of the same acts of denial of facts that he himself has committed and that she, likewise, is withholding evidence. Eventually Tiresias relents and informs Oedipus, "You are the curse, the corruption of the land!" and "I say you are the murderer you hunt" (*Oed*. 401, 413). But Oedipus resists and further insults Tiresias, to which Tiresias responds, "So, / you mock my blindness? Let me tell you this. / You with your precious eyes, / you're blind to the corruption of your life, / to the house you live in, those you live with--" (*Oed*. 468-72), and later he adds, "Blind who now has eyes, beggar who now is rich, / he will grope his way toward a foreign soil, a stick tapping before him step by step" (*Oed*. 517-9). Within the context of the play, these words act as

[38] Fagles (1982) 627

both prophecy and curse. Whether or not one believes that Tiresias has the power to see the future, his pronouncement is realized by the end of the play. He claims that he conveys a message from Apollo, which, legend tells us, was a curse, and in communicating the message, Tiresias is himself repeating in ritual incantation the specific details of the curse.

Following this scene, the audience should be eagerly anticipating Jocasta's entrance, which takes place near line 700. By that time, Oedipus is actively engaged in his own denial, refusing to believe Tiresias and plotting to banish him and Creon, believing that they have conspired to destroy him. Technically, Oedipus is correct in his evaluation of their characters, but for the wrong reasons. Tiresias, Creon, and Jocasta are delinquent characters and have contributed to the plague of Thebes by having withheld information or by failing to pursue truth and justice when Oedipus first arrived in the city.

Jocasta is guilty by her passivity, an instance of what the modern philosopher Hannah Arendt calls the banality of evil: "Evil comes from a failure to think. It defies thought for as soon as thought tries to engage itself with evil and examine the premises and principles from which it originates, it is frustrated because it finds nothing there. That is the banality of evil."[39] In terms of Athenian society, the education of women was more often in domestic arts and practical matters of obeisance rather than courageous critical thinking.[40] Jocasta's delinquency of cognition, her insistent denial and intentional avoidance of pursuing the truth, especially after she suspects Oedipus may be her son, is particularly egregious for the far-reaching effect it has on countless Thebans who perish

[39] Arendt (1963) xiv

[40] Aristotle *Politics* I.1260, IV.1296-7, VII.1323; Blundell (1995), (1998). Notably, the play takes place in Thebes, but, as is often true, many of the customs and shared assumptions of the work apply to the time in which it is performed.

in the plague while she remains privileged as one of the rulers of Thebes. From her first appearance in the play, she intends to dissuade Oedipus and Creon from inquiring as to the origins of the curse on the city by chiding them, ending the discussion, separating them, and understating the problem: "Have you no sense? Poor misguided men, / such shouting--why this public outburst? / Aren't you ashamed, with the land so sick, / to stir up private quarrels? / Into the palace now. And Creon, you go home. / Why make such a furor over nothing?" (*Oed*. 709-14).

Her behavior is suspicious. She turns Oedipus's attention away from his quest, separating him from Creon, and in so doing, puts an end to the Socratic dialogue between them. She intentionally disengages her (and their) cognitive faculties which might have led to the discovery of facts and evidence that would illuminate the situation and clarify the consequences of prior words and actions. She explains her refusal to consider fully her intuitive response to Oedipus when she attempts to assuage his suspicion that he may be Laius's murderer.

> Listen to me and learn some peace of mind:
> ….An oracle came to Laius one fine day
> (I won't say from Apollo himself
> but his underlings, his priests) and it said
> that doom would strike him down at the hands of a son,
> our son, to be born of our own flesh and blood. But Laius,
> so the report goes at least, was killed by strangers,
> thieves, at a place where three roads meet… (Oed. 780, 784-90).

Evidence that Jocasta has begun to suspect she knows Oedipus's true identity emerges, however, when she admits to Oedipus that she met a witness of Laius's death, "A servant who reached home, the lone survivor…. / Soon as he returned from the scene / and saw you on the throne with Laius dead and gone, / he knelt and clutched my hand, pleading with me / to send him into the hinterlands, to pasture, / as far as possible, out of sight of Thebes. / I sent him away" (*Oed*. 832, 834-40). Superficially, Jocasta appears to show compassion toward the servant, but her decision to grant his wishes is manipulative, conveniently avoidant and self-serving. Dividing the shepherd from the rest of the city mitigates the likelihood of his sharing knowledge with the community, in the same way that a farmer might isolate an animal from the rest of a flock to prevent the potential spread of disease.

As Jocasta continues to produce testimony intended to support her innocence and that of her husband, she further strengthens the case for their guilt. "The heralds no sooner reported Laius dead / than you appeared and they hailed you king of Thebes" (*Oed*. 812-13). Jocasta explains, "He was swarthy, / and the gray had just begun to streak his temples, / and his build…wasn't far from yours" (*Oed*. 818-20). The genetic sexual attraction between them also might have struck her as phenomenal.[41] Even at the climactic peripeteia, when Oedipus recognizes his fate and reverses his fortune, Jocasta is unrelenting in her attempts to deny Oedipus's self-knowledge:

> JOCASTA That man…
>
> why ask? Old shepherd, talk, empty nonsense,
>
> don't give it another thought, don't even think—

[41] On the phenomenon of genetic sexual attraction see Kirsta (2003)

OEDIPUS What—give up now, with a clue like this?

Fail to solve the mystery of my birth?

Not for all the world!

JOCASTA Stop—in the name of god,

if you love your own life, call off this search!

My suffering is enough.

OEDIPUS Courage!

Even if my mother turns out to be a slave,

and I a slave, three generations back,

you would not seem common.

JOCASTA Oh no,

listen to me, I beg you, don't do this.

OEDIPUS Listen to you? No more. I must know it all,

must see the truth at last.

JOCASTA No, please—

for your sake—I want the best for you!

OEDIPUS Your best is more than I can bear.

JOCASTA You're doomed—

may you never fathom who you are! (*Oed*. 1157-73).

In terms of moral agency, Jocasta is delinquent by refusing to engage her cognitive faculties. She serves as a decisive counter-example of the kind of masculine courage Oedipus displays in his willingness to sacrifice his position for the common

good. Jocasta's vehemence against Oedipus's investigation increases in equal proportion to the success of his discovery. Oedipus briefly resists his punishment before accepting it; and Jocasta enacts the ultimate conflation of denial and punishment in a form of self-sacrifice, her own hanging. This exchange between Jocasta and Oedipus reinforces the central meaning of Sophocles's work: that humanity holds within itself the answers to life's questions, but not if we refuse to challenge themselves, in an effort to maintain power and reputation. In other words, the play supports what Plato will later teach, that refusing to examine one's own life is humanity's greatest sin.

Oedipus emerges as hero and victim, a dual role that defines the tragic hero because it acknowledges the spectrum of the human condition and separates him from a pack of delinquents, people who refuse (usually by denial) to employ productive agency toward knowledge. Oedipus takes action to investigate and solve problems, genuinely vowing to sacrifice himself in the process if that will solve the problem. His self-reflection and self-sacrifice define him as a hero because he solves the problem, and as a victim because he martyrs himself. This is a common pattern in world religions, from Hindu goddesses to the Old Testament and stories of the Christian saints, and especially the story of Jesus Christ dying on the cross for the sins of the people. Oedipus is an exemplar of the self-sacrificing priest, or a god who turns himself into an animal to be ritually sacrificed, annihilated in one form only to be reborn in another. *Oedipus* metaphorically plays out the Dionysian ritual of rebirth in that the tragic hero successfully serves both god and man by sacrificing himself. Instead of a sacrifice by literal death, however, he relinquishes his status and power as king, and irrevocably transforms his existence by blinding himself, ultimately to be reborn as a spiritual leader

in Colonus. He becomes that which he initially feared, loathed, and cursed: an exile, a murderer, and a blind prophet.

It would seem that the ignorant citizens of Thebes are innocent victims of the situation, at the mercy of the plague sent to punish their rulers. They are victims with no apparent means to combat the power of nature, and would remain so if not for the priest of Zeus who seeks knowledge from Oedipus. It may appear that Laius, Oedipus, and Jocasta alone are culpable, yet, the situation suggests that most Thebans are guilty of willful ignorance, if not outright denial of the truth. Tiresias and Jocasta are the central examples of rational delinquency, having withheld information from Oedipus and all of Thebes, but their delinquency is gender-specific, in conformity with the reigning stereotypes of ancient Greece. Tiresias is aggressive and active, admitting he knew that Oedipus had murdered Laius, but had intentionally ignored and hidden the information. When confronted, Tiresias responds to Oedipus with masculine ego, cursing him to blindness and exile. Jocasta's denial of information is stereotypically feminine in its passivity, in that she simply does not engage her mind. She admits to experiencing moments that may otherwise have had meaning if only she had considered them rationally. The shepherd and messenger, although they are men, are both examples of complicity, passivity and denial. They are both shepherds and, like the animals they tend, they avoid confrontation and are eager to please their leaders. When they are finally questioned in the investigation, they enthusiastically offer information that they believe will exonerate their leaders. After Tiresias reveals the word of Apollo, almost every subsequent scene is an attempt to deny the truth of Oedipus's guilt. The chorus in Greek tragedy witnesses the dramatic action, sometimes commenting, sometimes interacting

with characters onstage. As a unit, they represent what would have been the congregation at a sacrificial ritual and convey to the audience, as a priest might have done in ritual, the possible and appropriate responses to the plot.

If one considers murder and incest as the ultimate forms of child abuse, Oedipus is the quintessential victim of such abuse. Jocasta blithely admits her acquiescence to her husband's attempt at infanticide: "…my son-- / he wasn't three days old and the boy's father / fastened his ankles, had a henchman fling him away / on a barren, trackless mountain" (*Oed*. 790-2). Oedipus, himself, offers testimony of incest between mother and son early in the play: "I hold the throne that [Laius] held then, possess his bed / and a wife who shares our seed…." (*Oed*. 295-6). Later, when Oedipus summons his children, he offers material proof that incest has been committed: "….Please…my king. / Grant it, with all your noble heart. / If I could hold them, just once….What's that / O god! Do I really hear you sobbing?-- / my two children. Creon, you've pitied me? / Sent me my darling girls, my own flesh and blood!" (*Oed*. 1611-6). Thus, while Oedipus, as the central character of this plot, is guilty of patricide and incest, his parents are guilty of the most extreme forms of child abuse: attempted infanticide and incest. These crimes and her perseverant avoidance of truth and consequences motivate Jocasta to commit suicide, and through this action she reinforces one of the central teachings of the tragedy: denial is dangerous.

When finally Oedipus curses and punishes himself, gouging out his own eyes, he insists that Creon ceremoniously banish him. Although Creon is his equal in ruling the city, this act makes the transfer of power official. Essentially, Oedipus is banishing himself, sending himself into exile for the third time in his life. Oedipus's exiles

recapitulate the Riddle of the Sphinx: First as a baby, Oedipus is sent away to die; then, as a young man, in an effort to escape what he believes is his fate he flees Corinth; and finally as an infirm old man he walks away with a stick as predicted by Tiresias. These are the three phases of man which are the answer to the Sphinx's riddle.

Oedipus teaches layered lessons concerning agency. The innocent people of Thebes who have died in the plague appear to be sacrificial victims of circumstances created by their ruler, but whether they possessed knowledge of the king's crimes and other relevant facts and withheld them or simply chose not to pursue answers themselves, their complicity in denial results in the same consequences for which Oedipus is blamed. Oedipus, having committed the crime for which the city of Thebes is punished, takes it upon himself to seek an end to the suffering of the people of his kingdom. He is, therefore, a hero. His crime, however, is one judged by the laws of humanity. Oedipus is also heroic by the standards of divine law since he successfully completes the destiny decreed by Apollo and Zeus. Oedipus is, therefore, heroic by both human and divine standards. Jocasta lives easily in denial of the secrets that plague the kingdom, believing that Laius successfully sent their baby to Mount Cithaeron to die of exposure. Throughout the course of the play we see just how deeply embedded Jocasta's denial is. By the denouement, she finally confronts the truth and hangs herself with the bed linens in which she made love to her husbands, one of whom is her son, Oedipus. Jocasta's position is crucial in this work, but to categorize her as a victim is patronizing and implies excusing her because she is a woman. As an obedient wife and subject, and perhaps as someone equally fearful of the prophecy, Jocasta may have had little choice but to submit to Laius's decision to have Oedipus killed, but her decisions subsequent to

her husband's disappearance are unmistakable. Her complicity in allowing her husband to send the child to his supposed death is the start of her moral failure, but her own suffering for it is deferred while others suffer and die. There are hints throughout the play that Jocasta could have deduced that Oedipus was her son, but that instead she intentionally held to her own ignorance. In the patriarchy of tragedy, the woman presents a moral problem.

The themes of sex and violence in tragedy are evident to different degrees, either in the literal storyline, in the play's metaphors, or in the symbolic resonances of the events and festivities depicted onstage. Sophocles bases *Oedipus* on a myth that classicists Bernard Knox and William Thalmann remind us was, "well known to the audience and as old as their own history, a legend told by parent to child, handed down from generation to generation because of its implicit wealth of meaning, learned in childhood, and rooted deep in the consciousness of every member of the community."[42] He begins with the fatal consequences of actions as yet unknown to the sufferers and continues through the realization of truths that result in a fate more tragic than the one predicted. The moral norms of ancient Greece may differ from our own in many ways, but certain fundamental moral values remain vital and constant. *Oedipus* exemplifies tragedy and reinforces a philosophy of accountability. Personal behavior always takes place in a social context, and as a result, the behavior of the individual helps define society as a whole. The actions of each individual influence a society, but the actions of those of superior social stature have an even greater influence, and hence, those individuals bear an even greater responsibility than do others of lesser social stature.

[42] Knox/Thalmann (1956…2002) 613

It might appear that Oedipus takes unwarranted or illogical action in his life, but his choices are based on limited self-knowledge. The plot of Sophocles's tragedy is complete, having a distinct beginning, middle and end, as a dramatic event, however, the play cannot attain full completion without an audience's interpretation and understanding of the events represented onstage. Requisite to such interpretation and understanding is familiarity with the entirety of the Oedipus myth. Sophocles alludes to many elements of the myth, but most of the events preceding Oedipus's birth, which are essential to the story, are not mentioned in the play. An especially noteworthy omission is that of the actions of Laius, which brought about the prophecy of Oedipus's fate. As one discovers in the fragments of Euripides's tragedy concerning Oedipus, and as any ancient Greek audience would know:

> Oedipus's problems derive ultimately not from anything he has done but from an action performed by his father Laius, against Pelops (whose wife Hippodamei, incidentally, has been incestuously loved by her father Oenomaus). While in exile from Thebes, Laius had been the guest of Pelops; he had repaid this hospitality by carrying off Pelops's son Chrysippus. For this act of pederasty, Laius was warned by Apollo that if he begot a son, this son would kill him.[43]

The details have a significant impact on the story and its meaning, especially as they concern the themes of child abuse. In the early portions of the mythic story, we learn that Laius challenges the patriarchal authority of his benefactor by stealing his ward. This

[43] Collard and Crops (2008) 55

demonstrates that Pelops is not only a bad judge of character, but also impotent in protecting his son from danger. Furthermore, in abducting Pelops's son, Laius is guilty not only of the crime of kidnapping, but of potentially depriving Pelops of the right to male progeny since Pelops's legacy would end were the seed of Chrysippus to be wasted in a sterile homosexual relationship. Laius's crime is, therefore, mortally disrespectful, and Zeus and Apollo agree with Pelops.

Knowing Laius's history of pedophilia, one might even conjecture that Oedipus is fending off uninvited sexual advances of Laius when he meets him on the road. Were this the case, Oedipus's violent act would be one of self-defense and justifiable homicide, and the common argument that Oedipus's tragic flaw lies in his hot temper or excessive pride would be bereft of one key piece of evidence. This reading of the events would reinforce the notion that one's intrinsic character informs a consistent behavior that may result in the undesirable consequences of that behavior. Instead of Oedipus's anger and arrogance being to blame for Laius's death, it is Laius's own licentiousness that causes it and thus, fulfills the will of Apollo.

Oedipus is intended to have been the victim, the sacrificial lamb, as a child sent as penance for Laius, (i.e., so that Laius could avoid his fate). Laius's attempted infanticide, of course, was beyond Oedipus's control. With a more complete understanding of the myth, one sees that it is Laius who is most culpable for instigating the original curse. Oedipus suffers for the sins of his father, just as the citizens of Thebes suffer for the sins of their rulers. Everyone, however, suffers because of deficient knowledge and acts of denial in an attempt to avoid justice. Theater, after all, is always about justice.

Laius's punishment is the prophecy that his son will kill his father and commit incest with Laius's wife, the son's own mother. Laius was guilty of crimes of sex and violence. The punishment therefore came in those forms: violence by patricide, sex by maternal fornication and procreation, both acts being particularly aberrant under the laws of Greek patriarchy since they challenge the position of men in power. Fate repays Laius via the world he helps create. The message that resonates through the lives of both the father and son is the accountability of every man for the world he creates. Oedipus's actions are not, however, as morally reprehensible as the crimes might at first seem given his ignorance. The most culpable characters in *Oedipus* are those with knowledge that they intentionally withhold.

As a hapless child, Oedipus is sent from Thebes to his death which instead results in a kind of exile; as an adolescent in a benevolent attempt to circumvent the fate of patricide and incest, he departs Corinth in a self-imposed exile; finally, as a blind man, walking with a cane, he is exiled by his own uncle/brother-in-law/king. Thus Oedipus lives in exile through the three phases of man as riddled by the Sphinx, and in each case, he demonstrates a sacrifice of self on behalf of others. As a character who acts compassionately, he elicits from an audience compassion and admiration, which is at the emotional center of tragedy.

The lessons of humility in *Oedipus* are so exaggerated and ironic that if it weren't a tragedy, it might be humorous. There is a particularly painful moment when, in a sincere attempt to assuage Oedipus's horror that he might kill his father, Jocasta introduces a messenger who confirms that the man whom Oedipus believes to be his father is dead, "Well if that's what you want first, then here it is: / make no mistake,

Polybus is dead and gone" (*Oed*. 1147-9). It is a horrible irony to imagine that learning such tragic news should bring comfort to Oedipus. This incongruity is a recapitulation of the irony felt at Creon's entrance, when he joyfully announces that he has learned the answer at Delphi and all they must do to end the plague is punish Laius's murderer. These moments provide additional definition to the emotional resonance of tragedy through intellectual means. The experience of simultaneous and concomitant comfort and discomfort, pleasure and pain, and that the solution to one problem is the exacerbation of another, is a milder, intellectual form of sex or death.

Oedipus is a pitiable character, most of whose actions are reasonable and noble. Sophocles's focus on the House of Cadmus after Laius's death, however, ironically saves Laius from direct scorn or ridicule. In a historical context, Laius escapes popular blame for his crimes and suffers less abuse to his reputation than his child does. Metaphorically, leaders, seen as parents, are responsible for the suffering of their citizens, viewed as children. Just as citizens suffer as a direct result of their leaders' actions, children suffer as a direct result of their parents' actions, and yet those who cause the suffering seem to suffer less in comparison. Reading *Oedipus* without knowledge of the complete myth intensifies one's focus on Oedipus and the degree to which he is responsible for his own fate. When viewed in the context of the complete myth, however, one sees that Oedipus fulfills the commandments of the gods while his hubristic parents attempt to thwart them. Ultimately, Oedipus is victimized not only by the gods, his parents, and himself, but by the ignorance of all audiences who have lost access to the full mythic background of the play.

Medea

Some of the difficulty in defining Medea as a tragic hero as compared to Oedipus is related to classical expectations of gender roles amidst the revolutionary approach to gender taken by Euripides.[44] Additionally, the distance between ancient and modern customs strains the understanding of the tragedy's original intended meaning. In this interpretation of *Medea* we begin with the premise that has already been demonstrated, which argues that Oedipus is heroic because he pursues knowledge and that he sacrifices himself, to show another kind of hero whose actions are also divinely derived and condoned in retaliation against an external party. Oedipus can be compared to a priest of ancient sacrificial ritual who is used as the human conduit by which the gods punish Laius. In this sense, Oedipus is both hero and victim, performing rites but suffering consequences of sacrifice as well. Medea also acts as priestess, and the divine right comes directly from herself. Euripides frequently reminds the audience of her distinction as the granddaughter of the sun god: " "…and with this beautiful dress which Helios of old, / my father's father, bestowed on his descendants" (*Med.* 930-1). Although both Oedipus and Medea ostensibly are foreigners in their respective lands, they have proven their heroic qualities before the start of their respective plots. Oedipus has been rewarded and is respected as king when the play begins. Because he has solved the riddle of the Sphinx in the past, his people seek his expertise in solving their current problem of the plague. Throughout the subsequent action, Oedipus demonstrates his talent, which is his intelligence and his ability to seek knowledge. Medea, on the other hand, while having proven her knowledge of potions, is in a tenuous position in Corinth as a clever, yet

[44] For research on Euripides's contribution to women's roles see Blundell (1995), Hathorn (1967) 139-41, 160-3, 169-72, 204-9, 338-40; Carlson (1984).

feared, foreigner. Nevertheless, Medea, like Oedipus, has shown that she is formidable and subsequently solves her dilemma the same way she always has, with her knowledge of potions and her intelligent powers of persuasion. The obvious difference of gender between these heroes is the primary rationale for the dissimilar receptions in their new lands and in the scope of dramatic criticism. After all, although posterity has awarded *Medea* immortality, the judges at its first production awarded it last place.[45]

The earliest extant plays of the ancient world, while they include female characters, predominantly display the tragic hero as a male character.[46] This gender-specific hero comparison between Oedipus and Medea has fostered critical arguments in opposition to Euripides's disruption of the status quo. His innovation in characterization with plays like *Bacchae*, *Medea*, *Hippolytus,* and *The Trojan Women*, more consistently count women as heroic than is the case in the precedent tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles.[47] One might use again the argument proposed in the *Poetics* that contends that Euripides portrayed characters closer to the real than to the ideal. Euripides, by including women in theatrical discussion of societal issues, acknowledges their existence and insists that the audience do so as well. One of the subtle messages in Euripides's play based on the Medea myth is the warning of underestimating foreigners. Medea is foreign and her divine ancestry is therefore overlooked or dismissed as invalid or unobserved in a land with different customs. While her lineage is often stated, instead of acknowledging her as a demigoddess, the other characters consider her a sorceress and a "clever"

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[45] Hathorn (1967) 207

[46] Hathorn (1967)

[47] For gender-specific Euripides criticism see Aristotle, Blundell, Boedeker, Claus, Graf, Griffiths, Hathorn, Johnston, Knox/Thalmann, Krevans.

woman. Her role in the tragedy differs from that of Oedipus in a number of ways. The plot begins with her loss of position, whereas Oedipus is still revered as king. Also, whereas his victimization is unquestioned, Medea bears much of the blame for contriving her own difficult circumstances. Euripides depends upon an audience's ability to process a complex combination of intellectual and emotional stimuli when Medea takes the lives of her own children. Her actions are as much a self-sacrifice as they are revenge against her husband and protection of her children from a potentially worse fate. This deed is not callously decided, it is carefully and regretfully determined. Killing her own children is at least as much a punishment and a sacrifice for Medea and, that she must be the one to commit the murders is terrifying. The suspense preceding the action builds through the words of *Medea*'s Chorus near line 860[48] through a poignant scene of dramatic irony with Jason until Medea finally acts near line 1280. Throughout this progression, Medea has another Oedipal moment when the children's tutor announces their reprieve, "reprieved from exile…why do you show no pleasure at this news?" (*Med*. 1002) Because Medea's children offer gifts to Glauce, they are granted permission to stay in the kingdom, which implies their protection. Unfortunately, this reprieve coincides with their having been the bearers of tainted gifts, which would inevitably reinstate their pariahdom. Information that should yield an auspicious reversal of fortune, instead reinforces Medea's undesirable intention.

[48] The translation cited throughout this study is that of Rex Warner (1944), except for this quote by J. Michael Walton (2008): How will you summon up the strength of purpose of the courage of hand and heart to dare this dreadful deed? When you have turned your eyes upon your children, how will you behold their fate with tearless eye? When your children fall as suppliants at your feet, you will not be able to drench your hand in their blood with hardened heart.

Furthermore, while Medea is to blame for the literal act of murdering her children, the Chorus is not without culpability.

> CHORUS. Should I enter the house? I am determined to stop the death of the children.
>
> FIRST CHILD. Yes, in heaven's name, stop it! Now is the time.
>
> SECOND CHILD. We are now close to the snare of the sword. (*Med*. 1275)

This is not an abstract chorus of social commentary or inner monologue. This chorus is physically present and deliberates on Medea's actions, claiming determination to intervene, but they do not act. They witness injustice, affirm their moral stance, and yet do nothing to thwart Medea. Were they not critical of Medea, this delinquent behavior would be justifiable; but because they not only proclaim Medea's immorality and their own indignation, they hear the children plead for their help, and still do nothing. Their lack of action implies consent, and must be read as a reverent act in favor of Medea.

The myth of Medea reinforces theories of conquest and imperialism in that the success of one means the defeat and exploitation of another. In keeping with this concept, Euripides's Medea is both heroic and guilty of crimes against humanity. For every act of heroism that she enacts on behalf of her husband's reputation and status, she mortally defeats others.[49] Whereas in the case of *Oedipus*, Jocasta is more egregiously culpable than her son because her actions are committed with both intuitive and explicit awareness, in *Medea*, Jason's exploitation of Medea, while legal by ancient Corinthian

[49] In the mythology of Medea in Pindar and Apollonius, however, it is clearer that Medea is coerced by Jason, with help by Aphrodite, to betray her family.

law, is ill-conceived, immoral and disrespectful of the gods before whom he vowed the "eternal promise" (*Med*. 22).

As is the case with *Oedipus*, modern audiences are at a disadvantage of interpretation if they are unaware of the mythology of Medea. Greek audiences would have known a variety of episodes and versions of the Medea myth through oral tales and the poetry of Homer, Hesiod, and Pindar, to name a few sources. "Although the earliest works in which she appeared are no longer intact, their fragments suggest that her story was an old and popular one by at least the eighth century B.C."[50] The research Fritz Graf offers on Medea and ritual details an array of Medea rituals throughout the ancient world and allows one to see *Medea* as a specific work in a particular context, albeit the one for which the character is perhaps best known. To begin to understand how Euripides's tragedy most likely would have been interpreted, one must have a more complete understanding of the myth than Euripides provides in just one play.[51]

According to the Mediterranean archaeological research of Carlos Parada, Medea would have been raised in an environment of extreme violence. In addition to having inherited innate skill, knowledge, and power, Medea lived in Colchis under her father's cruel authority:

> An oracle declared that Aeëtes's kingship would end when strangers landed in Colchis and carried off the Golden Fleece. Fearing this fate, Aeëtes offered up in sacrifice all foreigners that came to his country, hoping for the Colchians' cruelty to spread famous throughout the world,

[50] Johnston (1997) 3

[51] Johnston (2002) 123

> so that refugees and immigrants and all other kinds of wanderers, would not dare to set foot in such a land. For performing these deeds, Aeëtes has been called both cruel and treacherous.[52]

Significant events attributed to Medea's extended family parallel much of what has been attributed solely to Medea in Euripides's tragedy. These mythological legends provide the inexorable link by familial circumstances between Medea and Dionysus. Ino and Athamas were entrusted with Dionysus through his childhood. *Ino*, the lost tragedy by Euripides produced in 425 BCE, tells a story eerily similar to the plots of two other tragedies by Euripides, *Hippolytus* (428 BCE) and *Medea*:

> After Ino had joined a maenad band and had disappeared into the wilderness, her husband, Athamas, gave her up for lost and married Themisto, having two children by his second wife. Later Ino came back, and Athamas, wishing to conceal her, made her the nurse of both Themisto's two children and of her own two. The wicked Themisto determined to kill the children of the former marriage. Taking the nurse into her confidence, Themisto told her to dress her (Themisto's) two children in white and Ino's children in black, so that she might steal into the bedroom in the gloom and stab the two latter. The unrecognized Ino naturally did exactly the opposite, and Themisto stabbed her own children. When Themisto learned what she had done, she committed suicide.

[52]Parada (1998) n.b. This translation from the Greek is particularly awkward; I have therefore paraphrased here in an attempt to clarify the language without altering the meaning.

> Athamas then went mad, killed his eldest son, Learchus, and pursued Ino and her other child, Melicertes, into the sea, where they became the sea goddess and sea god Leucothea and Palaemon.[53]

Themisto has qualities of Phaedra and Medea, but the interesting connection comes in the form of a particular ram as it pertains to Ino's husband, Athamas. Nephele (Cloud) was the first wife of Athama. He tired of her and sent her away, for which she retaliated by causing a drought. The drought could only be removed by a royal sacrifice so Athamas set his sons by Nephele to the altar, but Nephele sent a ram with Golden Fleece to rescue them.

In addition, Parada's archaeological research reveals the foundational history that Euripides's seems to have conflated in constructing *Medea*, the tragedy. "There are those who believe that the story of Aeëtes's fire-breathiing bulls (*tauri*) is just a childish invention…but the bulls were Taurian guards, appointed to guard the Golden Fleece inside a precinct. Likewise they say that the dragon is an invention, but this legend originated in the name of a particular officer called Dracon."[54] Another way to interpret what Parada calls bulls and dragons as wild inventions, would be that the original stories were exaggerated to the point of fantastic hyperbole. This phenomenon prompts Parada's assertion that "this is the kind of thing…that poets do: they transform one thing into another and thereby truth is nowhere to be found."[55]

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[53] Hathorn (1967) 178

[54] Parada (1998)

[55]Parada (1998)

The gist of the Medea myth, and the version from which it appears that Euripides derives his tragedy, is that Pelias, having overthrown Jason's father, Aeson, for the throne of Iolcos, bargains with Jason for the return of the kingdom, to trade the crown for the Golden Fleece of Colchis. Jason and the Argonauts arrive in Medea's homeland, Colchis, where her father is King Aeëtes, to obtain the Golden Fleece. There, Aphrodite helps Jason with a potion to make Medea fall in love with him so that Medea, with her potion-making abilities, would help him through the extremely treacherous trials of obtaining the fleece. "After making Jason swear to marry her, Medea gave him a magic balm that kept him invulnerable in the trials prescribed by Aeëtes. She then led him to the Golden Fleece and charmed its serpent guardian to sleep so that Jason was able to seize his prize."[56] Once the mission is complete, Medea's brother, Apsyrtos, banishes her to a secluded island where she lures him with the lie of returning the fleece so that Jason can kill him. In Pindar's version of the murder, Pindar describes Jason clubbing Apsyrtos in the back of his head and slitting his throat in the language of the sacrifice of a bull.[57] Medea impedes Aeëtes's enraged pursuit of the escaping Argo by dropping Apsyrtos's dismembered body into the sea. While Aeëtes gathers the pieces of his son's body, the Argo escapes. When Medea and Jason return to Iolcos and realize that Pelias had no intention of reinstating Jason to the throne, Medea with a reputation for having restored Aeson's youth by sorcery, persuades Pelias's daughters that they could restore Pelias's youth by cutting him into pieces and boiling him. Tricked by Medea, they follow her instructions and inadvertently kill their father. Pelias's son, Acastus, who had

[56] Hathorn (1967) 204

[57] Graf (2002) 30

accompanied Jason as an Argonaut, chases Medea and Jason out of Iolcos and into Corinth. Euripides's tragedy begins once the couple has arrived in Corinth.

Subsequent to the story told by Euripides, Aiegeus impregnates Theseus's mother on his way back to Athens; and once Medea arrives there, she also bears him a son, Medus. When Theseus learns of his heritage and seeks a reunion with his father, Medea becomes jealous and thwarts his efforts, which results in Aiegeus's suicide. Medea is thus again exiled and returns to Colchis incognito to learn that the prophecy predicting Aeëtes's deposition after the Golden Fleece is taken from the shrine of Ares has materialized and that her uncle, Perses, is king. Medea redeems herself by killing Perses and restoring her father to the throne, who is then succeeded by his grandson by Medea, Medus.[58]

Given Medea's heritage and the ruthlessness she exhibits, her retaliation against Jason for his acts of humiliation and abandonment toward her is wont. Medea is guilty of crimes against humanity, but receives vindication because, although she has involved herself with a mortal, she is not beholden to the laws of humanity because she is a demigoddess, the granddaughter of Helios, to whom she prays throughout the play.[59] If we compare *Oedipus* in the same terms, Apollo would be blamed for the death of Laius and the incestuous relationship between Jocasta and her son. Apollo is not blamed for crimes against humanity in the myth of Oedipus. The trope throughout Greek mythology is exactly this: gods are not subject to the laws of humanity. If, one keeps in mind Medea's divine status while interpreting the tragedy, then one may conclude that her ancestry is not duly respected by the powerful because she is foreign and because she is a

[58] Parada (1993)

[59] For discussion of Medea as mortal or divine see Griffiths (2006) 52-3.

woman.[60] Euripides is asking the audience to consider the validity of local political assumptions within a broader context. Athenians may well have considered Colchians to be barbaric, but they were so in their own land in order to protect their authority. Within the context of the play, one can read Euripides's suggestion that divine law trumps humanity's laws even if the gods are foreign and female; or, stated differently, justice is determined in a universal context.

When classicists Knox and Thalmann write of *Medea* they, as have other critics, ignore Medea's birthright to divine status.

> Before it is over, our sympathies have come full circle; the contempt with which we regard the Jason of the opening scenes turns to pity as we feel the measure of his loss and the ferocity of Medea's revenge. Medea's passion has carried her too far; the death of Kreon (Creon) and his daughter we might have accepted, but the murder of the children is too much. It was, of course, meant to be. Euripides' theme, like Homer's, is violence, but this is the unspeakable violence of the oppressed, which is greater than the violence of the oppressor and which, because it has been long pent up, cannot be controlled.[61]

It appears that Knox and Thalmann assume a universal response based on their interpretation of the hierarchies within the play. I suggest an alternative reading that

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[60] For discussion of the status of foreign women in Athens see Blundell (1995) (1998)

[61] Knox/Thalmann (2002) 694

shows Jason as an excellent example of an irreverent delinquent from beginning to end. Medea is heroic because, to use their language, she is both the oppressor and the oppressed, or to use the vernacular of my theory, both victim and hero. I suggest that she is a goddess who sacrifices herself in terms of status and lineage. Like Oedipus, she experiences three exiles: the first takes place when she betrays her own family in Colchis and her brother banishes her; the second comes when she coerces Pelias's daughters to kill him and his son banishes her from Iolcos; the third order of exile is decreed by Creon which incites her murderous response. But, the most profound of Medea's self-exiles comes figuratively in the slaughter of her own children whereby she essentially eliminates the possibility of progeny and thereby exiles remnants of herself from human existence and history. In this way, the Medea of Euripides's tragedy serves as a priestess and goddess who sacrifices herself through the slaughter of her own children, thus finalizing the obliteration of her human social roles as daughter, sister, wife and mother.

Creon's manipulative plot to exile Medea and her children by exploiting Jason's egoistic tendencies incites Jason's sins against Medea. Subsequently, Jason's and Creon's delinquency in the form of disrespect of a demigoddess are duly punished. Jason's failure to appreciate Medea for the heroic reputation she has bestowed upon him as well as the semi-divine progeny she has borne for him is hubris, and Medea, with the help of a number of other gods, punishes him by sacrificing his children, just as Apollo and Zeus punish Laius and Oedipus. The sacrificial children of Corinth, however, include Glauce, Creon's daughter, as well as Jason's two sons. As the progeny of Helios, Medea's actions are condoned by Helios, not only by his allowing her to carry out part of her revenge, but

also to escape punishment – doing so literally by providing her with the means by which to escape.

Medea's first response to the injustices against her is a vow to kill Creon, Glauce, and Jason: "By exiling me, he has given me this one day / to stay here, and in this I will make dead bodies / of three of my enemies, --father, the girl and my husband" (*Med.* 369-71). When she sends her children with the poisoned gifts to the princess, it appears that Medea will only strike down one of the three. Creon's death is seemingly incidental. It is worth noting that Medea abandons her intention to murder Jason, deciding to murder his children instead. The seeds of this change are planted when she tells Jason, "…you forsook me, took another bride to bed / though you had children; for, if that had not been, / you would have had an excuse for another wedding" (*Med*. 477-9). In addition to Artemis and Hecate, Medea prays to Zeus, Themis, and Helios to help her to punish Jason once she has secured a place of refuge in Athens:

> God, and God's daughter, justice, and light of Helios! Now, friends, has come the time of my triumph over
> my enemies, and now my foot is on the road.
> Now I am confident they will pay the penalty.
> For this man, Aigeus (Aiegeus), has been like a harbor to me
> in all my plans just where I was most distressed.
> To him I can fasten the cable of my safety
> when I have reached the town and fortress of Pallas (*Med.* 748-55).

She is addressing the Chorus, whom she has previously addressed as women of Corinth, but she invokes the help and blessing of Zeus, Themis, and her grandfather, Helios. In the same speech she details her murderous plans, but it is important to note that she only lays out plans to kill the children of the two men she considers her enemies: "…that by a trick I may kill the king's daughter. / For I will send the children with gifts in their hands / to carry to the bride…a finely woven dress and a golden diadem / And if she takes them and wears them upon her skin / she and all who touch the girl will die in agony; / Such poison will I lay upon the gifts I send" (*Med*. 767-73). Her target clearly is the princess, that Creon also dies seems to be serendipitous. In the same speech, Medea reveals her plan to murder her own sons: "I weep to think of what a deed I have to do / next after that; for I shall kill my own children," (*Med.* 775-6), "…for this is the best way to wound my husband," (*Med.* 801). Medea does not blame the gods for the choices she made to help Jason, but she does enlist their help in seeking revenge: "My mistake was made the time I left behind me / my father's house, and trusted the words of a Greek, / who with heaven's help, will pay me the price for that" (*Med.* 784-6). Medea is distraught for what she plans to do but remains confident that her actions are condoned as tells the Tutor: "Oh, I am forced to weep, old man. The gods and I, / I in a kind of madness have contrived all this" (*Med.* 987-8).

The impact of Medea's destruction is all the more devastating and reinforced in the closing exchange:

MEDEA. Go to your palace. Bury your bride.

JASON. I go, with two children to mourn for.

MEDEA. Not yet do you feel it. Wait for the future (*Med.* 1369-71).

The damage has been done, but Medea reinforces the profundity of what has happened and projects her calculation for Jason's eternal failure to achieve power, reputation, and immortality through his children. If one were not convinced of Jason's retarded cognitive abilities, this proves that he was never any match for Medea, but he continues his feeble argument, blaming Medea for helping him to attain the Golden Fleece to which Medea replies: "Long would be the answer which I might have made to / these words of yours, if Zeus the father did not know / how I have treated you and what you did to me" (*Med.* 1326-7). Once again, Medea is assured that Zeus condones her actions, a specific manifestation of the wider principle that her actions are justified by divine law.

While death of innocents may universally evoke incredulity, the most complex emotions of the play as written are the simultaneous pity and fear elicited for Medea. With the Nurse's opening lines, Euripides establishes Medea as a formidable character. From the start, we know that Medea is a woman of cunning and prowess to be feared, if not respected for her knowledge of potions and magic; and one who has a direct line of communication with the gods. But she is also pitiable as she has been repaid for establishing her husband's reputation as a hero by dismissal and irreverence. As Griffiths explains in her book compiling research about Medea mythology throughout the ages, Medea was revered as a deity in her own right, to whom the people of Corinth and Athens made sacrifices.[62] She is an amalgam of the creator and the destroyer in her ability to give birth and to take life; mortal or not, she demonstrates these divine

[62] Griffiths (2006) 85-6

capabilities. In the context of the play, she is, as Oedipus, a human tool of the gods to exact their prescriptions of fate. The killing of her own children saves them from potential retaliation against her for killing Glauce and Creon. She sacrifices them in a form of self-rebuke for having betrayed her family and homeland in the name of love for a mortal. And she punishes Jason by rescinding the two gifts of life she gave to him. Medea is unable to revise history and undo the deeds which helped to build Jason's reputation as a hero, but she is able to abort his legacy by murdering his children. This action, which affects Medea in the same way as it does Jason, makes her desperate attempts to defend Medus (the son she eventually bears for Aiegeus) all the more understandable.

In early exposition Euripides offers aspects of the ancient Medea myth in which Jason relies upon Medea to make his reputation and to bear his children. In fact, the impetus for Creon's suggestion that Jason wed Glauce is due to Creon's response to Medea. Creon fears Medea and wants to supplant her by offering his daughter and kingdom to Medea's husband, thus debilitating Medea. His fear is justified since Jason's status as hero is wholly attributed to the prowess of Medea. Creon manipulates Jason by exploiting Jason's inconstancy, greed, and lust for power. Creon intends to exile Medea's children, which would have been a death sentence, except she pre-empts his actions: "…Kreon (Creon), ruler of the land, intends to drive these children and their mother in exile from Corinth" (*Med*. 70-1). In this scene of expository dialogue, Jason's position is represented as opportunistic and dismissive of his children when the Tutor says, "Old ties give place to new ones. As for Jason, he / No longer has a feeling for this house of ours" (*Med*. 76-7).

Knox and Thalmann suggest that "the play creates a world in which there is no relation whatsoever between the powers that rule the universe and the fundamental laws of human morality."[63] The theme of reconciliation between divine standards of conduct and those expected of humanity is a constant consideration throughout Greek mythology. But, Knox and Thalmann continue with the sentiment that "it dramatizes disorder, not just the disorder of the family of Jason and Medea but the disorder of the universe as a whole."[64] Their interpretation seems to ignore the common central themes of hubris, *religio,* and reverence for the gods. Greek myths repeatedly portray and examine the dangers of mortals positioning themselves as equals with gods. In each case, interaction between mortals and gods results in divine fury and punishment for humanity. What Knox and Thalmann call disorder is exactly the opposite: Medea is of divine birth, Jason is mortal. The structure of the universe requires him to honor her, especially because she has favored him. There are many clues throughout the text that remind the audience that Jason is inferior to Medea and that he once revered her. For example, Medea recalls to him, "O my right hand, and the knees which you often clasped / in supplication…" (*Med.* 484-5). Perhaps, more blatant, however, is the clumsiness of Jason's speech. Even in translation, it is evident that his facility with language is comparatively prosaic, in which the figurative references are limited to farming and sailing. Jason evinces an imperialistic and arrogant attitude when he says, "You have certainly got from me more than you gave. / Firstly, instead of living among barbarians, / you inhabit a Greek land and understand our ways, / how to live by law instead of the sweet will of force" (*Med*. 524-6). If the Nurse's philosophy is correct, that "Greatness brings no profit to people / God

[63] Knox/Thalmann (2002) 694

[64] Knox/Thalmann (2002) 694

indeed, when in anger, brings / greater ruin to great men's houses," (*Med.* 126-9) then Jason has just called a curse down upon himself in believing that he is a great man. Jason disparages Medea's heritage and laws, when ultimately it is proven that she is living by divine law while he adheres to laws of convenience devised by Greek men to favor their mortal desires.

Jason's speech here also demonstrates his ineptitude at critical thinking because it contradicts the logic he uses in lines immediately preceding these when he tells her that he has done more for her than she has done for him. He feebly rationalizes that anything Medea did on his behalf is ascribed to Aphrodite for making Medea fall in love with him: "Since you insist on building up your kindness to me, / My view is that Cypris was alone responsible / of men and gods for the preserving of my life. / You are clever enough, -- but really I need not enter / into the story of how it was love's inescapable / power that compelled you to keep my person safe" (*Med.* 514-9). If one accepts the belief that Aphrodite is alone responsible for everything that has come to pass in their relationship because she made Medea fall in love with Jason, then the goddess is also to be credited with Medea going away with Jason, which is the argument he uses to justify the belief that he, rather than Aphrodite, has done more for Medea than she has done for him. Jason invalidates his own theory by conveniently using it to support only his side of the argument, thus demonstrating a lack of sophistication and integrity. Medea reminds him, "Faith in your word has gone. Indeed I cannot tell / whether you think the gods whose names you swore by then / have ceased to rule and that new standards are set up, since you must know you have broken your word to me" (*Med*. 480-2). Jason's delinquent and

blasphemous behavior, dishonoring Medea and the gods to whom he vowed when they wed, leads to a harsh and justifiable (within a tragic paradigm) punishment.

Critics since Aristotle have disputed *Medea*'s classification within the genre of tragedy because of the fantastic ending.[65] But this ending is vital to its status as one of the pre-eminent tragedies in the history of theater because of, not in spite of, the divine intervention. This sensational ending is the strongest and most important message of the play. Euripides isolates a strikingly unrealistic moment of divine intervention, and thereby makes an undeniable impact on his audience. *Medea* teaches, as do most tragedies, the necessity for adherence to divine law and its superiority over laws devised by humanity. The play and its source material, having come from mythology and ritual, operate in exactly the same manner as a ritual sacrifice, complete with supplication, motivation, bloodshed, remorse, shock, awe, and redemption. Medea, as the high priestess, leads, however, two sacrificial rituals, both of which are meant to punish fathers for crimes against the gods. First, Creon sacrifices his daughter in marriage to Jason. His Greek laws conveniently dismiss the vows Jason made before the gods, particularly Zeus, the keeper of Oaths. Furthermore, he not only ignores Jason's children by Medea, but intends to exile them, which would be tantamount to death. Thus, Glauce is killed in sacrifice for Creon's hubris. Second, Medea sacrifices her own children, thereby punishing Jason for his delinquency in denying the gods' power. The witnesses to this tragedy are the Nurse, Tutor, Chorus, and Aiegeus, who recognize Medea's power, pray to her and for her, but do not betray or condemn her.

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[65] For Euripides criticism see Aristotle *Poe*. IV: 1447, 1449, 1453-6, 1458, 1460-1; Nietzsche 98.

The 2003 Abbey Theatre production of *Medea* was an attempt to honor the work as the ultimate tragedy by modern standards and insisted upon applying realism to the direction of the work. In addition to implying that Medea brutally murders her children with a chainsaw, both Medea and Jason remain onstage at the end of the play, weeping. Clearly, this ending goes beyond interpretation of Euripides's original intention, classifying it instead as an adaptation. The inclination to make such an adjustment highlights one of the difficulties in perpetuating tragedy as a theatrical form in a culture that has evolved too far beyond the practice of ritual sacrifice to understand its usefulness even in a metaphorical practice. Such radical plot changes, however, create entirely new characters and themes, and these changes incidentally recapitulate Aristotle's observations about Euripides's tendency toward realism.[66]

In Euripides's version, which decidedly differs from the array of depictions of this character, Medea is of royal blood, but by the time she arrives in Corinth, she has whittled away her social roles by betraying her family in her attempts to aid her husband, Jason. She is no longer a daughter or a sister after the deaths of her father and brother, and therefore, no longer a princess or queen of Colchis. She is a wife and a mother, a foreigner, and a sorceress. Having denied her loyalty to her family she is alone and at the mercy of one man. One would believe she could trust him, given all that she did to secure his station in life. His gratitude might be reasonably expected. She forsakes her own well-being to ensure his; she has confirmed his immortality in winning his fame and bearing two children by him. He repays her by marrying the king's daughter, Glauce. Medea is struck by a new awareness that she will be replaced as the subject of Jason's sexual desire. In many ways this is a metaphor for the change in western civilization's worship

[66] Aristotle *Poe.* I: 1460

of the feminine power. Medea is a personified version of Hera who demonstrates similar actions through similar motivations. A variety of scholars insist that Euripides's Medea is a conflation of many myths of women among them, one from Colchis who aided the Argo and another in Corinth who murdered her children. "Many scholars have suspected that our composite story originated from the conflation of two homonyms—a Thessalian and a Corinthian Medea." [67] Sarah Iles Johnston develops the idea "…that the Medea whom we meet in Euripides' play developed out of a folkloric paradigm that was widespread both in ancient Greece and in other ancient Mediterranean countries—the paradigm of the reproductive demon—and that this paradigm is likely to have been associated with the Corinthian cult of Hera Akraia."[68]

While an androcentric society that follows the biological urges of men to procreate with many women for a greater yield of progeny and therefore a better chance at immortality through them, female figures such as Hera and Medea appear petty and spiteful, but their motivation is as competitive and well justified as those of male figures who make broad attempts at immortality. Within the paradigm of patriarchy, the maternal instinct to affirm her male child's position of authority necessitates the elimination of competition from other sources. Thus, cultures of primogeniture induce competition among women in an effort to protect their son's interests. The feminine ability to bear children is thereby undermined and undervalued instead privileging androcentric power structures.

Artemis protects small children whereas Hera must be appeased so as not to harm them. Hera's destructive reputation is usually explained in myths that have her harming

[67] Graf (2002) 38.

[68] Johnston (2002) 23.

the mistresses of her husband/brother, Zeus, and the children produced by these unions. The story of Dionysus is one of the myths that secures Hera's position as a wrathful deity. Classicists such as Graf, Johnston, et al, as well as professor of humanities and media studies, Camille Paglia, describe Hera, as an ancient goddess, the worship of whom predates that of the Olympian gods by thousands of years, who symbolized the power of women to bring forth life. Civilization usurped her power and created mythology which demonized her and made her jealous and vengeful. *Medea* is in essence the story of Hera, who in other legends is credited with helping Jason procure the Golden Fleece, just as *Oedipus* has resonant analogies with the story of Dionysus. When Jason betrays Medea, he insists that it is for the best, arguing that he and his sons are important, but that she is no longer beneficial to him. It should come as no surprise that Jason is void of integrity. After all, in Euripides's tragedy, Jason is not actually a solitary hero; he could not have achieved what he is given credit for without Medea's expertise. To reinforce the point, Euripides makes it known that Medea is Jason's elder, and in so doing, he advances the social commentary consistent with bourgeois contemporary ideology, that women are only useful to the point of childbearing and then they are disposable. But for the highly debatable condition of his suffering over the loss of his potential wife, father-in-law, and two sons, he is unsympathetic. The obvious metaphor here is the comparison of Jason to any political entity that takes advantage of an ally's strength without full appreciation of that ally's potential to destroy it. By the same reasoning, Medea represents a political entity that would forsake its own tradition, culture, and firm power, going so far as to destroy parts of itself and risk a solid foundation for the potential of wealth, fame, and status. She is Icarus, melting her wings

in an attempt to fly too close to the sun, and it makes perfect sense that she would be flown away on Helios's chariot. She has attempted to break acceptable divine codes only to fall to earth in failure. Critics focus on the murder of her children as a heinous crime, but this woman has already been responsible for the deaths of her own brother and a powerful king. Her behavior in Corinth may not be typically reasonable, but given the history of her actions, committed to favor Jason, her behavior is not uncharacteristic and it is her last resort. She cannot reverse her domestic crimes, but she can rescind the most valuable gifts she has given Jason by killing her sons, and prevent any increase in his fame or fortune by killing his father-in-law and virgin bride.

Medea is the central character of the play around whom almost all of the action takes place. With the exception of the opening exposition between the Nurse and the Tutor, and occasional interjections directed at others by the Chorus, all exchanges with other characters involve Medea. Her position in the play is consistent and analogous to that of an idol on an altar to whom all else address, pray, and respond.

The character of Aiegeus is significant as more than just flattery to Athenians in the audience. His positive presence serves as a contrast to those characters who act without integrity. He appears in only one brief exchange with Medea, during which he shows himself to be a reverent man who keeps his vow. We know this by his success in history, which also would have been well known to a Greek audience. The exchange follows five verses by the Chorus and is terse and beautifully wrought, opening with one couplet each by Aiegeus and Medea that turns into 40 single lines of dialogue before the longer passages solidify their arrangement for her refuge. Temperance drives their exchange in both content and form. They are evenly matched in language and number of

lines between each other. He has a problem, she has a problem, and they each solve one another's problems in an exchange of mutual value. They plead to one another and answer each other's prayers in ritualistic fashion, both engaging as suppliants and supplicandi. Medea beseeches Aiegeus, "…by your beard / and by your knees I am making myself your suppliant, have pity on me…" to "receive me in your land and at your very hearth. / So may your love, with God's help, lead to the bearing / of children, and so may you yourself die happy" (*Med.* 693-9). Medea makes Aiegeus "swear by the plain of Earth, and Helios, father / of my father, and name together all the gods…." (*Med.* 730-1). Aiegeus complies, "I swear by the Earth, by the holy light of Helios, / By all the gods, I will abide by this you say" (*Med*. 736-7).

It appears that in these actions and descriptions of action, Euripides intends to show Medea as worthy of beseechment and that she understands the value in showing respect when she stoops to conquer in her manipulation of Creon: "No, don't send me away, I'm begging you / at your knee, in your daughter's name " (*Med*. 381). Creon grants Medea one final day in his kingdom, which results in his daughter's demise, as well as his own.

Euripides's works are less androcentric and include women as central figures more than the work of most other tragedians, constructing feminine characters as active heroes, not passive victims or delinquents. Tragedy is a decidedly masculine form and, compared to Sophocles's Jocasta, Euripides's Medea is more perspicacious, masculine, and courageous. Medea drives the action over the course of the plot and has a history of doing so outside the limits of one tragedy by Euripides; as compared to Jocasta, whose energies are spent blocking pursuits of justice and knowledge acquisition. These qualities

distinguish Medea and as a hero as compared to Jocasta who is an established delinquent. The courage to pursue knowledge and its undertaking differentiate heroes from delinquents.

Tragedy depicts women as necessary to the survival of humanity and hence as primarily biological beings belonging to the natural world. The systems and structures depicted in tragedy, however, rarely serve the needs of women. The significance of both Jocasta and Medea in their respective works resides in their social role as mother. By the time the action of the play is enacted, both of them have abdicated their power, status, or leadership role, and have yielded dominance to the men in their lives. Jocasta had been queen of Thebes when Oedipus arrived to answer the riddle of the Sphinx; Medea left her home and ended her relationship with her family for Jason. One could read their actions as altruistic, an extreme but natural expression of feminine agency and generosity; or one could read them as a form of subjugation in which these women are oppressed by the conditions of their society which privileges the desires of men over those of women. The natural and hormonal aspects of the decisions these women make, which are also political, are often explained by divine intervention, which complicates the question of accountability. Aphrodite, Artemis, Athena, Hera, and Hecate contribute to the story of Medea and the decisions she makes; Apollo and Zeus indirectly influence Jocasta. The gods symbolize natural forces so, confrontation of the imbalance, injustice, or unnatural aspects of Medea and Jocasta's choices and actions exonerates them. Calling upon goddesses to inspire their choices related to sex and violence would logically suggest that they share responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

Drama, like epic, confronts, exposes and magnifies intense societal issues. The difference, however, is the immediacy with which drama endows a subject by employing mimesis, thereby, allowing meaningful vicarious experience and identification between audience and text through actors. In a *New York Times* interview with chief theater critic for *The Times of London Times*, Benedict Nightingale, Edward Bond asserts, "You have to go to the ultimate situation in drama. The Greeks said very, very extreme things in their tragedies. They were told the best thing was not to have been born, but, if that misfortune struck them, the next best thing was to die young. And they all said, 'Hurrah,' and went down to their city rejoicing. Why? Because they'd faced the extreme situation, not at Auschwitz but at the Theater Royal."[69]

Sophocles's *Oedipus* and *Medea* by Euripides are products of ritual sacrifice with emphasis on victims, tragic heroes, catharsis, and allusion to the sex and violence that transpired before the start of the plot. Comparatively, *Bacchae* encompasses both sacrificial and ecstatic ritual. Euripides treats audiences to both experiences by building a plot that features rites associated with worshipping Dionysus as part of the action. Elements of ecstatic dance and ritual sacrifice are demonstrated and described within the play. Euripides's use of ritual authentically employs the ritual origins of tragedy and explores a broader array of emotional evocation than does Sophocles's use of ritual. Generally speaking, Euripides's plays may appear to have less philosophical emphasis than works by Sophocles, and may be less ideal and formal than Aeschylus as proposed by Aristotle. Euripides's tragedy, however, while considered less civilized by comparison, is actually much closer to the origins of ritual, which sought to create community through more than just intellectual means. Aeschylus and Sophocles are

[69] Nightingale (2001)

decidedly poetic and philosophical, but Euripides is an important figure in the history of tragedy for his dynamic style, innovations, and, ironically, more realistic view of humanity. Although criticized by primary philosophers and theorists such as Plato, Aristotle, and Nietzsche who criticize his style and form and accuse him of having killed the art, Euripides, by weaving music, dance, and sacrifice into his work returns the focus of tragedy to a more literal intention of worshipping Dionysus. The irony, of course, is imbedded in the nature of Dionysiac worship, which is one of intoxication and extreme behavior that symbolizes vulnerability and a loss of control. The pursuit of knowledge and justice are at the heart of Greek tragedy, but Euripides's *Bacchae* suggests that achieving knowledge and justice is separate from, and in fact in conflict with, the pursuit of power and control. It suggests that knowledge can only be pursued to a point, that not all things can be known; and that the highest form of knowledge is the awareness of humanity's limits of control.

Oedipus, *Medea* and *Bacchae* establish the themes of tragedy that persist by their connection with ritual sacrifice. In keeping with the myth of Dionysus, the heroes are themselves metaphorically regenerative, especially in contrast with those who irrevocably perish before them. Oedipus falls from his position as ruler, but lives to pursue another phase of life outside Thebes. And, although he abdicates his humanly lofty position as ruler of Thebes, he lives to become a spiritual leader in *Oedipus at Colonus*. Oedipus, therefore, while perhaps seen as losing status by human standards, is elevated in terms of spiritual status. Medea as well changes her status, abdicating her position as wife and mother and leaving Corinth. Medea murders her own children in a way that evokes pity and fear from an audience. She is pitiable for having been exploited, betrayed, and

rejected by Jason and yet her actions are frightening. The children are not the only sacrificial "kids" slaughtered by the hero-priestess; the virgin princess, Glauce, is also sacrificed, and her father, the king, is caught in the activity. *Medea* as a tragedy manages to exemplify every kind of ritual sacrifice, from that of animals to virgins to heroes, while avoiding overt and direct violent and vindictive activity against the villain. By Greek standards, at least, the greatest punishment is of Jason, whose life she spares, but whose reputation and future she obliterates.

This is not the first rebirth for either Oedipus or Medea; each of them has lived before with a certain noblesse in a kingdom other than the one in which their respective stories are set. Both have already experienced self-reinvention before the start of their tragedies: Oedipus is raised in Corinth by the king and queen of that city and Medea is the granddaughter of a god, daughter of a king and witch of Colchis. Her choice to murder her own relatives in order to serve Jason's mission re-defines her from granddaughter of a god, daughter of a king, and sister of a prince, to wife and mother to a mortal man, who himself is incapable of achievement without her. She relinquishes her status in order to serve her husband's needs, but her obsequiousness ends when Jason's ingratitude threatens her pride as his wife, mother to his children, and most importantly as a demigoddess.

Bacchae

Euripides's *Bacchae* incorporates anthropological elements of mystic cult ritual. From a theatrical perspective, the rituals are flamboyant, active, dramatic, and authentically linked to the spirit of Dionysiac cult worship. Critics, including the first judges of it in competition, disparaged the plot line of *Bacchae* which is less formal than those of most tragedies by Euripides's contemporaries. *Bacchae* appears to forfeit plot cohesion and elevation of character for authentic mythology and ceremony in worship of Dionysus, which, I argue is a crucial element of tragedy. The suggestion by classicists like Scott Scullion that tragedy has "nothing to do with Dionysus"[70] is a position I intend to disprove. The worship of Dionysus is the fulcrum point of tragedy, the rites of his cult are evinced throughout the genre, and define it as such. Euripides eschews some of the formality of the time and demonstrates with the structure of his play an ironic approach to ritual, one that shows reverence through irreverence and a willingness to briefly become vulnerable and intemperate. Euripides pays tribute to the gods' divinity by celebrating humanity and mortality through intoxication and vulnerability. Just as burning incense and blood sacrifice are modes of communication with gods, communion with Dionysus is achieved by altered states of ecstatic dance and inebriation.

In Euripides's *Bacchae*, Dionysus, the god whom the Bacchantes worship, opens the action outside the palace at Thebes. He immediately establishes his birthright as the deity born of Zeus and Semele, clarifying his presence in the mortal realm: "A god…disguised as a man" (*Bac*. 5), a statement he reiterates once he has announced the reason for his visit explaining that this "is why you see me now in human form" (*Bac*. 54). This play enacts the rites by which the god Dionysus is worshipped and

[70] Scullion (2002) 122

demonstrates what the practice comprises. Dionysus is, after all, the god out of whose worship rituals drama evolved. Of significance in Euripides's depiction, the first noun Dionysus uses to identify himself is "son." This establishes his eternal state of immaturity due to the nature of his perpetual lifecycle. J. M. Barrie created Peter Pan as a Dionysian character, based on the notion of a boy who never grew up because child death was common in his era; the only children who never grew up were those who died prematurely. The myth of Dionysus is the prototype for this notion as Hera manipulated Zeus into almost killing this son of his before he was born. Hera and Medea are linked in mythology and cult. Recall the last lines of Euripides's *Medea* when she tells Jason:

> …my own hands will bury them.
> I'll take them to Hera's sacred lands
> in Acraia, so no enemy of mine
> will commit sacrilege against them
> by tearing up their graves. And in this place,
> this land of Sisyphus, I'll initiate
> a solemn celebration, with mystic rites,
> future atonement for this wicked murder. (*Med*. 1642-9).

Hera is a protector of family but her methods are often brutal and one of the linchpin stories of Hera's attempt to protect her family comes from the story of Dionysus, the twice-born god.

Dionysus briefly describes the phenomenon of his birth and the impetus for his return to the house of Cadmus. "I have returned to this land of Thebes / where I was born from the lightning bolt / …Because these sisters of my mother, / these aunts of mine, denied that I was born of Zeus. / The last who should have done so, they defamed my mother, / Semele, proclaiming my god-like birth a trick" (*Bac*. 3-4…26-9). The diaspora of his cult is also explained by his residence and travel: "I have left behind the gold-rich lands of Lydia and Phrygia, / deserted the sun-parched shore of Persia, / The Bactrian fortress and the cruel land of the Mede. Through Arabia I came, prosperous Arabia, / and through all of Asia where Greeks and foreigners / mix in the lofty cities by the shore" (*Bac.* 13-8). Through Dionysus's words, Euripides describes the geography of Dionysian worship from the modern middle east through Asia to Europe. "Lydia is the central section of the western coast of Asia Minor. The Lydians were once the rulers of a widespread empire. After their defeat by the Persians, they became notorious for their cowardice and their luxurious mode of living."[71] Phrygia, the "interior section of western Asia Minor, extended up toward the Aegean Sea and the Propontis, so that even the Trojans were called Phrygians. The region was noted for its archers, sheep, wool, and flutes. In classical times the name Phrygian was a byword for cowardice and effeminacy."[72] Bactria has a reputation as "a land of opposites…situated between the Hindu Kush mountain range in the south and the river Oxus (Amudar'ya) in the north, it is essentially an east-west zone that consists of extremely fertile alluvial plains, a hot desert, and cold mountains. The contrast between the country's fertility and desolation

[71] Hathorn (1967) 199

[72] Hathorn (1967) 274

was already noted in antiquity."[73] It has been part of many empires, which parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan currently comprise, but its renown comes from its being the birthplace of Zoroaster. The Mede were the people north of Persia in what is modern Iran, where Medea was purported to have settled after fleeing Athens when her plans to murder Theseus were discovered. "To the Greeks the Medes were indistinguishable from the Persians, and the Persian wars were sometimes called the 'Median wars.'"[74] If one assumes that the pervasive Greek sentiment regarding Persians is primarily as Aeschylus depicts them in his play *Persians*, they are formidable yet impudent enemies whose lust for wealth is their undoing. Thus, the opening speech by Dionysus ostensibly forewarns his audience of the extremes of division and communion, and the expected intoxicating effects of his presence, but suggests that this is the moral imperative of his worship and that the people of Thebes would benefit from balancing their rigid morality with the kind of catharsis that is associated with creative pursuits, drinking, dancing, and having sex. That he has arrived with vengeance in mind to rectify his mother's reputation, as well as his own as a god, is foreboding and implies at least a bit of decadence.

As Nietzsche also points out, the Dionysian myth bears on Oedipus in a number of ways. Dionysus and Oedipus are scions of Cadmus, whose parents are cursed; attempts are made to end their lives when Dionysus and Oedipus are defenseless pre- and neo-natal infants respectively; they are raised outside their kingdoms where they gain high status and renown; they return to their birthplace, Thebes, and either knowingly, in the case of Dionysus, or unknowingly, launch retributive events. Both are either literally or

[73] Lendering 2005

[74] Hathorn (1967) 208

metaphorically reborn, which of course, perpetuates the myth of origin in the case of Dionysus, who was violently burned out of his mother's womb by Hera's manipulation and Zeus's lightning, only to be sewn into Zeus's thigh and brought to full gestation. This recalls the birth of Athena, but also suggests the essential balance of life and death as well as femininity and masculinity in Zeus. More importantly, even before Dionysus is born, he completes a life cycle: he is conceived by Semele, whose death by Zeus would have ended his gestation process, but then he is resurrected by his father and born by him. This myth reinforces Zeus's omnipotence by demonstrating the definitive aspects of his divine reputation: his sexual prowess and virility, the ease with which his power can take a life, even against his own desire to do so, his dedication to his children's survival, and his ability to give birth. In the story of Dionysus, Zeus conveys the themes of tragedy, the form developed to worship Dionysus: sex, death, justice, rebirth. That Dionysus is reborn through exile is played out as well in the Medea myth. Additional connections between Dionysus and Medea can be deduced by the archaeological research of Parada:

> Athamas was king first in Boeotia and then in Thessaly. As his second wife Ino plotted against the children of his first wife Nephele, he almost sacrificed his son Phrixus. Hermes entrusted Dionysus to Athamas and Ino, and persuaded them to rear him as a girl. But Hera drove them mad, and Athamas hunted his elder son Learchus as a deer, killing him. Athamas was then banished, and settled in the country he named Athamantia marrying Themisto and having other children by her.[75]

[75] Parada (2002) "Athamas"

Elements of this history parallel and interweave events in parts of Sophocles's *Oedipus* and both of Euripides's plays *Medea* and *Bacchae*. Athamas is a surrogate father to Dionysus and his geographical connection plays out in the stories of both Medea and Dionysus. The much coveted Golden Fleece arrived in Colchis as a result of avoidance. Athamas believed that the oracle of Delphi pronounced that he should sacrifice his son, Phrixis, in order to reinstate the fecundity of his kingdom. Nephele saved her son, Phrixis, by putting him and his sister, Helle, on the back of a gift from Hermes, the Ram with the Golden Fleece. Helle fell to her death into the sea, but Phrixis arrived safely in Medea's homeland, Colchis, where he sacrificed the ram, giving the fleece to King Aeetes and marrying his daughter, Chalciope. Athamas, therefore, is related to Medea by marriage of his son to her sister; making Medea a distant relative of Dionysus. The story of Athamas is that of Polybus in the Oedipus myth, adopting a son; it is also of Oedipus, himself, having to solve the problems of strife in his land by sacrificing his own family. Athamas, like Agave and Medea, murders his own son. Parada's account blames the hallucinogenic poison of a serpent, Tisiphone, for causing Athamas to kill his son, Learchus, "shot by an arrow being hunted by his father as though he were a deer."[76] The deer, one must note, symbolizes Dionysus and his followers. Furthermore, the accidental nature of an unintended death of a child echoes not only Agave's part in killing Pentheus, it is also the story of King Lear[77] and Cordelia. The competition between the wives of Athamas echoes Hera's contempt for Semele and Medea's actions toward Glauce. In all

[76] Parada (2002) "Athamas"

[77] The similarity of the names Learchus and Lear may be a tenuous observation, but one worth noting.

of these stories, the children suffer as collateral damage in the power struggles among their parents.

Medea plays the role of Hera in her own story, protecting Medus's position (her son by Aiegeus) as heir to the Athenian throne by thwarting the attempts of Theseus (Aiegeus's other and elder son) to reconcile with his father. Hera, of course, is Dionysus's nemesis, but Medea and Dionysus are linked in that they consider their greatness to be disrespected. Euripides only implies that Medea is a demigoddess by having her reiterate her relationship to the gods. That she is depicted as a woman in human form without explanation only leaves an audience to wonder to what extent she is divine. Euripides makes a point, however to justify Dionysus's appearance in human form, and plants two seeds of wonder: first, a mortal's assumption that Dionysus was mortal might be understandable by Dionysus's incarnation as a man; and second, since Dionysus can take this form in a drama, perhaps Euripides implies indirectly that Medea is also at least quasi-divine. Medea has a strong presence throughout the same region of the world as Dionysus; has a similar cult following that both praises and appeases her out of acolytes' pity and fear; is known for her abilities with herbs and potions that can intoxicate or kill; and has endured slights and exiles for which she has intentionally sought revenge. In the context of these tragedies one may suggest that, like Dionysus, she finds the most effective form of revenge in her exploitation of the flaws of her enemies. Both Dionysus and Medea, in response to disrespect, reveal their enemies' inability to live in moderation.

From the beginning of *Bacchae*, Euripides introduces a familial theme in the context of life and death with a lexicon including, *son, daughter, born, mother's*

memorial, mother, mortal, grandfather, tomb, sisters, aunts, grandson in the first 50 lines of the play. The gravity of the imagery he presents by mentioning his family line and the tragic story of his mother's death is interwoven with reference to contrasting revelry and celebratory rituals associated with the cult of Dionysus. "The dances and ceremonies invented across the sea / to celebrate my godhead, I now bring here. / Here, in Thebes, I have first excited women's cries -- / These women of Thebes, the first to dress in fawnskin – Placed in their hands my thrysus, the ivy-covered shaft" (*Bac*. 21-5). Just as Medea uses Peleus's, Creon's, and Jason's egos against them in ways specific to their individual lusts for power, Dionysus punishes the Theban women who disbelieve his divine status and speak ill of his mother even after her death. He is particularly angry with family members who disrespect each other. This quality and his divine status establish the audience's pity and fear for the god. Ultimately, Dionysus punishes those characters he deems blasphemous with what they seem to fear, an unchaste reputation, by amplifying their irreverent inclinations. As he explains:

> Why these? Because these sisters of my mother,
> these aunts of mine, denied that I was born of Zeus.
> The last who should have done so, they defamed my mother,
> Semele, proclaiming my god-like birth a trick
> devised by Cadmus to save a harlot-daughter's face….
> I have driven them mad. / Homes abandoned, they roam the mountains,
> out of their senses, deranged… (*Bac*. 26-30, 32-4).

Dionysus seeks redemption by disruption, upsetting normal life and, perhaps, humiliating those he has deemed haughty and self-righteous. When Dionysus says, "Thebes will have to learn to appreciate me / and my rituals. My mother will receive her recognition / when all acknowledge my divinity" (*Bac.* 40-2), although Greek audiences would have an educated anticipation of his subsequent actions, he has not yet described what he represents and the rituals associated with worshipping him.

The holistic inclusion of sex, birth, and death illustrate the cyclical nature of this god, and suggest an ironic balance. He speaks of his own near-death experience, which is related to the death of his mother, as having been marked with signs of honor and distinction, whereas the celebratory rites to which he refers are depicted as decadent and debauched. The text implies a certain seriousness and nobility in the tragic, a sentiment which is counter-balanced in moments of joyful practice. In the first lines of *Bacchae*, the predominant themes of tragedy are all named: sex, death, violence, abuse against women and children, justice, exile, and ritual. This list not only recapitulates the past but also predicts the future.

Dionysus explains the expectations of worship by negative definition when he describes the failure of Pentheus, Cadmus's grandson, and successor to the throne, to acknowledge Dionysus, a blasphemy which he terms "holy war" (*Bac*. 44). "[Pentheus] offers no libations, ignores me in his prayers" (*Bac*. 45). As in the myth-inspired plots of *Oedipus* and *Medea*, the citizenry suffer for the sins of their kings: "I am going to have to show this Pentheus, show all of Thebes, / what kind of god I am" (*Bac*. 49-50). Dionysus is the kind of god who both protects and punishes. In his address to his followers, Dionysus describes expectations of worship: "Rattle your castanets, clatter your drums, /

cymbals and tambours of Rhea, the great Mother. / Clash them and strike them….I to the mountains depart by myself, / there to accompany the mad Maenad dances" (*Bac*. 58-9…62-3). Here Dionysus describes ecstatic dances of dithyrambs thereby offering a lesson in anthropology and mandating, since Dionysus is the god for whom festivals of drama were conducted, that these activities be part of the festivals. Studies by Alain Danielou and Philippe Chevalier claim that ecstatic dances such as circumambulation are and have been universally practiced to induce intoxication and communication with gods.[78] Euripides craftily imbeds the requisite words and actions of Dionysian worship into the text.

Although some scholars have expressed consternation about *Bacchae*, citing the unpredictability of action and associating it with many genres besides tragedy, one must wonder how it would play to audiences with a modern education in alcohol and substance abuse. The aspects of the play that rationally driven academic scholars deem to be "irrational" are overtly inspired by intoxication by drugs and alcohol. MacDonald suggests, "the play poses questions at every turn about whom to trust, whom to take seriously and with whom to sympathise."[79] She recognizes, however:

> if it is difficult to know where to post your allegiance, then the paradoxes that the play throws up are part of the purpose [….] What is extraordinary about it as a play from the fifth century BC is that it is a tragedy about the nature of theatre. Dionysus, the god of theatre, puts Pentheus in costume

[78] Chevalier (1996) 200-1

[79] MacDonald xxix

> and lets him be the star of a drama where he would have preferred to be just a spectator.[80]

Here I would like to elaborate on the laudable yet truncated insight of this statement. The paradoxes are, indeed, part of the purpose: birth and death, sex and violence, creation and destruction are all part of the same paradigm and are all displayed in the work as they would have been enacted in ritual sacrifice. The play is about "the nature of theatre" because the ancient art of theater is a rite performed in the worship of Dionysus, which brings favor for those who engage in it and punishment for those who abstain. The Festival Dionysia were truly holy days during which celebrations were expected to include engagement in passionate and ecstatic rituals. Euripides creates a tragedy with comprehensive elements of theater, including comedy, satyr play, music, dance, hunting, blood sacrifice, and Dionysiac rites, all of which are parts of Dionysiac ritual. The unexpected nature of worshipping this god is found in the opposite of the usual solemnity associated with religion: its glorification of intoxication and otherwise decadent behaviors.

The morality of Bacchants and Maenads, followers of Dionysus, is extreme and considered immoral under other circumstances, but intoxication is recognition of human extremes and acknowledgement of the earth's offerings. Indulgence, a departure from the norm of moderation, in this case, is intended to show vulnerability to the gods. It is also a time of acquiescing and abdicating human attempts to control life's random events and to celebrate, as god-given, human impulses to create and destroy. The use of intoxication is

[80] MacDonald xxix

common in spiritual rituals of many cultures.[81] The expectation of indulgence and extremity in worshipping this god seems counter-intuitive to the predominant philosophies of ancient Greek culture and the tragedies performed in Dionysus's honor, and yet, Euripides's play comprehensively encompasses all aspects of the festival. The definitive aspect of *Bacchae*, however, is its delineation of specific Dionysiac rites.

In the other tragedies examined in this chapter, the title characters are intended to be the tragic heroes in their respective works. In large part, their role is as that of priest, communicating with gods to do their will and administering rites. *Bacchae* appears to differ in that the title characters are a congregation of worshippers who travel with the god, Dionysus, and do his bidding. The theological concept, however, proposes that the *bacchae*, as worshippers of the god, are responsible for keeping the spirit of the god alive. In essence, for better or worse, those who believe in Dionysus are integral to his survival and reputation as a god. One might also argue that Cadmus as the grandfather of the god, is a hero in his own right who worships reverently, yet suffers the punishment of exile and the breakdown of his family. Although Agave personally carries out the will of Dionysus, her actions are ignoble because they are not performed consciously and she regrets what she has done. One could argue that she behaves as a priestess, except for the fact of her regret. Ultimately, the Bacchants (*Bacchae*) are credited with instigating and completing the actions necessary to exact Dionysus's revenge on the non-believers of his own family and enemies of his mother.

The Chorus of Bacchants who follow Dionysus's opening speech offer a cogent list of the rites appropriate in the worship of Dionysus. Step One, be loud and boisterous in lauding his name:

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[81] Chevalier (1996) 542

Far from Asia, land of Asia,

I have come and I cry,

I have come and I praise,

I laud the name of Bromius,

Dionysus.

I praise his name, I laud his name,

Toil but a sweet toil,

The burden sweet as we praise his holy name.

Bacchus. Dionysus (*Bac*. 64-7).

The timbre of their rituals is immediately evident in the name Bromius (βρομί□) a word used interchangeably with Bacchus or "Bacchic," meaning loud and boisterous or loud-sounding. In this step, the first internal paradoxes appear wherein both "burden" and "toil" are described as "sweet." The mood of worship is said to be "happy" and "blessed," implying that the gods condone the mood. Step two can be read as dancing to the point of ecstasy, which can be easily enacted onstage. The implication of the language, however, denotes something closer to overt sexual behavior:

Happy. Happy is the one. Blessed is the one

who comes to know the mysteries,

the mysteries of the gods,

who hallows life, who yields.

who yields, lets the soul dance.

> Pure is our dance in the mountains,
>
> Purified the dancer in the name of Dionysus.
>
> Sacred are the rites, secret rites of Cybele, the Mother (*Bac*. 70-9).

Typical translation difficulties such as attempts to imitate the original text in terms of both form and content inevitably lose some of the work's potential connotations, especially when they involve adherence to poetic form. This passage in Greek especially the line translated here as "Sacred are the rites, secret rites of Cybele, the Mother" (*Bac*. 74), (*θιασεύεται ψυχάν ἐν ὄρεσσι βακχεύων ὁσίοις καθαρμοῖσιν, τά τε ματρός μεγάλας ὄργια Κυβέλας θεμιτεύων*)[82] much more clearly conveys a sense of Dionysus not only as someone who is worshipped but also as himself a worshiper of his mother, Cybele (Semele). The implications of the parallels between Dionysus's return to the land of his mother to worship her and the story of Oedipus are obvious, especially in that Dionysian worship includes carnal activity. Perhaps more significant, however, is the complex, ostensibly inverted hierarchy by which a god makes a pilgrimage to honor a deceased mortal. Dionysus's motivation for worshipping Semele, a mother whom he never met and with whom he had no relationship, is more to rebuke those who seek to undermine her and justify himself than to assuage her feelings of humiliation. By disrespecting Semele, the people of her own kingdom are also showing contempt for Dionysus. Thus, in redressing his mother's reputation Dionysus justifies his own. Ultimately, in typically paradoxical fashion, part of the worship of this mortal who conceived Dionysus is fatal for at least one whom Dionysus deems blasphemous, Pentheus.

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[82] Translations from the Attic Greek are my own with reference assistance by the Lagenscheidt's Dictionary and the online Perseus Project Library.

One is unable, even in translation, to ignore the sexual imagery of the Chorus's lines which call for at least figurative gestures, if not genuine, sexual activity:

> Break through, yield. Break through, yield.
> Break through with thyrsus aloft.
> Serve him, serve Dionysus.
> Come, Bacchants, come.
> Dionysus is your god, god son of god.
> Escort him home, home from Phrygia,
> Home to Greece, the broad streets of Greece.
> Bring him home, your Dionysus (*Bac*. 80-9).

The language of breaking through and yielding evokes images of dance and fornication. The presence of the thyrsus is significant for its sensual and pan-gender qualities. The shape of a thyrsus, a large fennel root, atop a staff is both phallic and vulvic, but in addition to the visual component, the root is one of the primary ingredients of absinthe and it is a phytoestrogen. Absinthe is an hallucinogenic intoxicant and phytoestrogens are chemicals in food that can function like the hormone estrogen. From the practical uses of the thyrsus come its reputation as a symbol for feminine sexual proclivities.

As is common in traditional ritual practices, the story of Dionysus's birth is retold, and in so doing, the provenance of various customs is disclosed:

> Dionysus god. Mother labours.
>
> Lightning flashes. Zeus destroys, but Zeus preserves.
>
> Mother dies, but Zeus preserves.
>
> Preserved from the fire, concealed in his thigh,
>
> Fastened there with golden pin,
>
> All too quick for jealous Hera's eye.
>
> In due time, as Fate decrees,
>
> He is born, but what a child,
>
> What a child from Zeus' thigh.
>
> A savage child with horns and serpents in his hair.
>
> His Maenads wear them still,
>
> the child, Dionysus (*Bac*. 90-106).

The story of Dionysus's birth is embedded in the text along with an explanation of why his followers dress themselves with "horns and serpents in [their] hair" (*Bac*. 105). This initiates the paradoxical, albeit consistently wild, quality of the creatures associated with and who represent Dionysus: the deer and the snake. They symbolize the combined masculine and feminine nature of the god having been borne by both his mother and father. The god's androgyny is further explained by one version of Greek mythology in which in an effort to hide the infant from Hera, "Hermes entrusted Dionysus to Athamas and Ino (Semele's sister) and persuaded them to rear him as a girl. But Hera drove them mad in such a way that Athamas hunted his elder son Learchus as a deer, killing him; and

Ino cast herself into the sea, together with her little son Melicertes."[83] Both creatures have qualities that persist regardless of the gender of the animal, and that are significant in understanding Dionysus who displays the qualities of both men and women. The snake, whatever its actual gender, maintains a phallic and predatory aspect which is considered masculine especially in biological terms, whereas the deer, male or female, is regarded as delicate, graceful and the target of violence against them by predators, all of which are stereotypically feminine qualities.

As the Chorus continues, they describe how Thebes is decorated both in honor of and by Dionysus. The translation, "Crown her with ivy, crown her with fir, / Crown her with evergreen, berry and flower" (*Bac*. 108-9), is a cursory description of the original Greek which, among other differences, names *σμίλαξ* or *μίλακι* (the convolvulus),[84] an O'Keefe-like image of concomitantly pure and provocative elements. Dionysus presumably decorates the city, referred to as feminine, growing natural vines. The Bacchants could also provide supplemental adornment to the environment as was the traditional custom.

> Sweet, sweet it is to run through the hills
> Sweet to wear the fawnskin.
> Sweet to fall enraptured.
> Sweet is the hunt, sweet the goat,
> Sweet the taste, sweet the raw blood.
> To run through the hills, through Phrygia, sweet,

[83] Parada (1998)

[84] Perseus.Tufts.edu 108

> To follow through Lydia the lead of our god, Dionysus.
>
> The earth flows with milk, the earth flows with wine,
>
> With honey it flows.
>
> The smoke like incense from the brandished brand (*Bac*. 131-48).

This verse describes the abundant and nourishing delights the earth provides to humanity with rhetoric similar to that of the *Old Testament*. "The earth flows with milk, the earth flows with wine, with honey it flows" (*Bac*.147-8), is strikingly similar to "..unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey…" (Exodus 3:8). This passage is translated with rhetorical anaphora highlighting the "sweet" mood of celebration, whereas the Greek has greater emphasis on activity and clearly evokes a celebration of life through extreme activity and celebration of the sensual world through athletic movement such as, dancing, running, yelling, brandishing objects, and hunting, which implies killing. The running is related to hunting and eating the hunted animal. This activity recapitulates and augurs the sacrificial rite of blood offering to the god.

Mention of fawnskin alludes to an aspect of the Dionysiac cult that has been referenced by Porphyry, Plutarch, Nonnos, and Ovid and parsed over time. P. G. Maxwell-Stuart, for example, proposes that the Maenads wore fawnskins to magically and symbolically protect them from the snakes that were also part of their customary costume: "If the women were to handle venomous creatures during their frenzy, they might wish for some kind of magical protection against their deadly bite, and what more natural than the skin of the snake's deadliest enemy, the deer?"[85] He also concludes, "The Maenads did not want swiftness, or timidity; nor were they thinking of the magical

[85] Maxwell-Stuart (1971) 439

'medicine' inherent in various parts of the deer family. But they did want immunity from snake bites and herein, I am sure, lies the answer to their wearing the fawnskin."[86] Maxwell-Stuart's explanation of the use of fawnskin, while legitimate, is incomplete. Most important is the fact that what is deemed "magical," like that which is deemed "mythological," has its roots in practical applications. Mythology and magic are mostly abstracted manifestations of truths that can be proven by science. Here I offer two more points of observation, one practical and one emblematic, to further elucidate the wearing of fawnskin. Maxwell-Stuart observes, with notes of support from Callimachus, Pausanias, Nonnos, Frazer, Strabo, and Rouse, "The deer is most closely associated with Artemis, who was both hunter and protectress, and we often find that the deer or hind is a helpless victim, sometimes surrogate for a human being who is killed to propitiate a deity."[87] These paradoxical qualities of the animal both hunted and protected could as easily represent women as sexual prey as the god, Dionysus, himself. The myth of Dionysus explains how the god is both the victim of Zeus's own lightning bolt and then Zeus's protégée by being sewn into the father-god's thigh. Furthermore, Dionysus as a god of rebirth, symbolizes both life and death, the sacrifice of one in death so that another may thrive. Hence, by wearing the fawnskin, the Maenads, as humans, are taking on the spirit shared by the graceful animal and the god in that in a sense they are protected and hunted, since they, too, are hunters and protectors. The hierarchy of animals, humans, and gods is a recurrent theme in Greek myth and epic.[88] The aspect of surrogacy to which

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[86] Ibid Maxwell-Stuart (1971) 439

[87] Maxwell-Stuart (1971) 437

[88] See Homer, *Iliad;* Bulfinch (1855); Hamilton (1952): mythology wherein humanity is placed somewhere between animals and gods as having qualities of both.

Maxwell-Stuart alludes is one of the complexities of Euripides's *Bacchae*. Tiresias enunciates the theme of surrogacy when he offers a reductive explanation of the events surrounding Dionysus's birth. Instead of clarifying things, however, the story plants seeds of doubt:

> …About Zeus' thigh, and the baby sewn up in it?
> Let me tell you the truth about that…
> When Zeus rescued Dionysus from the ashes,
> After the lightning-bolt, he carried the baby away to Olympus.
> Hera wanted to throw the god-like child out of heaven.
> Zeus with all a god's cunning, concocted this plan.
> Out of the ethereal layer which surrounds the earth,
> He constructed a surrogate, a phantom child
> Which he gave to Hera, thus protecting
> the real Dionysus from his wife's anger.
> but in time men confused 'ethereal layer'
> with 'laid in the thigh', a simple error of transmission.
> So myths are made (*Bac*. 287-94).

Since Hera's goal is to destroy the child of Zeus and Semele, offering her a surrogate would appease her and allow the real Dionysus to live. This story supports and enhances the ritual of killing the god in surrogate form in order that he may be reborn and

live. Traditionally, that surrogate was fawn or goat.[89] If the association of Dionysus with killing a young animal has symbolic resonance, it is in the proximity of life and death of a young being. The brilliance of Tiresias's version of the story is that it is a deceptive story of deception. It is a story of illusion that instigates a state of confusion and doubt. These are hallmark qualities of Dionysus and notable characteristics of Greek heroes such as Odysseus and Theseus, who are lauded for their cunning. This is the link between Dionysus and Athena. Dionysus demonstrates his cunning when he overcomes Pentheus's attempts to imprison him. Valuing intelligence over physical prowess is the reinforced theme here.

In his seminal work *The Golden Bough*, world-renowned anthropologist Sir Frazer offers still more mythology to consider:

> To save him from the wrath of Hera, his father Zeus changed the youthful Dionysus into a kid; and when the gods fled to Egypt to escape the fury of Typhon, Dionysus was turned into a goat. Hence when his worshippers rent in pieces a live goat and devoured it raw, they must have believed that they were eating the body and blood of the god. The custom of tearing in pieces the bodies of animals and of men and then devouring them raw has been practiced as a religious rite by savages in modern times. We need not therefore dismiss as a fable the testimony of antiquity to the observance of similar rites among the frenzied worshippers of Bacchus.[90]

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[89] Frazer (1952) 454

[90] Frazer (1952) 454

Also of note in this passage is the similarity of the practice of ingesting the body and blood of the god with the Christian rite of transubstantiation:

> The Eucharist was at one level simply a meal of bread and wine. At a deeper level it involved the spiritual consumption of the flesh and blood of Christ (cf. John 6:5308 I Cor. 2:23-6). The Eucharist was a reinterpretation of the traditional Jewish Passover meal, and a redefinition of existing notions of sacrifice. The sacrificial animal marked out for consumption was not a year-old sheep or goat 'without blemish' (Exodus 12:3-6), as stipulated in the Code of Holiness (Leviticus 22:22-5), but Christ himself.[91]

This is yet another aspect of Dionysiac mythology which Frazer explains as part of the evolution of religion. At first the actual animal or vegetable is worshipped as a god. When it is stripped of its hide or husk, it takes on decidedly human attributes, which then become anthropomorphic aspects of the gods. "The origin of the relationship between the deity and the animal or plant having been forgotten, various stories are invented to explain it."[92]

Still the practical aspect of wearing fawnskin is that it is supple, at once soft and strong (yet another paradox), remains. The quality of the young hide makes it almost immediately wearable, whereas other leathers and skins require a tanning and breaking process. Maxwell-Stuart observes this but ignores the obvious ready-to-wear conclusion,

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[91] Garnsey (1999) 18

[92] Frazer (1922) 454

instead conjecturing, "Among the Tarahumares of Mexico, foot runners tied deer hoofs to their backs to make them swift-footed, and one wonders if the Thracians in Xerxes' army did not wear fawnskin shoes for much the same reason."[93] Given that Thracians would have access to many swift animals, it is more reasonable that their choice of fawnskin stemmed from practical considerations. Certainly, in the case of the Maenads, the land would be well-stocked with fawns during the time of Dionysian worship, and their size would provide ample yet scant coverage as a garment in a temperate climate. This coverage would give the appearance of nudity and fulfill the Dionysian mandate to appear sexually uninhibited. While the wearing of goatskin, or that of a kid, is also associated with the Dionysiac cult, this could reasonably apply to town dwellers, but not to the group of Bacchants in the *Bacchae*. The nomadic women who travel with the god into Thebes would not have access to the shepherded animals; their only recourse would be to hunt the ubiquitous wild fawn of the forest. So in addition to the symbolism of the fawn as graceful, beautiful, and innocent, their hide also would be a practical choice.

In keeping with the theme of paradoxical elements, the fawn and the snake are both parts of the Bacchants' costume. The fawn, already killed, provides the skin of the snakes that are still alive. Taking this dichotomy as a cue, Euripides maintains the rule of opposites in the form of his tragedy. Additionally, the tone of the piece follows a trajectory of drug or alcohol consumption.[94] At first it is serious, it becomes increasingly playful, moving from silly innocence to more sinister emotions until it erupts in violence; it ends, however, with the pain of sobriety and regret for the inalterable mistakes of

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[93] Maxwell-Stuart (1971) 437

[94] For more on the physiological effects of alcohol consumption see Milkman and Sunderwirth (1987) 27-91.

inebriation. Because Dionysus is the god of the vine and encourages behavior associated with intoxication, it is easy to make the obvious connection of *Bacchae* to the tenuousness of intoxication, which would include a lack of inhibition, playfulness and cunning, a certain bravado, and potentially violent behavior.

When Pentheus is introduced in *Bacchae* he is immediately characterized as the anti-Dionysus. He opposes everything that Dionysus encourages and disbelieves his divine status. "What's this I hear about strange goings-on, / women leaving home to roam around the mountains, / prancing through the trees in honour of this fashionable god, / Dionysus, whoever he may be?" (*Bac*. 217-20) He is patently disrespectful of his elders, as is demonstrated when he first sees Cadmus and Tiresias: "Oh, here's another marvel. / (Tiresias) the prophet, all dolled-up in a fawnskin. / And my grandfather too. / How ridiculous he looks with that stick. / Dear old man I hate to see you so witless" (*Bac*. 251-5). Pentheus disrespects women and discourages their sexuality. "It's the goddess of lust they're celebrating / I've caught some of them, chained them up. / There they stay in the public prison" (*Bac*. 226-8). Pentheus insults Dionysus's mother, Semele, who would be Pentheus's aunt. "We know perfectly well the mother / was blasted together with the child / for claiming Zeus as her lover" (*Bac*. 242-5). Perhaps the strongest example of the antagonism between cousins, Pentheus and Dionysus, is in the disrespect Pentheus shows toward the women in his family, even his own mother. "…Ino is among them, Actaeon's mother Autonoë, and even Agave / who bore me to my father Echion. / I will hunt them down, / And when I have them safe under lock and key, / I'll put a stop to this Bacchic nonsense" (*Bac*. 229-32). In this case, Pentheus's denial of the women's rights to celebration and sexual activity is tantamount to blasphemy.

In the exchanges between the cousins, Pentheus is antagonistic, behaving sternly and defensively in his adherence to orthodox notions of order and state power. His attitude obviously is the antithesis of the wild, playful paradigm of Dionysus. Euripides's complexity here is as dizzying as the wine of Dionysus, and as a result the audience experiences the same confusion as the characters within the play do. After Euripides establishes sympathy for a son of Thebes who escapes certain death when his mother is killed, he introduces Pentheus, representative of Greek morality, in the delinquent position, behaving blasphemously toward a god whose morality is atypical of accepted Greek norms. This mastery of playwriting transcends one simple catharsis of pity and fear because Euripides is able to challenge the paradigm of a Greek audience by introducing one of their own gods as a foreigner and offering a representation of themselves in Pentheus. The audience's sympathies are challenged, for if they are reverent, although they may espouse the same virtues as those Pentheus champions, they must respect Dionysus. Although, at the start, Pentheus is feared as the ruler of Thebes, and Dionysus is pitiable, by the end of the play, Dionysus is feared and Pentheus is pitied. In *Bacchae*, Euripides follows his personal protocol of espousing themes similar to those in his other tragedies, placing women as central characters, aggrandizing atypical heroes with non-traditional views as a way of challenging commonly held beliefs, and upholding the morality of respect for the rights and beliefs of foreigners. The myths referenced within *Bacchae* describe patterns in the relationship between mortals and immortals and adumbrate impending activity, especially because they are in the same family, as Cadmus reminds Pentheus: "You saw what happened to your cousin Actaeon, / Torn to pieces by the man-eating hounds he'd reared. / And you know why he suffered. /

All for claiming he was better than Artemis at hunting" (*Bac*. 337-9), Pentheus is duly warned. As well, a Greek audience would be aware of Pentheus's impending fate. This threat of punishment for abstention from worship reinforces the reason for the tradition of honoring Dionysus, both by the characters within the play and by the audience who are present to worship him. Pentheus exhibits hubris in his belief that his own authority is greater than that of a "foreign" god and his believers. Pentheus assumes that anyone who follows Dionysus is not "decent." As he tells the Messenger, "I have no need to take out my temper / on decent people. / The worse the tale you have to tell / about these Bacchants, the more severe / My punishment for their corruption will be" (*Bac*. 673-5). Ironically, Pentheus's instinct is not completely wrong; he ultimately suffers a gruesome death at the hands of the Bacchants. The essential message is that humanity is powerless against the will of the gods. As Dionysus tells Pentheus, "You cannot fight / against the inevitable, mortal against immortal" (*Bac*. 795).

One of the most disconcerting reversals occurs shortly after this exchange. Pentheus goes from a state of legitimate paranoia when he tells Dionysus, "You're plotting something…. / You're in this together, plotting / to install this religion here," (*Bac*. 805…7), to accepting his assistance in spying on the women. Dionysus manipulates Pentheus by exploiting his desperate fear of losing his authority:

> DIONYSUS. One thing more. You would like to watch them
> up there in the mountain, wouldn't you?
> PENTHEUS. Watch them? Why, yes. I'd pay
> Good money to see what they are up to.

DIONYSUS. Why this great desire to see them?

PENTHEUS. There's no great pleasure in watching women drunk.

DIONYSUS. But you would like to take a look, pleasant sight or not.

PENTHEUS. Yes I would. As long as I was sitting quietly

Out of the way among the trees (*Bac*. 810-8/991-9).

Evidence of the importance of this negotiation include its central placement in the plot, the simplicity of the single-line-per-character structure,[95] and the abrupt change of relationship between two important characters. Although it is a literal conversation, given that one of Dionysus's primary powers is that of confusion and intoxication, the implications of the actions subsequent to this exchange are that Pentheus has been drugged. In a prior scene, Pentheus mocks his elders for dressing in costume and yet, now that Dionysus suggests it, he is willing to dress like a woman in "a full-length dress. And a wig, a long one….a headband…a thyrsus and fawnskin" (Bac. 831, 3, 5). Granted, accepting Dionysus's suggestion is not immediate. Pentheus considers the idea and then exits the scene announcing that he will choose between two disparate activities, "I'll go then. I'll go and prepare my weapons. / Either that, or do what you suggest" (*Bac*. 845). Preparing weapons implies violence and seriousness, while dressing like a woman to go watch ecstatic dances implies frivolity with sexual overtones. Dionysus is confident that Pentheus will acquiesce and the god will be able to recapitulate the deception of Hera who conceived a plan that resulted in Semele's death and Dionysus's exile. Here,

[95] See also the exchange between Medea and Aeigeus in Euripides's *Medea* 663-758.

Dionysus has the opportunity to avenge himself by luring Pentheus into a trap wherein he will be killed by his own mother, who will then be forced into exile for the crime. The similarities between this story and those of Medea and Oedipus are apparent: Medea, having killed her progeny, goes into exile; Oedipus, having killed his father, and his mother having killed herself, goes into exile. The story of Pentheus and Agave, like the others, reinforces the themes of life (by involving mothers in the action) and death (by homicide between family members) and incorporates the complicity of humanity in reinforcing the will of the gods by sending killers into exile.

Once Pentheus has been led to the hallowed ground of the Bacchants, Dionysus betrays him, revealing Pentheus's presence. He is not only humiliated because he has disguised himself as a woman to no avail, but he is also savagely punished, his body rent and devoured by the women, who are led by his own mother, Agave. An outstanding formal feature of this event is its placement. Ancient tragedies have long been noted for their adherence to a unity of place, with all of the action transpiring in a centralized location. That location usually serves as a dual symbol of humanity and divinity by existing outside the home of the tragic hero and taking on the appearance of an altar. In this case, since the worship of Dionysus is associated with nature, moving the action to a remote location is sensible, but unorthodox. The longest speech of *Bacchae* is that of the Messenger who describes in excruciating detail the ravaging of Pentheus's body by the Bacchants. Oddly, this messenger speaks to the chorus, who we were led to believe, were the Bacchants themselves earlier. Ancient Greek tragedy is noted for having disturbing action transpire offstage and then be merely recounted indirectly as is done here, but the violence described in *Bacchae* is more extreme than the violence depicted in any of the

tragedies by Euripides's contemporaries. The scene calls to mind the detailed description of Ophelia's death that Gertrude provides in *Hamlet* because of its precision and comprehensiveness; but it also echoes the sentiment of the child murders in *Medea* when Pentheus is said to have torn "off the headdress so [Agave] would recognize him / and grabbed her cheek. / 'Mother, it's me. It's Pentheus, your son. / Pity me. I've done no wrong. / Don't kill me'" (*Bac*. 1117-20). One cannot help but compare this scene to the one that got *Saved* banned. Although the action is not played onstage, the rhetorical imagery is disturbing:

> She ignored his words, and took his left hand in hers,
> planted a foot in his ribs
> and ripped off his arm at the shoulder.
> Her strength was supernatural.
> Ino set to work on the other side,
> Tearing out handfuls of flesh,
> And Autonoë and the whole mob of Bacchants.
> A single, terrible scream,
> Pentheus' agony, their exultation.
> One ran off with an arm, another a foot still in its shoe.
> His ribs were stripped to the bone.
> Bright red hands toyed with lumps of flesh.
> The remains were strewn about,
> by the rocks, in the undergrowth, anywhere.

We'll never find them.

But the head, the poor head,

His mother chanced to snatch it up,

And stuck it on her thyrsus. (*Bac*. 1125-40)

As discussed earlier, this is a reenactment of a blood sacrifice to Dionysus, except that this time, Pentheus is a substitute for the kid. As the dialogue confirms, Agave is unaware of her actions, still believing that the head she sports atop her staff is that of a lion cub. The scene confirms that Agave is not thinking clearly as the audience watches her transition back to sobriety and recognition of what she has done. Cadmus leads her through a series of actions and questions and reinstates her logic and clarity until she finally realizes that she is carrying her son's head and that she killed him.

CADMUS. Oh my dear. When you realise what you've done,

Your pain will be unbearable. Madness

is the best that you can hope for.

AGAVE. What's wrong? Why so solemn?

CADMUS. Look up. Look at the sky.

AGAVE. What am I meant to be looking at?

CADMUS. Is it the same as before, or do you see a change?

AGAVE. It's brighter, perhaps, a little clearer.

CADMUS. And the confusion in your mind. Is that still with you?

AGAVE. I don't understand. I was confused.

But that seems to be passing.

CADMUS. Can you hear what I'm saying? Tell me if you can.

AGAVE. What were we talking about, father? I can't remember.

CADMUS. What family was it you married into?

AGAVE. You gave me to Echion, the one they call the dragon-spawn.

CADMUS. Yes, and the son you bore your husband?

AGAVE. Pentheus. Our son is Pentheus.

CADMUS. and whose…whose head is that you're cradling in your arms?

AGAVE. A lion's. That's what the hunters told me.

CADMUS. Look at it. No, full. Look.

AGAVE. What is it? What am I holding?

CADMUS. Look again. Carefully. Now do you realise?

AGAVE. What I see is unbearable. God help me.

CADMUS. Is it anything like a lion?

AGAVE. God help me. The head is Pentheus.(*Bac* 1259-85/1554-86).

Agave is brought to her senses and realizes her error. While she is out of her senses, however, in a state she describes as "ecstatic," she indeed kills her son. The paradoxical nature of this event is truly tragic and emblematic of Dionysiac worship. The trope of defining *hamartia* in literary and dramatic criticism is delineated in this scene of revelation by which Agave confronts her fatal error and accepts the consequences. Agave and Cadmus each properly revere Dionysus, yet, like Oedipus and Medea, they are exiled, and stand as heroes in their respective tragedy. Essentially, Dionysus has

accomplished the goal of repaying Agave for her slights against his mother by taking her son away from her. His actions play out in allegorical retribution as well since his conception and potential existence was the impetus for his mother's murder. Essentially,, he transfers guilt for having been the cause of his mother's death onto Agave by indirectly coercing her into killing her son.

In *Bacchae*, a man and a woman, who are son and mother, take on multiple and paradoxical roles as priests (communicating with the god, Dionysus, and enacting his will); delinquents (Pentheus is delinquent for denying the power of Dionysus and then succumbing to it when it is convenient to his need to maintain authority by spying; Agave is delinquent for having denied Semele her dignity, refusing to believe her, and engaging in calumny); innocent victims (Pentheus is lured to his own gruesome death as a sacrifice to Dionysus; Agave unconsciously kills her son while temporarily under the influence of Dionysus); and witnesses (they each convert at some point and are forced to believe in Dionysus's authority). The Bacchae emerge as the heroes of the tragedy because their actions consistently follow the will of Dionysus, and by the end of the play, they have reversed Agave's stance and converted her. They perform the rituals of praise, intoxication and sacrifice, and reinforce justice by helping to punish Dionysus's blasphemers. The punishment of Cadmus in *Bacchae* is harsh, but not unjustified, and this is important because, as paradoxical as Dionysus may appear, he could not justify his divinity were he patently corrupt. Although Cadmus maintains integrity in defending Semele's reputation, erecting and maintaining a proper tomb for his daughter, and properly honoring Dionysus, he is nevertheless punished with exile. For one thing, he

tries to keep Agave from realizing her crime when she acknowledges that she is in possession of Pentheus's dispossessed head:

> AGAVE. Who killed him? Why am I carrying this?
>
> CADMUS. The truth is terrible. Best not to know" (*Bac*. 1286-7).

Cadmus does tell her, but his first inclination is to spare her the pain, which is contrary to the will of Dionysus, who demands her deep anguish in retaliation for calumny. Tragedy consistently teaches that knowledge and truth are to be revered. Dionysus punishes Cadmus for this brief betrayal. More importantly, however, is the connection upon which Shakespeare builds the plot of *King Lear*. For shirking their leadership responsibilities and abdicating authority to their progeny before they were properly educated, experienced, or had built sufficient character to succeed at it, both Cadmus and King Lear suffer for their decisions. Euripides implies through the Chorus that the gods' punishment is capricious "Olympian Zeus ordains. / the gods accomplish, strangely. / Things rarely end as you expect. / The unexpected is God's way, / the lesson of this story" (*Bac*. 1387-90). But the answer is clear: Except for the fact that Pentheus was given authority in Thebes, Cadmus could not be blamed.

Euripides's tragedy *Bacchae,* while underappreciated by its contemporary critics, serves the anthropological need of codifying many of the rites and customs associated with the Dionysiac cult, and strongly suggests a link between ritual and the form we continue to call tragedy. The many elements of ritual that appear in this enigmatic tragedy surface as well in the other works examined here in subsequent chapters. In

addition to the similarities already described between Oedipus and Dionysus, and Medea and Dionysus, the following chapters will include closer scrutiny of the shared elements of ritual, plot, and characterization of emblematic tragedies of the Renaissance and the Millennial era.

CHAPTER 3

"SUCH UNCONSTANT STARTS:"[96]

CHILDREN OF SHAKESPEARE'S *KING LEAR*

Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, and Edmund

King Lear[97]

King Lear is a tragedy as masculine and bawdy as any satyr play, with sexual references and violent tension that result in catharses of pity and fear. The heroes suffer and survive. The sacrificial victims die. Witnesses experience the events on a visceral level. The delinquent, however, defined as one who, by refusing to pursue truth and

[96] The first scene of the first act ends in a pivotal discussion with Goneril in which Regan says, "Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment" (*K. L.* I. i. 296)

[97] A comprehensive survey of criticism on *King Lear* alone would require a study as long as a dissertation. One can cite, however, some of the studies that have been most influential in the reception of this tragedy. Central studies include Charles Gildon, "Remarks on the Plays of Shakespear" 1710; Lewis Theobald, Notes on *King Lear* (1733), Samuel Johnson, Notes on *King Lear* (1765); Charles Lamb, "On the Tagedies of Shakespear" (1810); William Hazlitt, "Characters of Shakespear's Plays: *King Lear*" (1817); Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Records of his Lecture on *King Lear* (1819); John Keats, "On Sitting Down to Read *King Lear* Once Again" (1818); A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth* (1904); Maynard Mack, *King Lear in Our Time* (1965); Jan Kott, *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (1967); Peter Brook, *The Empty Space* (1968); Frank Kermode *King Lear* Casebook (1969) and *Shakespeare's Language* (2000); H. Weisinger *Myth and Ritual Approach to Shakespearean Tragedy* (1979); Joseph Papp and Elizabeth Kirkland, *Shakespeare Alive!* (1988); R. A. Foakes, *Hamlet versus Lear: Cultural Politics and Shakespeare's Art* (1993); Kathleen McLuskie *The Patriarchal Bard* (1985); Coppélia Kahn "The Absent Mother in *King Lear*" *Rewriting the Renaissance: Discourse of Sexual Differences in Early Modern Europe* (1986); Michael Warren, "General Introduction," *William Shakespeare: The Complete King Lear 1608-1623* (1989); Terence Hawkes, *William Shakespear: King Lear* (1995); Stephen Greenblatt, *Will in the World* (2005) and *Shakespeare's Freedom* (2010). (N. B. Institutional formatting required splitting this footnote into three parts. The two subsequent notes are part of this one.)

knowledge, willfully disengages from the ritual, is absent from the tragedy—unless one identifies the audience as the delinquent. Hence, the characters of *King Lear* can be categorized as priest/hero, victim, active and passive witnesses, and in this regard, the play continues the conventions established in classical Greek tragedy. In terms of character motivation, Shakespeare also appears to conform to the vision of classical tragedians, in that for him, too, character is destiny, and the characters of his *dramatis personae* are given at birth. Or so it would seem. The issue, however, is not so easily settled, for the play leaves room for the influences of family and social life in character formation, and one might entertain some of the questions that have coalesced around modern disputes about the importance of nature versus nurture in the formation of the human psyche.[98] Edmund raises the issue in one of his early soliloquies:

> Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
>
> My services are bound. Wherefore should I

[98] Virtually all of the studies of *King Lear* focus on Lear, Gloucester and Cordelia, and to a lesser extent on Kent and Edgar. Few regard Edmund, Goneril and Regan as anything other than evil beings, monstrous in thought, word and deed. Edmund generally is seen as a version of Richard III, one who brazenly and energetically embraces evil actions. Goneril and Regan are treated as equally nefarious, though more devious, hypocritical and conniving than Edmund. Feminist critics have recognized the misogynistic aspects of the play but few have reconsidered the demonized view of Goneril and Regan. Among those studies that have explored the elder daughters' motivations are Stephen Reid, "In Defense of Goneril and Regan" *American Imago* 27 (1970); Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* (1993); Paulo Valesio, *Novantiqua: Rhetorics as a Contemporary Theory* (1980); and Marina Leslie "Incest, Incorporation and *King Lear* in Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* (1998). Notable studies of misogyny in *King Lear* include, D. Callaghan "Woman and gender in Renaissance tragedy: A study of *King Lear*, *Othello*, *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The White Devil*" (1989); *King Lear* and the Politics of Teaching Shakespeare, (1990); Carol Rutter, "Eel Pie and the Ugly Sisters in *King Lear*" (1995); Catherine S. Cox "An Excellent Thing in Woman": Virgo and Viragos in *King Lear* (1998); Peter L. Rudnytsky "The Darke and Vicious Place": The Dread of the Vagina in *King Lear* (1999); Cristina León Alfar, *Fantasies of Female Evil: The Dynamics of Gender and Power in Shakespearean Tragedy* (2003).

Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?
Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take
More composition and fierce quality
Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops,
Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well, then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
As to the legitimate: fine word,—legitimate!
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top the legitimate. I grow; I prosper:
Now, gods, stand up for bastards! (*K.L.* I. ii. 1-22).

Here, Edmund reflects on the inequitable treatment he and his brother have received. Edmund and Edgar, having come from the same father, and therefore in theory

possessed of the same potential nature, nonetheless have diametrically opposed moral values. Although Edmund has been educated, as indicated by Gloucester's statement that Edmund has been "out nine years" (*K.L.* I. i. 27), he has not had the privilege of status that Edgar has enjoyed in his upbringing. The psychological result in Edmund's case is a distinct lack of trust. Through his high intelligence, however, Edmund deceives his way to an elevated station. He devotes himself to "Nature" as his goddess, yet his response to Nature as fate (divine law) is to apply his free will (human law) in order to obtain what he views as justice. Edmund's means of achieving his desire are immoral, but his question is valid: if Edgar is entitled to inherit land and power simply because he was born, isn't Edmund equally worthy? Is it merely a question of inheritance? The answer relies on arbitrary laws devised by men who determine the value of a child's rights based on the classification of a woman (the child's mother) as a function of the woman's relation to a man (the father). Edmund, having been "branded" as "base," decides to fulfill the title, proving to be both a literal and a figurative "bastard." This, however, raises the question of whether his having been labeled a bastard caused his behavior—or at least shaped his free choice of evil—or whether his behavior is innate and therefore inevitable regardless of his upbringing.

The question of character motivation is important in *Lear*, despite the difficulties of determining where Shakespeare stands in terms of the nature/nurture debate. Edmund scoffs at those who "make guilty our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars; as if we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience to planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on" (*K.L.* I. ii. 116-

22). Yet we know that Shakespeare writes of "star-cross'd lovers," (*R&J* I. i. 6) and that there are many indications in other plays of a certain credulity regarding astrology.[99] Regardless of Edmund's contempt for the stars, his actions may nevertheless be dictated by the innate character created through his illegitimate conception. In short, whatever the strengths of *King Lear* as a poetic or theatrical work, dramaturgically, at the level of plot and character motivation, the play remains problematic.

There seems to be ample evidence that *King Lear* adheres to the deterministic dualism of ancient Greek tragedy: good and evil are innate, and no familial or social dynamics need be identified as causal forces in the formation of individuals' characters. According to this model, Gloucester's son, Edmund, is by birth an innate "bastard," and Lear's older daughters, Goneril and Regan, are monsters, whose cruelties are inexplicable expressions of inherently evil natures.[100] I contend, however, that the play indirectly suggests that the actions of Edmund, Goneril, and Regan stem from understandable and

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[99] For more on this topic, see Warren D. Smith's 1958 article "The Elizabethan Rejection of Judicial Astrology and Shakespeare's Practice" in *Shakespeare Quarterly* Vol. 9, No. 2, Spring, (159-76).

[100] Very few critics address the motives of Goneril and Regan, which I see as central to the drama. The relationship between Cordelia and her sisters has been compared to Cinderella and her step-sisters, and critics have noted the folkloric nature of the opening ceremony in which the three daughters are asked to attest to their love of their father: Sigmund Freud "The Theme of the Three Caskets" (1913); W. W. Greg, "Time, Place, and Politics in *King Lear*" *The Modern Language Review* (1940); Marvin Rosenberg, *The Masks of* King Lear (1972); E. A. M. Colman, *Dramatic uses of bawdy in Shakespeare* (1974); Alan R. Young, "The Written and Oral Sources of *King Lear* and the Problem of Justice in the Play" *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* (1975); A. Dundes, "To Love My Father All: A Psychoanalytic Study of the Folklore Source of *King Lear*" *Southern Folklore Quarterly* (1976); Paul Delany, "*King Lear* and the Decline of Feudalism" *PMLA* (1977). I also examine the echoes of the folk tradition in *King Lear*, specifically those centered on father-daughter incest and the flight from the father. This tradition has seldom been brought to bear on *King Lear*, although the parallels between the play and the folk tradition are striking. My hypothesis that Lear may have sexually molested Goneril and Regan has seldom been entertained, though, as I will show, at least two novelists and one critic recognize the power of such a reading and, therefore, such a hypothesis should be explored further.

not entirely unreasonable motivations, and that their behavior is in reaction to abusive treatment by their parents, which in the case of Goneril and Regan, includes sexual abuse.

Whatever the motivations of the characters, however, there are many parallels between ancient Greek tragedy and *King Lear* that we might recognize. Lear is the central figure and a classic tragic hero in that the dramatic arc of the plot transforms him from a brazen, cruel megalomaniac into a penitent, compassionate man once he sobers and realizes that he is subject to the laws of the natural world, especially temporality. Like Dionysus, Lear is reborn; like Oedipus, upon loss of material wealth and status among men, he is elevated to a position of sagacity and spiritual elevation. After abdicating his power, Lear suffers and survives, and though rendered insane, lives with sufficient wits to see karmic retribution for himself and others. Gloucester's lascivious nature, which leads to the procreation of Edmund, returns to destroy him. In this regard, Gloucester resembles such characters of ancient Greek tragedy as Laius, Jason and Pentheus, all of whom suffer the consequences of their own offenses. Laius stands alone as misopedistic (Gloucester does not hate his sons; Jason claims love for his sons; Pentheus's relationship to his children is irrelevant), but all four characters abuse power in an effort to maintain or increase control over others. The actions taken against Lear and Gloucester would appear to be largely unwarranted. They make minor mistakes, Lear in his assessment of his daughters, Gloucester in his licentiousness and his faulty judgment of the worth of his two sons, and like most tragic heroes, the are punished tenfold for their faults. Eventually they have a moment of recognition—in both cases, when the fathers see the true value of their children.

If we are to assess *Lear*'s similarity to specific Greek tragedies, *Bacchae* rather than *Oedipus* would seem the closer model. The plot of *Oedipus* centers on a mystery. The play opens with the societal problem of a plague, the cause of which is unknown. The history of problem-solving in Thebes is then recounted. Eventually, the mysterious cause of the plague is revealed, at which point the original problem is deemed unsolvable, except through a course of redemptive retribution. The plot of *King Lear*, by contrast, involves no such mystery, and the actions of many characters seem mysteriously irrational and unmotivated. In this regard, *Lear*'s mysteries resemble those of *Bacchae*, mysteries of character motivation rather than plot. As we saw in the previous chapter, the irrational actions of the Thebans, particularly Pentheus, prove to be explicable—they are the products of intoxication induced by Dionysus, who uses this altered state to exact his revenge. No such god presides over the action of *Lear*, yet revenge is exacted in the play, clearly so in the case of Edmund.

In *King Lear,* as in Greek tragedy, there is dramatic irony, yet only when secrets are revealed to characters who do not comprehend what they hear, leaving no typical tragic moment of simultaneous revelation and reversal. One might argue that Lear on the heath is a poetic, existential substitute for plot-specific peripeteia, in that Nature teaches him the lessons of redemption for which the play is so often valued. One may argue that Lear mourning Cordelia's death, is the ultimate tragic recognition, but neither of these examples explains the hostile behavior of the apparently villainous characters.

It is at this point that the question of motivation and the influence of nature versus nature becomes crucial. A very important set of circumstances are alluded to throughout the work, which could explain some of the unreasonable behavior of many of the

characters. *King Lear*, I argue, demonstrates the consequences of intemperance that grow out of a bacchanalian lifestyle of inebriation, licentiousness and child abuse. Lear's and Gloucester's abuse and neglect of their children create the environment that forms the children and in which the adult progeny must eventually function. René Girard submits that "the destruction or undermining of all legitimate authority is a recurrent feature in Shakespeare and, more often than not, it occurs with the passive or active collaboration of this authority itself."[101] Lear and Gloucester are the authorities who undermine their own authority, and they do so by perpetuating a values system to which the children, in one fashion or another, are sacrificed. They create the environment that shapes their children's personalities and instigates their actions.

We might argue that *King Lear* is Shakespeare's homage to Euripides's *Bacchae*. Both plays question the legitimacy of authority and the systems created by that authority, and they do so by reconsidering the society's accepted paradigms of justice. When the reigning authority is challenged, the legitimacy of the entire system is brought into question. *King Lear*, of course, is not a retelling or adaptation of *Bacchae*, but plot elements, ritual aspects, and much of the characterization are similar, and the decisive challenge of the foundations of authority in the two is identical.

As a first stage in the examination of character motivation, we might note the presence in *Lear* of the theme of intoxication, so important in Euripides's *Bacchae*. Lear's moods and behavior can be explained as stages of inebriation. The daughters' actions once they gain power run the gamut from sensible to hostile and irresponsible. They each represent varied stages of sobriety. Cordelia is sensible and sober but her sisters appear to be drunk with power, or perhaps they literally are drunk. The 2008 PBS

[101] Girard (2000) 182

and 1997 BBC productions[102] depict Regan drinking often and to excess, and given the fact that Regan and Goneril die after drinking poison, a pattern of frequent indulgence in alcohol would make that fatal action more believable. The sisters have a propensity to indulge in wine or the like, and they are also prone to diminished inhibitions and sexual urges as demonstrated in their adulterous advances toward Oswald and Edmund. Their violent actions against Lear and Gloucester, if not encouraged by actual inebriation, can at least be said to mimic those of an intoxicated individual.

King Lear is seen on the heath in much the same way that Cadmus and Tiresias are dressed and behave in the early scenes of *Bacchae*, looking wild. The odd behavior of King Lear, especially its inconsistency, is attributable to episodes of drunkenness. The play begins with Lear, *in medias ebrietas*, celebrating the parsing of his kingdom. The king's mood exudes the kind of confidence and celebration of a man making a toast at a wedding or an awards ceremony (which are both valid descriptions of the setting). In this sense, Lear's staging of the division of his kingdom is a version of the ritual ceremonies of ancient Greek tragedy, in this case an improvised ritual that makes incongruous use of various established ceremonies. The audience, as well as Lear's subjects, witness the king's transformation through the various stages of intoxication, starting with euphoria and excitement, progressing through confusion, stupor and grief, and ending finally in restored sobriety. Lear's behavior in the final act of the play recalls that of a man who regrets his behavior during a phase of extreme intoxication.

One must wonder at Lear's inspiration for abdicating control of his kingdom. The answer begins to materialize when we observe that Lear uses his freedom from responsibility to carouse with his men, drinking, laughing and (as staged in some

[102] http://www.pbs.org/wnet/gperf/episodes/king-lear/watch-the-play/487/

productions) groping female servants. If this behavior were portrayed as part of a holiday celebration, it might be viewed as a brief moment of Dionysian revelry, but Lear is choosing revelry as a lifestyle, which suggests the possibility that he is an alcoholic who, throughout his life, has enjoyed and fostered in his court an environment of drunkenness and excess. Indeed, as the plot progresses, the play's similarities to *Bacchae* mount and the common theme of inebriation becomes increasingly clear.

Gloucester's son Edmund, and Lear's daughters Goneril and Regan, work within the system and conspire to enact violence toward both of these men. Evidence suggests that these aggressive acts are responses to events that plausibly occurred in the backstory of the play. By contrast Edgar, Gloucester's legitimate and slightly elder son, and Cordelia, Lear's youngest daughter, having once been favored by their fathers, are cast out of the kingdom, but eventually they have their favor restored. The reinstatement of their elite positions serves as redemption for their fathers and restores peace, if not justice, to the kingdom, but this redemption costs Cordelia her life. Redeemed or not, the deaths of all of Lear's biological heirs ends the lineage of the royal family, thus altering the history of England. Here we have a variation of the moral conveyed in many of Shakespeare's works: that internal strife is often more treacherous than external competition. If one considers the presence of the themes of abuse and domestic violence, that political moral may also serve as a microcosmic commentary on the play's action. And it must be admitted that, whatever the motivations behind the actions of Edmund, Goneril and Regan, the play imposes a violent and untimely death on the three, thereby exacting what would seem a conventionally moral punishment for their unfilial deeds.

As I have already indicated, I believe that the hypothesis of father-daughter incest between Lear and his elder daughters is worth considering and not as far-fetched as might at first appear. First, one must consider the general cultural climate in which the original Lear account was formulated and recorded, a climate that continued into the Elizabethan era. In *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, Elizabeth Archibald studies several medieval incest stories and links them to classical antecedents, including *Apollonius of Tyre*:

> There are plenty of incestuous fathers in classical mythology and literature, but the story of the flight of the innocent daughter from her father's unwelcome advances seems to be a medieval innovation….It combines the widely known motifs of the woman set adrift or exposed, the *Accused Queen* or *Calumniated Wife* who is unjustly driven from her home, and the father who wants to marry his own daughter….*Apollonius of Tyre* offered the greater number of narrative building blocks: a series of royal fathers each of whom has only one child, a daughter; the hero's horrified flight after his discovery of the incestuous liaison of his prospective bride and her father; the abandonment of his new wife at sea after childbirth; the ordeals of their daughter at the hands first of her jealous stepmother and then of a series of hostile or aggressive men; the intervention of a deity; and a two-part family reunion, the second part caused by a sort of confession in a temple.[103]

[103] Archibald (1991) 147-8

Shakespeare takes as his source Holinshed's 1577 account of the history of King Leir, said by Holinshed to have lived in the 9th century CE. Holinshed's attribution of a medieval date to his history is not arbitrary, since Geoffrey of Monmouth speaks of a King Leir in his *Historia Regnum Britanniae* (c. 1166 CE). Hence, the story of Lear, whatever its relation to actual history, was most certainly a product of the medieval period in which incest tales abound.

And indeed, the basic plot of Shakespeare's *King Lear* conforms to the generic pattern Archibald outlines. Cordelia is the last unmarried daughter of a king whose formal inquiry into his daughters' emotional states is officious and an illegitimate use of authority. Later in the play when working against Cordelia and Lear, Edmund tells Albany, "Sir, I thought it fit / To send the old and miserable king …With him I sent the queen; / My reason all the same" (*K.L.* V. iii. 47, 53-4). In these words Edmund links father and daughter as king and queen without designation of their respective kingdoms, implying a union of marital, rather than filial, status. Cordelia is not his only daughter, but she is unmistakably favored and singled out as special to him: "Although the last, not least" (*K.L.* I .i. 83). The rationale for Burgundy's refusal when pressed for his response to taking Cordelia as a bride appears to be that the offer of land and power has been rescinded, but the action also recalls the hero who flees upon acknowledgement of his betrothed's relationship to her father in *Apollonius of Tyre*. Lear's reunion with Cordelia after the realization of his spiritual growth also recalls the family reunion of *Apollonius of Tyre*. Archibald also remarks:

> [t]he Flight from the Incestuous Father story may have been circulating in oral forms throughout the first millennium AD; it has survived as a folktale to the present day. It would seem that the fully-fledged medieval version of the story was developed (or at least committed to writing), like the legend of Gregorius, in the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. This was the period which saw not only the rise of romance, with its increased interest in the psychology of love and adventure stories about women, but also great anxiety among clerics about the definition of marriage, the consanguinity laws, and the incest taboo, and great emphasis by clerical writers on contrition, confession, and penance.[104]

Archibald points out as well that "a remarkable number of versions of the Flight from the Incestuous Father have survived. The earliest seems to be in the English *Vitae Duorum Offarum* attributed to Matthew Paris, written about 1250…."[105] Finally, she argues that the motif of the incestuous father was alive and thriving in England throughout the 16th and 17th centuries.

The subject of incest was also a significant topic of discussion during the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. As Bruce Thomas Boehrer points out in *Monarchy and Incest in Renaissance England*, Henry VIII brought a new prominence to the subject by inviting various academic bodies to investigate the topic. Previously, incest had been a locus of adjudication by the Church, and discussions of the topic were restricted to clerical circles. King Henry sought to wrest control of the subject from the Church in order to justify his

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[104] Archibald (1991) 148-9

[105] Archibald (1991) 149

consecutive marriages and divorces without dependence on ecclesiastical authorities. As part of that effort, he encouraged public discussion of the matter, and he combined that strategy by asserting that the legal authority for the adjudication of incest resided in the state—that is, in himself, as head of state. In divorcing his various wives, he consistently argued that his marriage had been incestuous, and as a result, that the progeny of that match were illegitimate. His judgments were issued in a series of Succession Acts, and these pronouncements on incest, marriage and the succession, observes Boehrer, "rush upon each other in a torrent of contradictions, each one advertising itself as inevitable, transcendent, irrevocable, and final."[106] The Succession Act of 1534, for example, declares the marriage of Henry and the Lady Katherine to be "against the laws of Almighty God" and Mary, Henry's daughter by Katherine, to have been born out of wedlock. The Succession Act of 1536 declared Henry's marriage to Anne to be incestuous adultery, and the Act identified Elizabeth as a bastard. The Succession Acts of 1543 and 1546 followed the same pattern. Since Elizabeth had been declared illegitimate in Succession Act of 1536, when she ascended to the throne the question of incest and illegitimacy was raised again. Hence, in the decades before Shakespeare and into his own day, the question of incest remained a subject of public discussion.

Not only was incest a prominent topic in 16th century royal and academic circles, but it was a common subject in drama in the Tudor, Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Boehrer's *Monarchy and Incest in Renaissance England* notes this fact, and Richard McCabe's *Incest, Drama and Nature's Law: 1550-1700* provides copious examples and detailed analyses of dramas that thematize incest in the Tudor, Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.

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[106] Boehrer (1992) 44

That literal rather than figurative sexual violence might be viewed as an important topic in Shakespeare is not without precedent. In a 2005 article in *Renaissance Quarterly*, for example, Dickey and Watson argue that "[c]ommentators on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*—perhaps mesmerized by the play's reputation as an exemplar of pure love—have overlooked its references to the most notorious rapists of classical culture: Tereus, Hades, Tarquin, and Paris"[107] and that "Ignoring the ancient specter of rape haunting this story also precludes recognizing what Juliet does heroically to exorcise it."[108] And certainly many commentators have remarked on the strangely erotic relations between fathers and daughters in Shakespeare. Perhaps no play of Shakespeare bears out more clearly Marc Taylor general observation:

> Consciously or unconsciously, sometimes both, Shakespearean fathers dread no circumstance more than the loss, to other men and to maturity, of the daughters whom they desire for themselves; and this desire, both impermissible and inadmissible, expresses itself in very strange behaviour—in acts that are arbitrary, selfish, irrational, violent, cruel.[109]

And indeed, Taylor recognizes the relevance of this analysis for an understanding of *Lear*:

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[107] Dickey and Watson 75

[108] Ibid. 79

[109] Taylor (1982) 75

> Lear…has had a daughter come to maturity; that is invariably a circumstance that makes a father react, not altogether irrationally, though the response often appears inexplicable, but according to a peculiar logic that characters not so placed have trouble understanding. For it is not only the case that a girl's realization of her incipient sexual being takes her away from her father; that it makes him give her to another; that it destroys his little perfect world; that at a time, often of waning sexual powers his ideal object becomes that which is forbidden; and that all of this is further and intensely aggravated by the father's dim perception of the attraction this forbidden fruit holds for him: it is also true that this complex of circumstances, in part natural and in part a consequence of the father's poor adjustment to the real world, is none the less a matter for which the father blames his daughter. Her becoming what he covets and cannot have is, in his mind, the primal act of filial disobedience, an intentional gesture of supreme mockery, for which no punishment is too stern. To this gesture a father can react…like Lear, by banishing the daughter…[110]

Nevertheless, the hypothesis of actual incest in *Lear* is scarce among literary critics. Perhaps the first explicit exploration of this possibility comes, not from a literary critic, but from a novelist: Jane Smiley.[111] In her 1991 novel *A Thousand Acres*, Smiley

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[110] Taylor (1982) 133

[111] Marilyn French should be noted for her 1994 novel, *Our Father*, which also could be described as a deconstructed, modernized realization of *King Lear,* which

retells the Lear story as a narrative set in Iowa circa 1979. The parallels between the novel and Lear are deliberately drawn, and reviews of the novel routinely make note of this fact. In Smiley's novel, the narrator, Ginny (the counterpart of Goneril), reveals midway through the narrative that her father, Larry Cook, had repeatedly sexually molested her as an adolescent, and that he had done the same to his daughter Rose (Regan's counterpart). The youngest daughter, Caroline, however, had been spared, primarily because Ginny and Rose protected her from their father. Caroline was Larry's favorite, and because Ginny and Rose had never told her about their father's incestuous actions, she viewed her sisters' cold treatment of their father as unjust. Yet, despite her status as the favorite one, her refusal to agree to her father's plans to incorporate the farm in the names of his three daughters sends Larry into a blind rage during which he completely and irrevocably disowns her. It is worth noting that, although the fact of Larry's actual incestuous deed is never in dispute in the novel, to the end of the text it is uncertain whether Larry is consciously aware of what he had done, since his repeated assaults on his daughters always took place when he was in a drunken stupor.

In her insightful study of *A Thousand Acres* and *King Lear*, Marina Leslie makes a number of pertinent observations about the reception of Smiley's novel. First, the centrality of incest is often ignored or denied by reviewers, a centrality that Smiley herself insists on. In one interview about the novel, Smiley speaks of her "hard intellectual labors of linking Shakespeare with incest, Christianity and ecologically destructive agriculture," and in another she states explicitly that the focus of the novel is

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focuses on the incestuous relationship between a dying, politically powerful man and his daughters. In it French develops her precedent innovative readings of Shakespeare found in some of her earlier works notably, *The Women's Room* (1977), *Shakespeare's Division of Experience* (1981), *Her Mother's Daughter* (1987), and *The War Against Women* (1992).

on the patriarchal appropriation of women, of which incest is one of its most dramatic manifestations, and the exploitation of the land. "Women," she says, "just like nature or the land, have been seen as something to use."[112] Leslie also notes that most reviews of Smiley's novel see her attribution of incest to the Lear's counterpart as at best a fanciful modernization of the original story, and at worst as a degradation of the source. Few reviewers explore in detail the parallels between *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*, and virtually none allow Smiley's novel to serve as a commentary on Shakespeare. Leslie shows that this aversion to discussion of incest is longstanding in the West and evident throughout the twentieth century. As many have observed, Leslie notes that psychiatric discourse in general, and psychoanalytic theory in particular, have shown a consistent resistance to admitting that actual incest occurs. Modern estimates of the frequency of incest were routinely stated as infinitesimally small into the 1950s and 1960s, and only in the last few decades have professionals begun to admit how widespread the phenomenon is. Although data about incest are notoriously difficult to obtain and to interpret, and as a result estimates of the frequency of incest vary widely, consensus is emerging that its incidence is at least significant. David Finkelhor, a reputable researcher in the field, estimates that 1,000,000 Americans are victims of father-daughter incest, and 16,000 new cases occur annually.[113] These figures are underestimates, according to many scholars.[114] (That Finkelhor's estimate focuses on father-daughter incest is significant, since father-daughter incest is far and away the most common form of incest reported by social agencies and therapists. Judith Herman and Lisa Hirschman state that 95% of the reports

[112] Cited in Leslie (1998) 33, 38

[113] Cited in Matasakis (2000) 8

[114] See, again, Matasakis and Finkelhor via correspondence.

they have examined involve father-daughter incest. Herman and Hirschman also argue persuasively that father-daughter incest is intimately tied to patriarchal cultures, noting that virtually all abusive fathers are strict disciplinarians, who impose an autocratic rule on their households, and who hold strict hierarchical conceptions of male-female relations.) Despite growing awareness of the seriousness of this problem, resistance to open discussion of incest remains, and it is to such resistance that Leslie attributes the virtual silence of reviewers regarding this topic in Smiley's novel.

As Leslie shows, feminists have long noted the misogynistic nature of *King Lear*, and several critics have sensed latent incestuous overtones in the tragedy. McCabe, for example, traces the inappropriately erotic language with which Lear expresses his affection for Cordelia, and remarks that, when Lear disowns his favorite daughter, "the subsequent outpouring of vicious anti-feminism in madness … is such that one might suppose Lear the victim of sexual insult. His daughters' 'ingratitude' is insistently evoked through the sort of abusive scatological imagery more appropriate to a cuckolded husband."[115] The feminist critics Coppélia Kahn and Lynda Boose argue that incest is a central theme in *King Lear*, yet for both Kahn and Boose, it is the repression, not the commission, of incestuous desire that shapes Shakespeare's play. Boose identifies Act One as a kind of failed marriage ceremony between Lear and Cordelia, and Kahn speaks of "Lear's frustrated incestuous desire for his daughter," arguing that "the socially-ordained, developmentally appropriate surrender of Cordelia as daughter-wife—the renunciation of her as incestuous object—awakens a deeper emotional need in Lear: the

[115] McCabe (2008) 177

need for Cordelia as daughter-mother."[116] Neither Kahn nor Boose, however, entertains the possibility of actual physical abuse in the play, and neither speaks at all about Lear's paternal relationship to Goneril and Regan.

Leslie, however, insists that Smiley's novel offers a penetrating critique of *Lear*, and that her reading of the masterpiece deserves serious consideration. Leslie observes, for example, that "Smiley raises several retrospective questions for the play: How *does* Goneril reflect and play upon her father's desires when she pledges to her father a love 'that makes breath poor, and speech unable' (I. 1. 60)? Why does Regan choose to follow her sister's inexpressibility *topos* by focusing on 'my very *deed* of love' (I. 1. 71)? And why do Lear's accusations invariably sexualize his daughters when they refuse to defer to him, although he was the one who commanded them to perform their love for him?"[117] Clearly, Leslie's sense that Smiley's critique of *Lear* is worth taking seriously is one that I share, and it is in such a spirit that I independently began my analysis.

My stress on nurture does not entail any determinism, of course. Abusive treatment of children need not lead to aberrant behavior in the children when they reach adulthood. However, studies have shown that there is a significantly increased likelihood that abuse will have harmful effects on the victims later in life. A 1995 U.S. Department of Justice article claims that although criminal behavior is not the inevitable outcome,

> [i]n general, people who experience any type of maltreatment during childhood–whether sexual abuse, physical abuse, or neglect—are more likely than people who were not maltreated to be arrested later in life….

[116] Kahn (1986) 19-20

[117] Leslie (1998) 35

> Of all types of childhood maltreatment, physical abuse was the most likely to be associated with arrest for a violent crime later in life. The group next most likely to be arrested for a violent offense were those who had experienced neglect in childhood, a finding of particular interest. Though a more "passive" form of maltreatment, neglect has been associated with an array of developmental problems, and the finding extended that array to include greater risk of later criminal violence….
>
> The link between childhood sexual abuse and negative consequences for the victims later in life has been examined in clinical reports and research studies in the past two decades. Frequently reported consequences include acting-out behaviors, such as running away, truancy, conduct disorder, delinquency, promiscuity and inappropriate sexual behavior.[118]

This list of consequences clearly characterizes a great deal of the behavior of Edmund, Goneril, and Regan.

In *King Lear*, the disclosure of the information that supports the hypothesis of incest and abuse emerges only slowly and in fragments, and it is important to situate this information within the hierarchical, patriarchal world of Lear's court. The characteristics of patriarchal culture have often been discussed, and it might seem unnecessary to note the pervasiveness of sexism in *Lear*, but at the risk of belaboring the obvious, in my review of some of the exchanges in Act One, I will consider not only the evidence supporting the incest hypothesis, but a few specimens of Elizabethan patriarchal values

[118] Taylor (1982) 4

that occur in these lines. As Herman and Hirschman argue, and as *Lear* demonstrates, the links between patriarchy, incest, and child abuse are strong.

King Lear begins with an exchange between earls of the court, Kent and Gloucester. In formal terms, the scene is meant to prepare for the conflict between Lear and Cordelia. Initially, the earls discuss Lear's preference for one of his sons-in-law over the other, omitting entirely any reference to Lear's daughters. As is later ironically revealed, the scene that determines the land's apportionment depends entirely on the women, not their husbands, as Lear pits sister against sister in competition for their father's gift. The play's first line, "I thought the King had more affected the Duke of / Albany than Cornwall" (*K.L.* I. i. 1-2), indicates that something has led Kent to wonder whether Lear might be changing his earlier preference for Albany in favor of Cornwall. Since Albany and Cornwall are the husbands respectively of Goneril and Regan, this conjecture implies further that Lear's relative affections for his daughters may also be changing. That the subject of Lear's wavering favors is mentioned in the opening line suggests that Lear's caprice is a central concern of the play. A clear hierarchy is also implicit in the opening exchange, one whose implications will be demonstrated in the ensuing action: as subordinates to Lear, the earls must worry about the whims of Lear, whereas the earls' desires are of no consequence to the king. Gloucester shares Kent's assessment of the situation and his uncertainty over the situation's eventual resolution: "It did always seem so to us..." (*K.L.* I. i. 3). Gloucester continues to describe the circumstances that have led them to ponder this question: "but now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the dukes he values most" (*K.L.* I. i. 3-5). Gloucester assumes that the apportionment between Albany and Cornwall will be equal, unaware

that it is possible that neither duke may be valued more than the other once a third duke enters the mix: either Burgundy or France, the prospective husband of Cordelia. Gloucester and Kent are men discussing men, but ironically the land ostensibly belongs to Lear's daughters. This point develops into a critically important idea that is borne out in a subsequent scene: "for qualities are so weighed / that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's / moiety" (*K.L.* I. i. 5-7). In other words, "who knows what criteria Lear uses to decide their share of the land; the decision may have nothing to do with either of them." This is precisely the case when Lear determines the division of the kingdom via the public test of his daughters' affections. Eventually, it is Cordelia, Lear's youngest and still unwed daughter, who proves to be the central figure in the apportionment ceremony. Lear's preference for his youngest daughter over her sisters is clearly unfair and inequitable, and is the first sign of Lear's abusive treatment of his children.

In these first crucial lines of the play, there is no mention of women. The audience assumes that Kent and Gloucester have a reasonably accurate understanding of their kingdom's politics, in which land is apportioned to men and therefore, men, in accordance with their property ownership, have power and control of the kingdom. Since this is the case, the subsequent public test of the daughters' affections is especially exploitative, for this demonstration seems to have no purpose other than to gratify their father's ego and perhaps provide entertainment for the male courtiers attending the ceremony. This demand of Lear upon his daughters is particularly unseemly in that he is inviting his daughters to state publicly the extent to which their affections for their husbands are shared with him. Cordelia reinforces this point in her response.

The subject of Gloucester and Kent's conversation quickly turns from Lear's choice to Gloucester's propensity for whoring (a subject blithely discussed in the presence of Edmund). As casually as one would discuss the weather, Gloucester admits that Edmund is his "whoreson"(*K.L.* I. i. 23). He also confesses that at one time Edmund's existence had embarrassed him, but that "I have so often blushed to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed to it" (*K.L.* I. i. 10-1). We might note that Gloucester initially says that Edmund's mother had "a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed" (*K.L.* I. i. 14-5), and then adds that though Edmund "came something saucily into the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair, there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged" (*K.L.* I. i. 21-4). The class or occupational status of Edmund's mother is not certain. She was unmarried, fair and an entertaining partner, but whether she was a wayward aristocrat, a maid coerced by his rank into the sexual act, or an actual prostitute is unclear. It would seem that for Gloucester the category of casual sex partners is broad and inclusive, all such alliances capable of bearing the label "whore." Gloucester's unapologetic admission of his licentiousness and his indifference to Edmund's sensibilities might be seen as the traits of a worldly sophisticate, but they might just as well be taken as signs of a coarse and arrogant individual. Often Gloucester is played as self-deprecating in this scene, but there is strong evidence here and subsequently to support the view that he is proud, vain, and insensitive.

Like the paradoxes of *Bacchae*, those of *King Lear* disclose the play's most salient qualities. The Fool is the personification of the play's contradictory nature. His role is symbolic of the microcosm of the play, in which nothing is as it appears to be and

nothing can be taken for granted. This is the subtext of the opening line of the play, in which Kent questions what he had heretofore taken for granted: "I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall" (*K.L.* I. i. 1-2). The opening lines's revelation of Gloucester's loose morals also indicates that any expectation of decorous behavior by the nobles must be held in suspense, since their attitudes, expressed by Gloucester and silently endorsed by Kent, are base and degraded from the beginning.

(As an aside, we might note that Gloucester's relationship with Edmund instantiates dramatic tropes of abandonment and exile similar to those found in *Oedipus, Medea, Bacchae* and *Hamlet*. Edmund has been sent away "for nine years" (*K.L.* I. i. 32), and upon his reappearance, he participates in his father's death. The Oedipal aspect is further emphasized when Gloucester is blinded in the third act, a scene that serves as a Renaissance *peripeteia*, in that Gloucester is humiliated, and through that humiliation he learns ultimate truths about himself and the State he has helped to create.)

Gloucester's identification of Edmund as primarily his mother's son and Edgar as his own[119] suggests that he only considers women in terms of their sexual functions as toys or incubators. In the absence of any alternative characterization of women in the play, the audience must conclude that women are to be understood exclusively in sexual terms as a commodity for male exploitation. Other references to women compound the implicit sexism of the opening lines. The only time Lear mentions his wife is in the course of castigating Regan, when he says that, given Regan's behavior, her mother must have been unfaithful to him: "if thou shouldst not be glad, / I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb, / Sepulchring an adultress" (*K.L.* II. iv. 129-31). When Lear disowns

[119] Adelman suggests that Gloucester acknowledging Edgar as his son and Edmund as his mother's son thereby confers on Edmund the identity of a woman, not a man, (1978) 125.

Goneril, he arrogantly implies that her value is determined by her relationship to him, "Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee / Yet I have left a daughter" (*K.L.* I. iii. 251-2); that now he will make her fatherless, rendering her worthless. Throughout the play, men speak about women in terms that are disrespectful, derogatory, and dehumanizing. The metaphors usually make reference to sexuality, and often blame women for engaging in sex while the men completely ignore their own part in the sexual act. Such sexist speech is not limited to men. Even the women, having been raised in this environment, chide each other in the same sexist terms.

Shortly after this exchange between the earls, the allocation scene begins. The first line Lear speaks is a directive to Gloucester regarding his youngest daughter's suitors, "Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester" (*K.L.* I. i. 34). Although we later realize his reference to these men implies a relationship to women, the nature of this reference is not immediately apparent. In fact, Lear only mentions his daughters after having spoken of their husbands. In most productions, in the scene introducing the audience to Lear and his daughters, the daughters are positioned nearly as equals, which is misleading. Their roles are accepted as daughters first, then wives, which supersede their impending power as heads of state. The elder two have been married off to the best political choices. One might assume that they have been groomed to be good wives. But this exchange of wealth for women is tantamount to prostitution, a suggestion that is reinforced by the reference to "whoring" in the play's opening lines. Even if Goneril and Regan were not literally sexually abused, at the very least they symbolize the derogation of women in a society among men who institutionally oppress them and undermine their

autonomy through marriage, prostitution, and various forms and varying degrees of sexual violence.

The purported question Lear presents to his daughters concerns the allocation of his land. He claims that the significance of reapportioning the land is to have it properly administered, "to shake all cares and business from our age, conferring them on younger strengths" (*K.L.* I. i. 39-40). The "strengths" clearly pertain to the dukes, and have no relation to the emotions of his daughters. Lear also recognizes that every blessing is a curse when he calls himself "unburdened" by relinquishing his position. As a further complication in the exchange, Lear addresses his daughters' husbands when he speaks of conferring the land upon them as a dowry, but he ceremoniously calls upon his daughters to determine the amount of land each will receive. This process of assigning a convoluted meaning to the ceremony reinforces men's use of women as bartering tools and symbols of male power. The bequeathal of land is a ceremonial affair, in some ways like a wedding cum ritual sacrifice in its placement of the victim-daughters on an altar and the priest-Lear pronouncing the performative words that alter the status of the victims. Lear makes a public display of affection out of an otherwise personal and intimate relationship. The question for the audience is to what extent this is immoral and whether or not the elder daughters' complicity constitutes proper conduct. The ceremony in the opening scene demonstrates Lear's power over Albany and Cornwall through the affections of his daughters. Lear asks Goneril to express her love, and she does:

> Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter;
>
> Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;
>
> Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;

> No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;
> As much as child e'er loved, or father found;
> A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;
> Beyond all manner of so much I love you (*K.L.* I.i.55-61).

Goneril's reference to her love as "dearer than eye-sight, space and liberty" summarizes the punitive actions in the play: Gloucester is blinded, thus losing eye-sight; Lear is exiled, losing space; and Cordelia is imprisoned, losing liberty. Goneril says that her love for her father comes with bated breath and "tongue-tied speech," language which is more appropriate for romantic than filial love. Lear then asks Regan the same question, and she simply reiterates Goneril's sentiment and enlarges upon it:

> Sir, I am made
> Of the self-same metal that my sister is,
> And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
> I find she names my very deed of love;
> Only she comes too short: that I profess
> Myself an enemy to all other joys,
> Which the most precious square of sense possesses;
> And find I am alone felicitate
> In your dear highness' love (*K.L.* I. i. 69-76).

The images in Regan's speech suggest hardness and reification: Regan describes Goneril and herself as made of "metal" (although some editions use the word "mettle"),

hence as mineral rather than human; she speaks of being "prize[d]," at her "worth," reinforcing her status as commodity; her reference to a "deed of love" carries with it the idea of a deed of land in exchange for love, while also suggesting that love is a chore. Lear's test also forces these sisters into a competition. This competitive demonstration performed as entertainment for men seems a non-too-distant version of contemporary popular culture events like beauty contests and "cat fights." This display of the daughters in a public ceremony of competitive avowals of paternal affection is a prurient staging of the hierarchical structure in which women must prove their worth to men. The scene is an ironic recapitulation of the Judgment of Paris, in which three of the most important goddesses of Mt. Olympus vie for the approval of a mortal man.

When, finally, Cordelia is prompted, she abjures: "Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave / My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty / According to my bond; no more nor less" (*K.L.* I. i. 91-3). If one entertains the hypothesis that the elder daughters have been sexually assaulted, either by their father or, due to his neglect, by others in the kingdom, this response may indicate that Cordelia has been spared her sisters' fate; it is certain that she is not yet married. Even if Goneril and Regan have not been molested, they are no longer virgins and that alone separates them from Cordelia. As Cordelia continues, she implies that her sisters' behavior is contemptible:

> Good my lord,
> You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
> Return those duties back as are right fit,
> Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
> Why have my sisters husbands, if they say

> They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
> That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
> Half my love with him, half my care and duty:
> Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
> To love my father all (*K.L.* I. i. 55-61).

That Lear "bred" her emphasizes the fact that Lear's seed sired the zygote that would become Cordelia, but it also suggests that she might be loaned out for stud, or even that Lear might be bedding her himself. When she criticizes her sisters, she makes the unseemly suggestion that the two have the same kind of love for their husbands as for their father. It may be that Cordelia is simply naïve and does not yet know the difference between love of father and love of husband, but it is more likely that she knows quite well what she is indirectly saying. Whatever her intention, the equation of paternal and matrimonial love is made explicit in her speech. When Cordelia is exiled, she bids farewell to her sisters in these telling terms:

> The jewels of our father, with washed eyes
> Cordelia leaves you: I know you what you are,
> And like a sister am most loath to call
> Your faults as they are named. Use well our father:
> To your professed bosoms I commit him
> But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,
> I would prefer him to a better place (*K.L.* I. i. 272-9).

Cordelia is being coy in saying she is "loath to call your faults as they are named." She tells her sisters, "Use well our father," but given the circumstances, his use is limited. After surrendering his kingdom, he is politically impotent, which renders complex the sense of her remark, "to your professed bosoms I commit him." She uses the plural "bosoms" which could indicate the single heart of two people, Goneril and Regan; but the word also may denote physical breasts, a maternal or sexual image inappropriate in characterizing any daughter's relationship to her father. Cordelia hints at Goneril's incestuous relationship, but with an invective tone. She blames her sisters for using their sexuality to win favor with their father. She, like most audiences, sees Goneril as mean, cruel, and calculating. Cordelia responds to her elder sisters as though they were genuinely in control of their sexuality and should be blamed for their actions, when in fact their sexuality is controlled by the men to whom they belong. They are being blamed for lacking virtue and maturity, but it is their father who is immature and licentious. As patriarch, Lear represents leadership and authority, but in the opening scene he behaves like a child.

This is the moment in the play when the audience must pass moral judgment on the events onstage. It is a complicated situation in which the personal and the political are intertwined in the relationships of the ruling family. The audience is challenged to decide whether the king's request of his daughters is appropriate, or if he has blurred the moral standards inherent in his roles as king and as father. The general moral climate of Lear's kingdom is a direct reflection and consequence of his behavior. Goneril replies to her youngest sister, "Let your study / Be to content your lord, who hath received you / At

Fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted, / And well are worth the want that you have wanted" (*K.L.* I. i. 280-3). In this retort, Goneril mentions Cordelia's "study" to "content" her husband, which could be taken as an allusion to Cordelia's imminent sexual relationship with her husband. Then Goneril speaks of "obedience" which may refer to more than just the verbal directive of their father to profess their love. Goneril could be hinting that Cordelia's virtue is intact because she has not yet had to "obey" sexually either their father or her husband. Superficially this line means that Cordelia has what she deserves, exile and no land, because she has not earned it, but also Goneril is saying in effect, "be careful what you wish for or you may get it," returning to the idea that every gift is a curse. The sisters are angry at this point and if "the want you have wanted" is to have a relationship with Lear, Goneril could be telling Cordelia that she deserves to have been abused in the way in which the elder sisters were. Cordelia essentially says the same thing when she wishes her sister prosperity in response: "Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides: / Who cover faults, at last shame them derides. / Well may you prosper!" (*K.L.* I. i. 284-6). Unfortunately for the audience, time does not explicitly unfold the elder sisters' hidden motivations for their criminal behavior, but implications are made throughout the text. The termed "plaited" is related to braiding, implying a twisted, ornamental arrangement of some thing, for instance, the truth. Figuratively, Cordelia could mean that her sisters' words were convoluted to hide their true intentions, but she might also be making an ironic play on specifically feminine uses of the word. Plaiting as braiding is a common feature in women's styles popular in the Elizabethan period. Braided hair would perhaps hide thought or present a formal appearance as opposed to loose hair, which would appear libertine. Braids typically would be both ornamental and

functional in dress; untied, they would reveal nudity and imply sexuality. Hence, her condemnation of their schemes may suggest as well that sexual licentiousness is intertwined with their deceit. Perhaps the "shame" Cordelia predicts for her sisters will be not simply for the cunning that time has unplaited but also for their incestuous behavior.

The land distribution ceremony is not a genteel inheritance ordination; rather, it is an act of patronizing degradation for which the acquiescent daughters eventually have their revenge. The courtiers apparently regard this *quid pro quo* of land for love as logical, but it is clearly extortion. Of course, one daughter, the favorite, refuses to participate, and as a result the conversation goes from land apportionment and the commensurate expression of love to rejection and vociferous condemnation when Cordelia is disinherited. Perhaps not surprisingly, even in this rejection, we find hints of Lear's incestuous desire. Lear says of Cordelia after she disappoints him "I loved her most, and thought to set my rest / On her kind nursery" (*K.L.* I. i. 123-4). Again, he indicates an expectation of emotional fulfillment perhaps beyond the scope of filial devotion. His reference to her "nursery" suggests that he expected her to care for him as a nurse for a child. Such an expectation is a clear inversion of the parent-child relationship and suggestively Oedipal.

In the various conversations involving Cordelia's suitors she is regarded as an object. In negotiating her marriage with Burgundy and France, Lear haggles over Cordelia's worth as though she were livestock: "When she was dear to us, we did hold her so; / But now her price is fall'n" (*K.L.* I. i. 199-200). Burgundy is not interested in the transaction if there is no wealth gained. France, by contrast, truly admires Cordelia and ultimately takes her in marriage despite the loss of her inheritance. In the context of the

play as a whole, this is more than a simple romantic gesture—it is truly extraordinary. France's recognition of a woman for her character must be stunning to the entire kingdom; it certainly stands out as the most humane and respectful action toward a woman in the play.

France's declaration stakes the parameters of his attraction for Cordelia:

> Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;
> Most choice, forsaken; and most loved, despised!
> Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon:
> Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.
> Gods, gods! 'tis strange that from their cold'st neglect
> My love should kindle to inflamed respect.
> Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,
> Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France:
> Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy
> Can buy this unprized precious maid of me.
> Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind:
> Thou losest here, a better where to find. (*K.L.* I. i. 254-65).

According to France, she is fair and virtuous, and under the circumstances, he can save and protect her. France realizes her purity and given that she is no longer wealthy, his declaration of love augments his genuine respect for her. France is in effect taking a

marriage vow of love in this line when he calls upon the gods to witness his emotional response to the fateful episode at what was intended to be a virtual business transaction.

Act One, Scene One's, closing dialogue between Goneril and Regan is vital to understanding the work, since, even if one rejects the incest hypothesis, this exchange demonstrates that their subsequent treatment of their father is not instigated by hatred alone, but based on rational deductions and understandable motives:

> GONERIL. Sister, it is not little I have to say of what most nearly appertains to us both. I think our father will hence to-night.
>
> REGAN. That's most certain, and with you; next month with us.
>
> GONERIL. You see how full of character his age is; the observation we have made of it hath not been little: he always loved our sister most; and with what poor judgment he hat now cast her off appears too grossly.
>
> REGAN. 'Tis the infirmity of his age; yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.
>
> GONERIL. The best and soundest of this time hath been but rash; then, must we look to receive from his age, not alone the imperfections of long-engraffed condition, but, therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them.
>
> REGAN. Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment.

> GONERIL. There is further compliment of leave-taking between France and him. Pray you. Let us hit together: if our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us.
>
> REGAN. We shall further think on't.
>
> GONERIL. We must do something, and i' the heat. (*K. L.* I. i. 291-8)

The elder sisters discuss their father's likely actions. They assume that he expects attention and hospitality first by Goneril and then by Regan. He has behaved violently and they fear him. Goneril is not completely surprised by Lear's behavior: "the observation we have made of it hath not been little." They do not trust him and surmise that if he can be so cruel to his favorite, Cordelia, then his actions toward the elder sisters could be far worse. They plot to thwart him. They make clear in this scene that their father has always had a capricious nature, "the best and soundest of this time hath been but rash" (the same sentiment expressed in the play's opening lines). They surmise that he will become increasingly difficult, a conjecture which should force an audience to reconsider the elder sisters' motivations for what is usually regarded as their sycophantic behavior during the apportionment ceremony. Instead of assuming that they are greedy and deceitful, perhaps their acquiescence to Lear's demand of a public profession of their love is motivated by fear. King Lear is not a gentle, humble man until his world is obliterated and he is no longer feared. His daughters are keenly aware of how dangerous he can be: "such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment." Goneril characteristically takes the lead in her exchange with Regan, inciting fear in her sister and calling her to action: "we must do something and i' the

heat." Regan is married to an equally powerful duke and has as much land and power as her sister. Her agreement to join forces against her father implies that she has good reason to trust her sister and fear her father.

In the final scene of Act One, Goneril takes the first steps in exercising her resolve. Albany suggests that her plans are excessive and that she "may fear too far," but Goneril knows better: "Safer than trust too far: / Let me still take away the harms I fear, / Not fear still to be taken: I know his heart" (*K.L.* I. iv. 327-33). Although Goneril's response strikes Albany as extreme, she presumably has logical reason to anticipate Lear's reaction and to worry. When Goneril meets Lear to tell him that she will enact her power by diminishing his retinue, she offers more than an opportunistic rationale for her action:

> This admiration, sir, is much o' the savor
> Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you
> To understand my purposes aright:
> As you are old and reverend, you should be wise.
> Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;
> Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd and bold,
> That this our court, infected with their manners,
> Shows like a riotous inn: epicurism and lust
> Make it more like a tavern or a brothel
> Than a graced palace. The shame itself doth speak
> For instant remedy: be then desired

> By her, that else will take the thing she begs,
> A little to disquantity your train;
> And the remainder, that shall still depend,
> To be such men as may besort your age,
> And know themselves and you (*K.L.* I. iv. 234-49, emphasis mine).

Far from inventing an excuse for her action, Goneril is accurately characterizing the behavior of Lear and his men, and, I believe, suggesting something of the debauched environment in which she was raised. In such a world, she herself might well have been subjected to drunken advances, and if not, she was doubtless privy to them. Having been raised in a society that dehumanizes and undervalues women, Goneril finally has the authority to make changes, and she does so by decreasing Lear's retinue: "For instant remedy: be then desired / By her, that else will take the thing she begs, / A little to disquantity your train" (*K.L.* I. i. 244-6). One must imagine the courage and resolve it would take for Goneril to enter as she does and interrupt the revelry of men who no doubt have disdain for women. The mood and language of the scene suggest that they are drunk and, therefore, somewhat dangerous. Hence, what is often viewed as a selfish assertion of new-gained power could just as well be her attempt to assert her concept of justice.

When Goneril initially breaks into this rowdy male gathering, Lear feigns ignorance at the cause of her displeasure: "How now, daughter? What makes that frontlet on? You are too much of late i' th' frown" (*K.L.* I. iv. 180-1). His playful teasing is in fact a patronizing indication of his assumed superiority to her. But he soon realizes that, having abdicated his power, the customary hierarchy has been overturned; he is no longer

the authority, she is. He is jarred into seriousness when he realizes that Goneril has more control than he does. His response is explosive, irrational, and immature. He calls upon the goddess Nature to curse her:

> Hear, Nature, hear; dear goddess, hear!
> Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
> To make this creature fruitful!
> Into her womb convey sterility!
> Dry up in her the organs of increase;
> And from her derogate body never spring
> A babe to honour her! If she must teem,
> Create her child of spleen; that it may live,
> And be a thwart disnatured torment to her!
> Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth;
> With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks;
> Turn all her mother's pains and benefits
> To laughter and contempt; that she may feel
> How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child! Away, away! (*K.L.* I. iv. 274-88).

The inequity in this scene is less in Goneril's punitive treatment of her father than in Lear's draconian, practically inhuman, response to a situation he has created. Having given his daughters all the land in the kingdom, he is impotent, but unwilling to abide by

his daughters' decrees. Startlingly, the first thing he asks is that his daughter be sterile. He is willing to end his own family line to gain revenge for her assertion of power. In retaliation for a political act, then, Lear attacks his daughter's reproductive (and civil) rights—a decidedly illogical response since rendering her sterile would also terminate his legacy. Here, Lear continues a pattern of confusing the personal with the political and allows his egoistic emotion to override his strategic intellect. The result is a request for unfair retribution beyond his dominion as a father or former king.

When Albany questions Lear's rash response ("Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?"), Goneril tells her husband, "Never afflict yourself to know the cause; / But let his disposition have that scope / That dotage gives it" (*K.L.* I. iv. 289-92). This response is telling in ways that might not be immediately evident. She does not say outright that her father is a lecherous man, but she uses the word "dotage" which can mean both senility and excessive affection. Hence, Goneril may be obliquely alluding to the sexual secret she never fully reveals. And despite her clear hostility toward Lear, her reaction to Lear's curse is somewhat perplexing. She may well be wounded or angered by her father's curse, but her reaction is stoic. Instead of reacting to Lear's anger, she lets him go without offering him another word.

One wonders whether her response to Lear's curse might be an effect of the love she earlier proferred to her father, a "love that makes breath poor, and speech unable" (*K.L.* I. i. 60). As Herman and Hirschman point out, victims of father-daughter incest hold deeply ambiguous feelings about their violators. Most abusive fathers also mistreat their wives, often beating them, and the wives generally sever emotional ties to their daughters, whom they recognize, if only intuitively, as rivals for their husbands' affection.

This leaves the abused daughter with no one to turn to for love other than her father. It is not surprising, then, that in Herman and Hirschman's interviews with victims of father-daughter incest, "the victims rarely expressed anger toward their fathers, even about the incestuous act itself."[120] In Herman and Hirschman's analysis, father-daughter incest is worse than rape:

> A woman who has been raped can cope with the experience in the same way that she would react to any other intentionally cruel and harmful attack. She is not socially or psychologically dependent upon the rapist. But the daughter who has been molested is dependent on her father for protection and care. Her mother is not an ally. She has no recourse. She does not dare express, or even feel, the depths of her anger at being used. She must comply with her father's demands or risk losing the parental love that she needs. She is not an adult. She cannot walk out of the situation (though she may try to run away). She must endure it, and find in it what compensations she can.[121]

If indeed Lear sexually abused Goneril, her impassive response to Lear's curse may be a sign of the emotional damage inflicted by her father. Given the common inability of incest victims to express anger towards their fathers, the wonder is that Goneril is able to retaliate against Lear's abuse at all.

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[120] Herman and Hirschman (1977) 747

[121] Herman and Hirschman (1977) 735-56

Whatever Lear's faults and the sources of Goneril and Regan's hostility, however, the motivations behind their savage hatred of Gloucester remain to be explained. Edmund's hostility toward his father is understandable, as is his cruel treatment of his brother: his father regards him as an inferior bastard child and grants favor to the legitimate son. As a result, Edmund resents both father and brother and seeks revenge for the slight he has endured all his life. But why do Goneril and Regan unleash such violence on Gloucester? His ostensible crimes hardly merit the torture he endures. Two explanations are possible. The first, admittedly a remote possibility, is that Gloucester himself molested one of the daughters, or both. Gloucester has already expressed his enthusiasm for sexual "sport," and the libidinal excesses of Lear's court would have provided sufficient opportunities for Gloucester to impose his will on the young girls. It is perhaps likely, however, that Gloucester is a surrogate for Lear, upon whom the sisters can visit their revenge without suffering the ambiguous emotions of assaulting their father. Gloucester is, after all, an important member of Lear's court whose attitudes towards women are as sexist as Lear's, and hence the substitution of Gloucester for Lear would follow a coherent pattern of association. Granted, Cornwall willingly and mercilessly performs the actual deed of blinding Gloucester, but clearly Goneril and Regan are the driving forces behind this action. It is Goneril who suggests that they "[p]luck out his eyes" (*K.L.* III. vii. 3), and it is Regan who taunts the old man and plucks his beard. If viewed as revenge for abuse, Regan's gleeful assault on Gloucester becomes an especially violent and distorted form of sexual molestation: the flouted masculine beard mimics feminine pubic hair; the penetration of rape or sodomy takes the form of

eye-gouging; and the helplessness of the incest victim is physically enacted in Gloucester's being bound to his chair.

Entertaining the incest hypothesis ultimately does not diminish the play's tragic nature, but enhances it. Goneril and Regan remain morally reprehensible, but their actions are rendered coherent and understandable. Instead of being stock figures from a morality play, they emerge as psychologically complex individuals. They suffer their own tragedy, victims of parental abuse and the patriarchal order that informs it. Edmund, too, is a victim of patriarchal sexism, though, like Goneril and Regan, he remains someone who brazenly and unapologetically embraces an evil course of action in his pursuit of retribution. Cordelia and Edgar also emerge as victims of patriarchal inequalities, Cordelia because she refuses to submit to her father's morally ambiguous demands, and Edgar because his brother's resentment at Gloucester's mistreatment motivates his vengeance against Gloucester and Edgar, even though Edgar is not responsible for having enjoyed his father's favor as the legitimate heir. One may say broadly, then, that all the children are tragic victims of their fathers' actions and the value system they perpetuate. Lear and Gloucester also become more deeply tragic figures when viewed in the light of the incest hypothesis and the attendant inequities of patriarchal culture. Their tragic flaw is not simply one of inaccurately assessing the worth of their children. Instead, their licentious and sexual improprieties lead to more than just their own downfall, but to the suffering of all around them, including those whom they love. In this regard, they enter the company of many ancient Greek tragic heroes, who are at least partially responsible for their own tragic fate.

In *King Lear*, then, sex and death are central themes that finally bring about an Aristotelian catharsis. With astounding similarity to the plot of Euripides's *Bacchae*, *King Lear* achieves an Aristotelian *peripeteia* in that the fortunes of all involved are overturned except for the men, whose rule over their respective regions of the country, were remembered in the Elizabethan history of England: Gloucester, Albany, and Cornwall. In terms of its ritualistic roots, the children of Lear's kingdom are sacrificed, and through that sacrifice, the illegitimate and irresponsible system of authority fostered by Lear and Gloucester is ended and order is restored. A new hierarchy is created by Lear, who inadvertently acts as priest-hero, inaugurating the transformation of regimes through the ceremonial test of his daughters' love. He, like Gloucester, suffers the consequences of his actions, but survives them long enough to see those consequences, and to recognize, however partially, his own part in his downfall.

CHAPTER 4

PLAYING IN THE PARK:

CHILDREN OF EDWARD BOND'S *SAVED*

Playwright and theorist Edward Bond has created this era's paradigmatic tragedies. Here *Saved* is examined as the quintessential modern tragedy according to the tenets of this thesis. His plays confront violence from a socio-political perspective in which vapid reality and hollow gestures replace ritual, and apathy replaces the gods of ancient Greece. Bond's indisputably classic drama, *Saved*, perpetuates the conventional internal and external archetypal aspects of tragedy and crafts them for contemporary access. While there are many distinctions to be made, modern tragedy differs most radically from other eras in its markedly existentialist position. In modern tragedy, the effects of an apathetic government tear away the mask of religion and brazenly supplant the gods as the authoritative entity. Philosophies developed from post-renaissance through post-modern movements support this rich irony. The gods of the modern world are unnatural, contrived to corrupt and oppress; they do not represent fate and circumstances beyond human control; they are, in fact, an excess of human control. Religion having once been an acknowledgement of forces (or, Law) beyond human control, is usurped by humanity. Tragedy, therefore, having its roots primarily in this core belief of religion, is no longer a question of fate and free will in the modern world; it is instead a question of agency and categorical imperative. The moral imperative in modern

tragedy is again a call for humanity to respect the natural order of things, but in the absence of god, the authority is an illegitimate power.

As described in the "Betrayal of God" chapter of *Deleuze's Wake*, Ronald Bogue summarizes Deleuze's response to Kant's notions of the categorical imperative by saying, "Deleuze adds that the categorical imperative implies a new relationship between Law and the Good, a reversal whereby Law no longer derives from the Good, but the Good issues from the Law as 'a pure form that has no object, either sensible or intelligible. It does not tell us what we must do, but what subjective rule we must obey whatever our action might be.'"[122] The core of modern tragedy is the transformation of ritual into rational thought and artistic interpretation through physical action. The art of tragedy is the power of human reason tempered by passion to question the meaning of existence that was otherwise explained symbolically by witnessing the actions of a priest conducting a ritual sacrifice. The origins of tragedy and its form as developed through western culture follow a line of reasoning that connects morality to compassion and rational thought. Tragedy, therefore, can be defined as the art of philosophy, founded on the notion that morality and rationality are linked. Ironically, it is a Platonic idea; Kant explains it as the categorical imperative. Modern tragedy persists in finding at its center the insistence that Dionysus be worshipped through suffering.

Tragedy teaches that thinking is a spiritual and moral obligation. Within modern tragedy, a hero suffers and lives and demonstrates critical thinking and understanding more so than the other characters, often taking no action or action contrary to his own best interest. Tragedy in the modern age, like the political theatre associated with Brecht,

[122] Bogue (2004) 156

is a call to action. The audience is overtly represented in modern tragedy. Oppressive governmental systems and illegitimate powers are unnatural. The people have agency to become heroes, but instead perpetuate the power structure, allowing themselves to be victims of the State and of each other. Benedict Nighingale chief theater critic of *The London Times* reports, "Hence the intense seriousness with which [Bond] takes his vocation and why he believes theater is not just necessary but vital to human survival. 'If you can't face Hiroshima in the theater,' he said, 'you'll eventually end up in Hiroshima itself.'"[123]

Modern tragedy moves away from the established convention of tragic heroes as elevated characters. As political systems are established in false representation of autonomy, even heroes remain subordinate to institutions of the political system. Ironically, in much of Bond's dramaturgy, political institutions themselves, ostensibly based on the complicity of the people they purport to support, are the gods of ancient times. The system is beyond the control of its people, most of the characters are victims who suffer under it. The tragic hero is a lone character who takes a stand or attempts to behave morally. As Bond writes in the introduction of his collection, *Bond Plays: 2*, "Theatre, when it is doing what it was meant to do, demonstrates order in the chaos, the ideal in the ordinary, history in the present, the rational in the seemingly irrational."[124]

Saved, one of Bond's first works, exemplifies modern tragic composition, more recent plays like *Olly's Prison* (1990), *Coffee* (1994), The Children (2000), *Chair* (2005), and *Window* (2009) while worthy to carry the banner of tragedy, struggle to reach the

[123] Nightingale (2001)

[124] Bond, *Bond Plays: 2 (1978)* 12

intensity of *Saved*. For purposes of this study, the focus is on Bond's epoch-defining work, *Saved*, produced in 1965. Characterization defined by a morality that seeks justice, the use of sex and violence to evoke pity and fear, child endangerment and murder, and ceremonial sacrifice in contrast to compassion make this an example of the persistence of ritual themes.

The internal elements of the form are the focus of this study, but it must be noted that external to the life of the play *Saved* holds an important place in history as a political tool wielded against censorship. In the most critically controversial scene an infant is:

> "tormented, has feces smeared on it and is stoned to death….The Lord Chamberlain, Lord Cobbold, was willing to give Bond a license for the play if he was willing to rewrite the mob scene. Bond refused and was not given a license to perform the play….The play showed at private clubs and influenced a controversial trial that led to the end of theater censorship in England in 1966. The case helped invigorate the English Stage Company, a theater group of the Royal Court Theater in London.[125]

The Aristotelian conjecture that tragic heroes be of a certain stature in order to be effective does not necessitate that they be royalty, but they have something at stake, something to lose that would matter. The characters of *Saved* do not at first seem to have this quality themselves, but as individuals they represent western culture and the object of

[125] Jones, D. (2001)

their loss is their future. That representation comes in the tangible form of a life they create, a baby, which they eventually kill. The baby proves that they are capable of creativity, but their lack of morality renders them incapable of progress. Their outrageous lack of moral compass or profound emotion implies a bleak future for humanity. Bond redeems their society with one young man, Len, who shows compassion and genuine interest in others, and remains diligent all the way through to the end of the play. The message of the play can positively affect those who are in a position to understand the message and respond in a productive way, which provokes the question of audience. As D. R. Jones observes, "[Bond] stresses the need for awareness and action in his plays, this interdependence of idea and act being his most persistent theme. In each of the major plays at least one character comes to see society as irrational, then acts to make it somehow rational."[126]

It may seem ironic that Bond considers himself an optimist. In each of his plays there is a hint at hope for humanity, the possibility for keeping compassion alive or at least demonstrating its operation. In *Saved*, one lone character remains, offering hope to an audience that there is a possibility for humanity to survive and live naturally and with compassion. Len remains onstage at the end of the play. He is the priest, he is the hero, he is the one who gives the audience hope that humanity could make a compassionate comeback. Len is the only character who displays the human quality of inquisitiveness and, therefore, any desire to connect with others, to understand the experience of the people around him. To a limited extent, we see that Harry is capable of compassion once Len opens the door to the viability of this behavior. The glimmers of curiosity for others

[126] Jones, D.R. (1980) 507

shown by the women are only in relation to male desirability, symbolizing their definition of self-worth and satisfaction through sexual acquisition.

Sexuality is more than alluded to, it is more than bawdy. The play opens with Pam and Len about to have sex on the couch when her father wanders through the room, not making much of the situation. Sex is casually offered and discussed as the only form of relief or satisfaction in the lives of the characters. Sex in this situation, however, is not a spiritual act performed for the survival of humanity or the expression of deep emotion. It is not even a particularly conscious act. It is an enterprise to satisfy hormonal desires and offer a fleeting sense of accomplishment, distraction, or power. The baby is a product of the gratuitous sexual liaison between Pam and Fred (presumably), this consequence is seemingly irrelevant to them, and, eventually, the child is stoned to death. There is no reverence, beauty, or sensuality connected to sexuality between Pam and the others. Her mother, ironically named Mary, continually attempts to make herself alluring and thereby feel fulfilled by her desirability. Her husband is inattentive and so she creates an Oedipal tension between herself and Len, bordering simultaneously on erotic and filial love. All of the sexuality of the play evokes pity and fear in the audience almost immediately. There is no incubation period for the feelings evoked in the relationships between characters. They are raw, primal, instantly accessible, and directly linked to the baby. The killing of the baby arises in a crescendo of violence, the placement of which is remarkably awkward in realistic terms, but ritualistically resonant. German professor of English literature Ruth Freifrau von Ledebur observes Bond's facility with violence and its aesthetic elevation, "It has often been remarked that in Bond's plays, violence frequently takes on the form of a ritual. As with the notorious stoning of the baby in

Saved (1965), it may begin in an almost playful manner, gradually build up tension and draw in more participants, then gather momentum until it is finally released in bouts of communal violence."[127]

The baby stoning scene is a surreal recapitulation of the rending scene in Euripides's *Bacchae*. It is a frenzied, nearly ecstatic moment not in worship of a god, but in the characters' frustrated impotence, not as sexual beings, but as human beings who have been disenfranchised by and from their own society. The baby is the ultimate result of the sexual tension that perpetuates their existence, the one discernable contemplation of the characters, and yet killing it seems fully justifiable to them, and is treated as hardly even eventful. They enact a ritual sacrifice. The play is a modern blood sacrifice, a consideration of the life cycle in the modern world. Nightingale shares a practical anecdote that explains Bond's perspective and philosophy about the paradoxically impotent gesture of killing the baby in *Saved*:

> When Mr. Bond was directing a recent French revival of the play [*Saved*], he made the actors scream and scream, and repeatedly asked them what they were angry at. Again and again they replied, "The baby," who cries unceasingly through one scene. But eventually one of them gave what the author regarded as the right answer: themselves. "And that is the one anger that can never be satisfied," he said. "The child is helpless, it's dirty, it cannot communicate. It's the exact image of themselves." Killing it changes nothing.

[127] Freifrau von Ledebur (1996) 54

> But maybe drama can change something. That has been Mr. Bond's belief since he was taken, as a lost, unhappy schoolboy of 14, to see Donald Wolfit as Macbeth. "Everyone rubbishes those old actors but, by God, they knew some extraordinarily powerful things," he said. "There was William Shakespeare and all this Elizabethan language, and it was as if he was talking to me about my life. For the very first time someone was telling me what it meant to be Bond." [128]

Bond, too, has a distinct way of connecting to audiences. His language has a distinctly rough, working class edge, which acts as a conduit for believable and effective violent rhythms. While often staged in expressionist-influenced environments, Bond's plots are all too realistic for some audiences. *Saved*, for example, forces audiences to confront a society of people with an increasing capacity for violence and a diminished capacity for compassion. The extreme denial they face as part of a disenfranchised citizenry from a neglectful and oppressive society unravels into debauchery and decadence to the point of unconscionable murder of an infant. Freifrau von Ledebur observes:

> In *Saved*, only boys participate in the stoning of the baby. Yet Pam, the baby's mother, is not free from blame as she left the child with the gang, and after its death her behaviour is highly ambivalent. The Cockney girl

[128] Nightingale (2001)

> Pam is in no way a motherly type, and Bond makes it abundantly clear that neither Pam nor Fred (the child's father and leader of the gang) but society is to take blame for the child's death.[129]

Freifrau von Ledebur's comment overlooks the fact that Pam and Fred are both part of society. If society is at fault, Pam and Fred, as individuals are at least equally culpable, more so precisely because they are the child's parents. The commentary that claims that "Pam is in no way a motherly type" is practically irrelevant. Pam is a mother, therefore her behavior is that of a mother. The portrayal of this woman as a representative of her society's motherhood is at issue. Mary may be her mother and they have no relationship to each other; only their behaviors are germane. Pam is an example of parenting in her contemporary society. If, then, the relationship of mother to child is analogous to the relationship between governing structures and the people they govern, there is another layer of social commentary that results in political allegory. The youth's behavior, modeled after the ignorance of the adults in their lives, has them in dire straits, but the part of the story that is relevant to the plot comes from the government and subsidiary systems that engender and promote the kind of behavior these young people exhibit. Theirs is a world mereologically lacking compassion. The governing authority that provides poor educational systems and worse working opportunities guide the fates of the *Saved* characters. Their ignorance, cynicism, and scorn prevent them from ever seeing their own potential through responsible action or their obligation to think, if not do.

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[129] Freifrau von Ledebur (1996) 54

In an interview with *Guardian* critic Michael Billington Bond explains that the fate of the characters in *Saved* is by political design:

> He is a socialist and, he somewhat surprisingly adds, a utopian. His view, roughly summed up, is that people are born with a natural capacity for love and creativity but as they grow up they often become distorted by cultural circumstances. The child's search for justice in an unjust world becomes an amorphous need for revenge. The hooligans in "Saved," then, are damaged, thwarted individuals who don't fully know what they are doing.[130]

This chapter will explicate significant portions of *Saved* by Edward Bond and compare its classification as a tragedy to some of the Ancient Greek canon in our continued exploration of the evolution of tragedy. The obvious stylistic differences necessitated by chronology still render Bond's work as very closely related to the Greeks in significant sociological ways. In its stylistic progression, Shakespeare's canon of tragedy, as compared to the Greeks, is a renegade evolution. Bond's plays are more like Greek tragedy than are those of Shakespeare with regard to the roles of the priest/hero, the victim/sacrifice, delinquent and witness/audience. This chapter focuses on *Saved* arguing that it defines the period and genre known as Millennial tragedy, and not only fulfills some of the same foundational requirements of Ancient tragedy, but also evolves

[130] Billington (2008)

relevantly to its contemporaneity. Subject, character, theme, and audience experience are the conceits set forth by Aristotle's *Poetics* which inspired the categories of evidentiary submission set forth in this study. Under the previously described premise, subjects and themes involving sex, death, and violence (especially against children) are at the core of the definition of tragedy.

As explored in an earlier chapter, Greek tragedy presents a martyr who is sacrificed and dies, which is sometimes supposed as a requisite of tragedy as compared to comedy, but in actuality, a tragic hero, however, more often survives. Oedipus, Medea, and King Lear witness death, but continue their lives. At most, they are displaced, having learned their lessons and fallen from their initial elevated status, but they continue to live. Survival as a central subject for consideration can sometimes apply to Bond's characters but, more often, survival is the subject his audiences are intentionally challenged to consider for themselves in terms of the moral questions posed within or by the play. Attendance and participation in Bond's tragedies is a modern secular temple where the stage is the altar, audiences witness sacrifice, and are forced to consider their own morality in terms of their perception of and response to what they have witnessed. Shakespearean tragedy differs in its tendency to kill heroes. Tragedy tells the story of the metonymic relationship between a tragic hero and his or her world. That world includes, but is not limited to, the time and place in which the story is set. In the preface to his 1975 play, *Lear*, Bond is often quoted for claiming:

> I write about violence as naturally as Jane Austen wrote about manners. Violence shapes and obsesses our society, and if we do not stop being

> violent we have no future. People who do not want writers to write about violence want to stop them writing about us and our time. It would be immoral not to write about violence" (*Lear* iii).

Conflict is the heart of dramatic structure and violence inherently presents conflict because there is a juxtaposition of action and inaction, a question of power dynamics, and a disruption to the status quo. Violence has been the subject of dramatic works since their inception. Tragedy, as a form, particularly depends on violence and is defined by it. This may be one of the reasons that tragedy does not consistently maintain its popularity. This study is not intended to be a sociological investigation into tragedy as a popular form, but we cannot logically ignore that the question of tragedy's inconsistent popularity is a relevant anomaly. The popularity of tragedy reflects the socio-political nature of a culture.

The ideas driving a play transcend the time and place in which it is set. Ideas also transcend characterization and this is proven by way of shared themes among divergent works. The link of drama is that between humans as characters and humans as audience through the exploration of ideas. *Saved* exemplifies Bond's approach to tragedy with homage and attention given to children and the effects of society upon them. It offers an imaginative examination of the role of children in their worlds. In keeping with the metaphorical world of tragedy, children represent humanity in that they are innocent, vulnerable and weak compared to the authoritative forces in the world. In Greek tragedy, the gods (or, fate) are the authority and humanity suffers but a cosmic justice is served. Shakespeare's tragedies hold those in authority accountable and moralistically punishes

them for societal degradation. Modern tragedy, however, operates from an existential perspective and blames humanity for its own disintegration as a cautionary tale for the audience. Existential accountability is the central message of modern tragedy. The settings in which each child dies in *Saved* happens to be in or near the park. One is left with the impression that an otherwise playful, natural, pleasant environment is perverted into a crime scene. For the children who die in *Saved*, the park is unduly dangerous and ultimately fatal because of the violent and unnatural circumstances that are thrust upon them through no fault of their own. One child is the victim of a bomb, another is run into one vehicle by another, and the third is beaten and stoned to death by rowdy teenagers. The metaphor here is that humanity, like the children, is at the mercy of violent, dispassionate, inured people.

Most essays and articles about Edward Bond contain at least a brief reference to his 1965[131] ground-breaking, censor-busting, period-defining play, *Saved*. The critical response to *Saved* as a notorious work focuses on the climactic scene in which a baby is stoned to death. Critics, as do most audiences, overlook the ubiquity of the morbid and unsafe environment the entire world of the play creates for children generally, and the many examples of it presented throughout the work. The baby is only present in a few scenes, but the ghosts of this baby and other children linger and haunt the play as characters from start to finish. By the presentation of an infant as a character, and by reference to youth, whether one's own or that of another, one cannot help but sense the ghost of one's own youth lingering within him or herself. At the onset of *Saved,* Bond presents a subtle, metaphorical demonstration of neglect and sacrifice of an adult child,

[131] Bond began writing *Saved* in 1964, it was first performed and published in England in 1965 and finally published in the United States in 1966.

but the subsequent scenes reiterate the trope of child endangerment, neglect, and abuse, either in attitude and conversation or by blatant demonstration. No child is safe in the world of *Saved*; parents, society, and government are all criminal elements guilty of murder and violence against children. This is a perennial theme of Bond's work that can also be seen in *Lear*, *The Children*, *Olly's Prison, Chair*, and other plays.

Bond autobiographically describes the way in which the unstable war environment in which he was raised shaped his view of the world:

> 'One of the things that makes me a writer is that, from the age of three, I was constantly bombed,' Bond said in a question-and-answer session afterwards. 'People would fly overhead and try and kill me. A bomb is coming down and you say, "it must hit me". Ten minutes later it is still coming down and you say, "it must hit me". Ten years later it is still coming down and you say, "it must hit me". Television just can't tell you what that's like. And so you write out of the noise -- and the silence within that noise.'[132]

Although he is often criticized as a man of difficult temperament who writes about violence and uncompromising bleakness, in actuality the life work of Edward Bond has been devoted in some fashion to children. When he is not writing plays that expose the cruel realities and suffering of children, he is personally working in underprivileged areas developing theatre workshops and productions with young students. The children in *Saved* are at the mercy of a hostile, often violent environment. Bond identifies with these

[132] Todd (2010)

innocent victims and expresses in his work that which they are unable to convey. He gives them a voice metaphorically through his work and literally by working with them to develop their ability to express themselves.

In contrast to damaged and immoral characters of his plays another character often stands as a solitary beacon of hope for humanity, demonstrating positive qualities such as awareness of others, compassion, and morality. This character is a very distinct kind of modern tragic hero who is in some ways a modified version of the Sophoclean prototype, Oedipus. In *Saved*, that character is Len. While it may be malformed or incomplete, Len's sense of responsibility and morality is consistently demonstrated throughout the ominous thirteen scenes of the play. He emerges as the last viable link the other characters have to a sense of compassion and reasonable morality.

Scene One of *Saved* introduces the relationships and personalities of Len, Pam and Harry. The mood is comparatively light, albeit vaguely unsettling, and the conflicts presented are relatively parochial. The play opens with a young man (Len) and a young woman (Pam), who hardly know each other, about to engage in sexual activity on a sofa when an old man (Harry) nonchalantly walks through the living room.[133]

> LEN. This ain' the bedroom.
>
> PAM. Bed ain' made.
>
> LEN. 'Oo's bothered?
>
> PAM. It's awful. 'Ere's nice.

[133] Please note that the play is accurately quoted as written and that the language of the play is distinctly stylized to reflect the working class nature of the characters. What might appear to be typographical errors are intentional signifiers.

LEN. Suit yourself. Yer don't mind if I take me shoes off? [*He kicks them off.*] No one 'ome?

PAM. No.

LEN. Live on yer tod?

PAM. No.

LEN. O. [*Pause. He sits back on the couch*.] Yer all right? Come over 'ere.

PAM. In a minit.

LEN. Wass yer name?

PAM. Yer ain' arf nosey.

LEN. Somethin' up?

PAM. Can't I blow me nose? [*She puts her hanky back in her bag and puts it on the table.*] Better. [*She sits on the couch.*]

LEN. Wass yer name?

PAM. Wass yourn?

LEN. Len.

PAM. Pam. (*Sav.* 11)

The scene presents unsettling juxtapositions of intimacy and ignorance with Len asking for permission to remove his shoes and Pam blowing her nose in anticipation of sex, but neither of them knowing the other one's name. The relationships established in this initial scene combined with our proposed thesis suggests shared elements of a ritual sexual sacrifice with the small, uncomfortable couch in the South London flat as an altar and Pam as the implied victim. As their sexual activity progresses, Pam is a consenting

participant but is physically uncomfortable on the couch which allows the male characters in the scene to respond in their respective capacities for compassion:

> LEN. ….Lucky.
>
> PAM. What?
>
> LEN. Bumpin' in t'you.
>
> PAM. Yeh.
>
> LEN. Yer don't mind me?
>
> PAM. No.
>
> LEN. Sure?
>
> PAM. Yer wan'a get on with it.
>
> LEN. Give us a shout if I do somethin' yer don't reckon.
>
> PAM. Bligh! Yer ain' better 'ave.
>
> LEN. I could go for you. Know that? [*pause*.] This is the life.
>
> PAM. Ow!
>
> LEN. Sh! Keep quiet now.
>
> PAM. Oi!
>
> LEN. Sh!
>
> PAM. Yer told me t'shout!
>
> *The door opens.* HARRY *comes in. He goes straight out again.* (*Sav*. 12).

The timing of Harry's seemingly arbitrary entrance is not entirely random. Harry walking through the scene and exiting without comment conveys both nonverbal concern and an implied consent for the somewhat uncivilized engagement that is about to transpire. In the context of their circumstances, Harry's seemingly apathetic silence could be interpreted as a condonation, offering a young woman to her suitor, as King Lear does in offering his daughter, Cordelia, to her suitors. In a broader sense, given the unseemliness of the scene defined by a lack of equity between the parties, Harry represents man's acceptance of degradation in society. This father-figure's neglect of common decorum and acceptance of immoral behavior is a form of self-imposed impotence and denial that builds into an important thematic trope throughout the play. As we learn in the succeeding scene, Len becomes a practical source of some wealth to the family. In the literal sense, he provides them with income as a tenant in their home; metaphorically, he brings the sort of morality that they blatantly lack. An alternative reading might argue for Len as victim as we suspect in this scene, and confirm during the progression of the piece that he is the most innocent and compassionate character with the highest moral standards, but for purposes of this study, he is the quintessential modern tragic hero. Critic Bruce Weber of the *New York Times* concludes, "And in the end we are meant to feel the tiniest twinge of hope at the endurance of those characters who have not burst their seams into violence. They are, in the play's sliver of optimism, courageous in their way, and redeemable."[134]

Bond, himself, refers to Len as the symbol of hope and optimism at the end of the play. At the climax of the play, when Pam's baby is brutally killed, he or she (gender is unknown) is undoubtedly a victim of neglect, abuse, and violence, and may accurately be

[134] Weber (2001)

deemed sacrificial. This tragic action alone does not qualify the work as a tragedy; it is horrific but not quite epic. In the introduction to *Saved*, in fact, Bond makes explicit his purpose for showing something as extreme as the stoning death of one baby; that it is meant to serve as a comparison to (and perhaps a metaphor for) condoned institutionalized atrocities: "Clearly the stoning to death of a baby in a London park is a typical English understatement. Compared to the 'strategic' bombing of German towns it is a negligible atrocity, compared to the cultural and emotional deprivation of most of our children its consequences are insignificant" (*Sav*. 6).

The masculine Oedipal aspects of the play are between Harry and Len, as mentioned in the introduction by Bond, but also between Fred and the baby, whether or not one believes that the child is his.

In this modern play, all of the characters are victims of inhumane environments and situations. The play implicates many forms of irresponsible authority from personal relationships (with one's self as well as others) to societal systems and institutions which include deficient educational, social, and judicial structures as the true villains. These considerations thus move the work from purely personal, private considerations to public, political concerns and elevating the status of the genre from realism or naturalism to modern tragedy.

Len is appreciative and compliments Pam in a relatively coarse way, but he is not abusive. Within the scope of their social conventions Len is comparatively cultured, considerate and perceptive. He says things like "Yer got a fair ol' arse" (*Sav*. 12). He considers himself "lucky" to be about to engage with her sexually (*Sav*. 12). He is considerate of her feelings "Give us a shout if I do somethin' yer don't reckon" (*Sav*. 12).

Len is also sensitive to Harry's presence. "Reckon 'e saw?...Will 'e be long?...'Ear that?...I 'eard something….Better 'ang on" (*Sav*. 13). Len has the capacity for modesty and decorum whereas Pam is content to ignore her father's presence.

Harry, Pam's father, is an ineffectual, downtrodden man whose behavior in general, but especially toward his daughter, can be described as apathetic and neglectful. He is emotionally and economically impotent which renders him delinquent in his parental obligations to the point of being abusive. As a member of a war-torn society, oppressed by poverty and lack of opportunity, Harry cannot even afford to have a sense of pride. In the first scene, he enters and exits without saying anything; then he pokes his head in when Len engages in a playful quid pro quo.

> LEN. Less give 'im a thrill. [*He jumps noisily on the couch.*] Cor-blimey!
>
> PAM. You're terrible! [*He takes some sweets from her bag*.] They're my sweets.
>
> LEN. Less 'ave a choose. [*Loudly.*] 'Ow's that for size?
>
> PAM. What yer shoutin'?
>
> LEN. [*puts a sweet in her mouth*]. Go easy! Yer wanna make it last! [*She laughs. He bites a sweet in half and looks at it.*] Oo, yer got a lovely little soft centre. [*Aside to* PAM.] First time I seen choclit round it! [*He jumps on the sofa*.]
>
> PAM. [*shrill*]. Yer awful!
>
> LEN. That still 'ard?
>
> PAM. [*laughs*]. Leave off!

> LEN. Come on, there's plenty more where that come from. [*He puts a sweet in her mouth.*]
>
> PAM. [*sputters*]. Can't take no more!
>
> LEN. Yeh-open it. Yer can do a bit more!
>
> PAM. Ow!
>
> LEN. Oorr lovely! [*He tickles her. She chokes*.] This'll put 'airs on yer chest! [*They try to laugh quietly. The door opens. Harry puts his head in. He goes out. He shuts the door. Len calls*.] 'Ave a toffee!
>
> PAM. Oo-oo 'ave a toffee! (*Sav*. 15).

Len establishes his dominant position in the household with this scene. He tests the boundaries of decorum and stakes his claim for Pam. Len's posturing, however, is done playfully, with a theatrical *quid pro quo* of suggestive dialogue that is meant to mislead Harry into thinking they are having sex, when actually Len and Pam are eating candy.

Scene Two begins after some development of Len and Pam's relationship and moves from an interior to an exterior setting, from a small couch to a small boat, both of which create an isolated and focused locale evoking images of an altar, where rites, such as a sacrifice would transpire, or a couple would stand in a wedding ceremony. It also evokes the prototypical man and woman, like Adam and Eve of the *Old Testament*. The seemingly romantic setting on a lake is also quite desolate. "*Park.* Pam *and* LEN *in a rowing boat. Otherwise stage bare"* (*Sav*. 16). They discuss their impending union, which includes living together in their own place and implies that they will be married.

Bond carries over the confectionery conceit from Scene One, a vehicle that conveys Len's persistent expression of genuine concern for Pam's comfort. Len remains sympathetic while Pam's behavior teeters between playfully immature and apathetic, but she occasionally demonstrates brief instinctual moments of caring. She promises to knit Len a sweater if he buys the wool; she attends to a pimple on his neck, which, as an intimate if somewhat crude act, is nevertheless a demonstration of genuine intimacy. Pam and Len are clumsy with each other's emotions, exposing each other's insecurities but they are not malicious. This scene demonstrates that Pam's attitude is highly suggestible and sensitive to those to whom she is exposed.

Their conversation exposes vague references to the difficulties experienced in the lives of Pam's parents. When they are late in meeting Len and Pam, Len begins with a judgment of their irresponsible behavior meant to offer sympathy to Pam. "….They must a' forgot us. We bin 'ere 'ours….Some mothers! [*Pause*]. Livin' like that must 'a got yer down" (*Sav.* 20). The conversation reveals that Pam's parents had had a son who died "in war." Although it is never made explicit in the play, we can deduce from interviews with Bond that this is based on his autobiographical experience and the event would have been akin to the Blitz of World War II.

Saved was first performed in 1965, and the conditions reinforce the contemporary action of the piece. When we first learn that their elder child was killed "in war" by "a bomb in a park" it is easy for us to imagine that the boy was a soldier, but if we calculate the ages of the characters, it is more likely that their son was only a child, an innocent victim and a casualty of war. Although it is a very subtle allusion, the war, and by association, an impotent government, acts here as the absent character, a character whose

importance is paradoxically amplified by truancy. In this scene, Pam's parents are judged as neglectful, but they serve as metonymic metaphors for their government and society. This pattern of subtle allusion linking immediate personal action or character to governmental or societal circumstances is repeated throughout the play.

Later, the scene introduces another young man, Fred, employed at the lake renting boats. The pattern of a couple interrupted by a third party is repeated and echoes not only Scene One but the story of Adam and Eve[135] in which the potential paradisiacal experience of the primary couple is interrupted by a sinister, immoral character. Fred is coarse and inappropriately flirtatious with Pam, which Len handles with minimal offense.

> LEN *starts to pull in*. FRED *moves towards them as the boat comes in*.
>
> FRED. Lovely. 'Elp 'im, darlin'. Thass lovely. She 'andles that like a duchess 'andles a navvy's pick.
>
> LEN. All right?
>
> FRED. Lovely.
>
> LEN. Steady.
>
> FRED. 'Old tight darlin'. [*He lifts her out.]* Yer wanna watch Captain Blood there. Very nice.
>
> LEN. Okay?
>
> PAM. Ta.
>
> FRED. Very 'ow's yer father.
>
> LEN. [*stepping out*]. Muddy.
>
> PAM. [*to* LEN.] I enjoyed that.

[135] See *Gen*esis 1:26-3:24

FRED. Same ‘ere.

LEN. We’ll do it again.

FRED. Any time.

PAM. [*to* LEN.] Got everythin’?

FRED. [*to* PAM]. You ‘ave.

LEN. [*clowning*]. Watch it!

FRED. ‘Oo’s bin ‘aving a bash on me duckboards?

PAM. [*to* LEN]. Less ‘ave me bag.

FRED. Bashin’s extra.

PAM. Yer wanna get yerself a job.

FRED. I got one.

PAM. ‘Irin’ out boats!

FRED. I’d rather ‘ire you out, darlin’.

LEN. [*joking*]. Watch it!

PAM. [*to* LEN]. Ready?

LEN. Yeh.

Len’s jovial response to Fred’s lascivious comments is yet another iteration of the mood of moral impotence that runs throughout the play. Fred’s behavior is disrespectful of Len, Pam, their relationship, and social codes of conduct. Len’s behavior, on the other hand, is non-confrontational, uncommunicative, and intentionally ignorant which mirrors Pam’s behavior toward her parents. Both are examples of denial and avoidance, typical delinquent behavior in tragedy. When Len asks Pam when her parents became

irresponsible or what she knows about the relationship between her mother and father, she expresses denial and apathy.

> LEN. 'Ow's it start?
>
> PAM. Never arst.
>
> LEN. No one said?
>
> PAM. Never listen. It's their life.
>
> LEN. Whass she say about 'im?
>
> PAM. Nothin'.
>
> LEN. But-
>
> PAM. She never mentions 'im an' 'e never mentions 'er. I don wanna talk about it.
>
> LEN. They never mention each other?
>
> PAM. I never 'eard 'em.
>
> LEN. Not once?
>
> PAM. *No*!" (*Sav*. 20-1).

Len expresses concern for Pam's emotional well-being and her reaction offers insight into denial as a coping mechanism:

> LEN. ….I wonder it never sent yer off yer nut.
>
> PAM. Yer don't notice.

> LEN It won't be long now. Why don't yer blow up an' knock their 'eads t'gether?
>
> PAM. [shrugs]. I 'ope I ne'er see 'em again. Thass all" (Sav., 21).

The reason for Pam's parents' failure to meet them in the park that day is not made explicit, but their truancy is indicative of their feelings of depression, isolation, denial, and further demonstrates their delinquency.

The park setting carries over into Scene Three where the raunchy young men of the play are introduced. Pete and his friends discuss the funeral he is dressed for. He wears a suit jacket he has outgrown with a tie and shoes that are inappropriate for the event. He is reluctant to attend the funeral but he explains that not only does his mother expect it of him, he was the cause of the death. He explains how he caused the death of a young boy by intentionally hitting him with his car, propelling into oncoming traffic. "PETE. What a carry-on! 'E come runnin' round be'ind the bus. Only a nipper. Like a flash I thought right, yer nasty bastard. Only ten or twelve. I jumps right down on me revver an' bang I got 'im on me off-side an' 'e shoots right out under this lorry comin' straight on" (*Sav.* 23-4). Pete is unremorseful and his friends glibly joke about the incident. Mike sarcastically calls the literally bloody scene of the accident "The Fall a the Roman Empire" (*Sav*. 24) which describes with full metonymy the world in which they live. Pete and his friends shift the blame to the truck driver and discuss the institutional responses that encourage them to deny their culpability. Pete is not held accountable, and is in fact, encouraged to believe in his own innocence:

MIKE. Accidents is legal.

COLIN. Can't touch yer.

PETE. This coroner-twit says 'e's sorry for troublin' me.

MIKE. The law thanks 'im for 'is 'elp.

PETE. They paid me for comin'.

MIKE. An' the nip's mother reckons 'e ain' got a blame 'isself" (*Sav*. 24).

Pete has admitted that he intentionally caused this accident, but the legal system is delinquent and refuses to pursue the truth. The coroner, the law, and the child's mother assume there is no fault and take minimal action in response to the event. The insurance company will go so far as to repair the damage to Pete's car. On one hand, it is perhaps easier for compassionate people to believe in Pete's innocence. On the other hand, it is perhaps easier to avoid confrontation by accepting the fatal circumstances without incurring additional costs in the pursuit of justice:

COLIN. Bad for the body work.

MIKE. Can't yer claim insurance?

PETE. No.

MIKE. Choked!

COLIN. Ruined 'is paint work.

BARRY. 'E's 'avin' yer on!

MIKE. Yer creep.

COLIN. Yer big creep.

PETE. Let ‘im alone. ‘E don’t know no better” (*Sav*. 24).

The emotional response of the mother in this situation is the psychological equivalent of the sociological response. By remaining ignorant of the facts pertaining to this nefarious situation, all authority abdicates its responsibility to take just action, which allows guilty parties to go undisciplined, thus redefining the appropriate emotional response to guilt.

Throughout Scene Three, the young men cover a variety of vulgar subjects with lurid and callous subjective responses. They brag about committing acts of violence. Barry claims to have killed and mutilated enemies during war “in the jungle.”[136] His friends do not believe him, and underplay the potential importance of his claim with disrespect and disregard for his experience. With sublimation as a possible justification, they flippantly change the subject to sex. Pete leads his friends and asserts himself as the leader of the group in a number of ways. He maintains himself as the center of attention, appearing dominant because he is not teased during the scene. Pete controls the direction of their conversation, keeping the peace among his friends and protecting two of them separately. When Mike is confused about whether or not Pete can have his car fixed with insurance money, Barry and Colin tease him and Pete stops them, “PETE. Let ‘im alone. ‘E don’t know no better” (*Sav*. 24). Again, when Barry discusses his experiences at war and the others tease him Pete takes control, “PETE. Chuck it, eh?” (*Sav*. 25). Colin becomes the subject of light-hearted ridicule until Len’s entrance interrupts the scene. Pete is never the subject of derision in this scene and in fact provides protection for

[136] This may be a reference to the Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation of 1962-1966.

Mike's ignorance and Barry's fear. He maintains his authoritative position by protecting the weaknesses of others and by allowing them to remain unaccountable for their shortcomings. The mood carries over into the end of the scene when Mary (Pam's mother) passes through and Len helps her carry groceries home. The pack assumes that Mary and Len are involved sexually which the audience would not naturally expect given the tone of Len's attitude toward Mary in Scene Two with Pam. As unlikely as it may have seemed at first, the accusation instigates the thought and Scene Four paints a different picture still, which suggests that Len and Mary have at least formed a bond.

Scene Four introduces a new character and perpetuates the theme of child abuse and neglect. Offstage throughout the scene an infant cries and sobs to the point of caterwauling at times. While the characters onstage refer to the noise, complain about it, and use it to criticize each other, no one takes productive action in attending to the needs of the child. Len repeatedly states that he cares about the welfare of the infant, yet he passively accepts the pleas of an apparently distressed child. Mary ignores her husband, neglects her grandchild, and criticizes her daughter, but she flirtatiously dotes. Mary chides Pam for wearing only a slip and changing her clothes in front of everyone, and criticizes her daughter's lack of maternal impulse but is equally culpable for the same offenses. Portraying the mother as critical of her own faults in her daughter demonstrates the downwardly spiraling nature of the family's integrity. Pam remains apathetic to her child except to note the commotion caused by the situation and the inconvenience of the noise while she's entertaining Fred in her bedroom. The only time it appears logical that Pam would have had contact with her child is when she moves the infant out of her room and into her parents' room: "PAM. Can I put the kid in your room?" (*Sav*. 33). The stage

directions imply that it is an unpleasant experience for the child, "PAM *and* FRED *go out….The baby's crying suddenly gets louder…*" (*Sav*. 34). Although the action takes place offstage, the increased volume implies that the child is disturbed or uncomfortable.

The social dynamics among these characters represent an extreme level of selfishness and insecurity. Having been rejected by Pam at this point, Len is jealous of her new relationship with Fred, whom she brings to the house they share to spend the night. Len verbally expresses concern for the child, but his inaction suggests that it is only an excuse to stay in his current living situation so that he can keep an eye on Pam.

> LEN. ….Wish t'God I could take that kid out a this.
>
> HARRY [*drinks*]. Better.
>
> LEN. No life growin' up 'ere.
>
> HARRY [*wipes his mouth on the back of his hand*]. Ah.
>
> LEN. Wish t'God I 'ad some place.
>
> HARRY. Yer wan'a keep yer door shut.
>
> LEN. What?
>
> HARRY. T'night.
>
> LEN. Me door?
>
> HARRY. Yer always keep yer door open when 'e's sleepin' with 'er.
>
> LEN. I listen out for the kid. They ain' bothered" (*Sav.* 34).

Len's character is such that one can believe his compassion for the child is genuine but Harry concludes that Len's concern for Pam is the stronger motivation for eavesdropping.

The baby is onstage in Scene Five and Len is the only one to interact with the child. Pam has relocated to Len's bedroom to recuperate from a psychosomatic response to Fred's rejection. Len continues to demonstrate concern for Pam, tending to her while she is bedridden and introducing the baby in an attempt to solve their respective plights of loneliness and rejection, but Pam is uninterested in her own child. Although she is dismissive of Len's attention (except for the information he has regarding Fred) she is somewhat jealous of Len's interaction with the baby. Throughout the scene, dehumanization of the child is reinforced by consistent avoidance of gender identification; they use only the word "it" to describe the infant. Only Len picks up the baby and lays the child on the bed. Len is the only character to evince compassion, putting his own needs behind those of others. He cares for Pam and acts as messenger and matchmaker between her and Fred. Pam is increasingly heartless and irresponsible. In Scene Six, Len's compassionate acts intensify while Pam's behavior increasingly degenerates. Len meets with Fred to convince him to see Pam again. It's later in the evening, an inappropriate time for a child to be out for a walk in a pram, but Pam uses the baby as an excuse to interrupt Fred, Len and Mike. In trying to lure Fred to visit her, she explains that the child will sleep through the night because she has given the infant aspirin.

> PAM. Yer ain' seen it in a long time, 'ave yer? [*She turns the pram round*.]
>
> It's puttin' on weight.
>
> FRED. Eh?
>
> PAM. It don't cry like it used to. Not all the time.

MIKE. Past carin'.

PAM Doo-dee-doo-dee. Say Da-daa.

FRED. Yeh, lovely. [*He looks away*.]

LEN [*looking at the baby*]. Blind.

PAM [*to* LEN]. Like a top.

FRED. What yer give it?

PAM. Aspirins.

FRED. That all right?

PAM. Won't wake up till t'morra. It won't disturb yer. What time'll I see yer? (*Sav*. 46).

This seemingly simple act of administering aspirin to an infant is not only selfish and abusive, it can be fatal. An average adult can have adverse side effects from a single dose of four to six aspirin; if Pam has given her infant child more than one adult aspirin, she has administered an intentional overdose which can, as demonstrated in the scene, induce unconsciousness. Repeatedly administering aspirin to a child could lead to more serious complications including internal bleeding, Reye Syndrome, and death.[137] The effect of the neglect and avoidance Pam demonstrates in Scene Five is ironically diminished by this criminal act against her child. Because the child is contentedly sleeping for the first time in the play, Pam appears to have improved her parenting skills, when, in reality, she has abused her child to elicit this behavior.

[137] Gilbertson. FDA.gov

Len announces that the baby is blind. While it is never explicitly revealed, a common cause of infant blindness is venereal disease, particularly gonorrhea infection. Venereal disease is likely and the topic has been introduced in the Scene Three:

> COLIN. …What yer scratchin'?
>
> MIKE. 'E's got a dose.
>
> PETE. Ain' surprisin'.
>
> COLIN. Ain' it dropped off yet?
>
> MIKE. Tied on with an ol' johnny.
>
> COLIN. It's 'is girl.
>
> MIKE. 'Is what?
>
> PETE. Gunged-up[138] ol' boot.
>
> COLIN. 'E knocked it off in the back a 'is car last night—(*Sav*. 25).

The loose sexual behavior of the culture demonstrated throughout the play lends credence to the probability that the child is born with a venereal disease which would be a contributing factor to the child's blindness. Len notices that the child is blind, but the remark is inconsequential to others in the scene. This scene, again, raises questions of prioritization as characters intentionally disregard the most important, vital, and fundamental needs of those closest and most accessible to them. In this example, Pam exploits her child in order to manipulate a situation that would satisfy her immediate need for attention and affection, but as demonstrated by her disregard for Len, whose genuine

[138] Bond: n.8 "gunged-up: from *gungy*, dirty, especially with reference to venereal disease."

generosity she eschews, Pam is psychologically damaged and cannot be satisfied by attention, preferring to live in a constant state of need instead of fulfillment. The psychological state of the play's characters is indicative of the society in which they live. It is a mereological system by which societal structures induce and are conducive to dysfunction thereby producing and perpetuating that production by frustrated citizens.

Scene Six contains the climactic and notorious baby-killing scene for which the play is known. The characters in this scene paradoxically act as both victims of sacrifice and delinquents; that is to say, their own tragic circumstances of disenfranchisement by society foment their hostility. They behave toward the child as they have been treated by their society. Len, as the tragic hero, witnesses the scene. Thus, one of the developments in the evolution of modern tragedy as a genre is in the multiplicity of roles within the structure of the ritual.

While Scene Six is recognizable as a perverse reinterpretation of Christian mythology, the more accessible similarity is in its likeness to *Bacchae*. Midway through the scene, Pam tries to convince Fred that the child is his. While the claim is possible, Pam's promiscuity mitigates the certainty of Fred's fatherhood. Pam is the antithesis of the Virgin Mary, but this situation recalls Semele's reputation. To extend the metaphor, by comparison, Fred becomes Pentheus in his disbelief of Pam's claim. The difference is that Pam has earned her reputation whereas Semele is innocent. In response to Fred's rejection and insults, Pam walks off, leaving the pram behind. Len, chases after her:

> FRED. 'Alf the bloody manor's bin through you.
>
> PAM. Rotten liar!

FRED. Yeh? [*To* MIKE]. Ain' you 'ad 'er?

MIKE. Not yet.

FRED. Yer'll be next. [*Points to* LEN.] What about 'im? [*To* LEN.] Eh? [*To* MIKE.] Yours must be the only stiff outside the churchyard she ain' knocked off.

PAM. I 'ate you!

FRED. Now we're gettin' somewhere.

PAM. Pig!

FRED. Thass better. Now piss off!

PAM. I will.

MIKE. Ta-ta!

PAM. An' yer can take yer bloody bastard round yer tart's! Tell 'er it's a present from me! [PAM *goes out. She leaves the pram*.]

MIKE. Lovely start t' the evenin's entertainment.

FRED [*calls*]. I ain' takin' it! It'll bloody stay 'ere!

MIKE. What yer wan'a let 'er get away with---

FRED. Don't you start! I 'ad enough with 'er!

LEN. I'd better go after 'er.

FRED. Send 'er back.

LEN. See 'ow she is. [LEN *goes out after* PAM.]

FRED [*calls*]. Don't leave 'er kid. Take it with yer. [MIKE *whistles after her*. FRED *throws his gear down*.] Lumbered!

MIKE. 'E'll send 'er back. (*Sav.* 47)

Mike and Fred are left alone with the child discussing their plans for an evening of Bacchanal behavior. Mike is particularly excited and eagerly convincing Fred that there is a new place to meet young women. The first line spoken on the subject is highlighted by action. After Mike and Fred sit, Mike says, "They opened that new church on the corner" (*Sav*. 48). Thus begins what could otherwise be a comedic scene of *quid pro quo* and creative antics. With the perverse irony that characterizes the whole scene, Mike tries to convince Fred that the new church is the best place to meet women or as he says, "Best place out for'n easy pick up" (*Sav*. 48). If one were to ask what kind of a church would be a good place to find opportunities for debauchery, the answer might well be the church of Dionysus. Pete, Colin, and then Barry enter as perverted interpretations of the three wise men of the Christian nativity or more Bacchants, and the subsequent action exemplifies how seemingly innocuous dehumanizing exercises can develop into murder. These exercises, however, are out of context. There are many combined and contributory psychological and emotional factors that facilitate this scene, including a will to power, mob mentality, and hormonal instigation; all of which are destructive under the circumstances, but recall the frenzied rending scene of *Bacchae*. Relationships among the characters in *Saved* and how their semantics yield action are particularly interesting. There is a performative quality to their hostile language and tone, which is conducive to inciting violence against a helpless victim. It is as though they incant and pronounce their grotesque actions against the child.

Especially because it is set around Christmas time, the moment elicits interpretation as a perverted nativity scene: the baby is in a pram like the Christ child and Pete, Colin, and Barry emerge as three ignorant men with only disdain in their hearts. By

normal standards, Mike and Fred might be expected to behave as guardians, or surrogate parents, but instead they contribute to the endangerment of the child. The new arrivals enter the scene with roguish temperament and rough, debauched humor:

> PETE. 'Ow's it then?
>
> MIKE. Buggered up.
>
> COLIN. Like your arse.
>
> MIKE. Like your flippin' ear in a minute" (*Sav*. 48).

Their humor is of a base, sexual nature and they exhibit power over one another through pejorative language. The newcomers notice the pram and ask questions:

> BARRY. O yeh- 'oo's mindin' the baby?
>
> COLIN [*seeing pram*]. Wass that for?
>
> MIKE. Pushin' the spuds in" (*Sav*. 49).

This is one of the first perversions of reality that encourages the kind of degradation, which leads to the ultimate dehumanization, death. Throughout the scene, reality is morphed by language into an alternate reality, a linguistic conceit which gives otherwise powerless people control over their environment, like any form of slang or secret language. There is a distinctive creativity in the use of figurative or metaphorical language, but the implication imposed by the use of this conceit throughout the play is usually one of negativity. Mike does not acknowledge the usefulness of the pram for its

intended function, to nurture a child and provide a safe environment. Instead, Mike re-imagines the pram as a hilling machine. Presented in a positive way, one could see value in farming but Mike's motivation is less charitable. He devalues child-rearing and reprioritizes potato farming over it. It is a deliberate act of dehumanization in removing the human element of the structure and industrializing it. This simple comment launches the mindset of subtracting humanity from a situation and undermining the value of human life by replacing it with machinery. It is indicative of the effects of the industrial age on humanity, the acceptance of people as machinery like factory workers whose efficiency and lack of personality are valued over qualities of differentiation.

The imagery of a hilling machine as well borders on immature sexual allusion, which is a salient theme of *Saved*. Factors of their society including idleness and a lack of education, and given the fact that they are at the peak of male hormonal activity, these factors reasonably result in ignorance and an odd combination of indulgence, degradation, and devaluation of sexual activity. Mike could be equating a penis with a potato growing in the field, which requires coverage. The metaphor is both sexual and punitive pushing the root vegetable back into the ground is a sort of recapitulation of fornication with the earth serving as the feminine as is often the reference of Mother Earth. To extend the metaphor, the potato would serve as the masculine element with its phallic shape and turgidity. A concomitant reading of this imagery is that the pram, although necessary because of sexual act, is more a deterrent for amorous behavior in this case, crushing the phallic symbol back down into the ground.

The gradual build of hostility and cruelty is particularly unnerving in contrast to earlier parts of the scene where Barry, for one, shows some consideration for the child:

"BARRY. We don't wan' the little nipper t'ear that! Oi, come 'ere. [COLIN *and* PETE *go to the pram*.] 'Oo's 'e look like? [*They laugh*.]" (*Sav*. 49). This is the first moment in which there is a subtle suggestion that perhaps the child resembles Fred after all. It is also the first mention of killing the baby:

> MIKE. Don't stick your ugly mug in its face!
>
> PETE. It'll crap itself t' death.
>
> BARRY. Dad'll change its nappies.
>
> COLIN [*amused*]. Bloody nutter!
>
> FRED. You wake it up an' yer can put it t'sleep. COLIN *and* PETE *laugh*.
>
> BARRY. Put it t'sleep?
>
> COLIN. 'E'll put it t'sleep for good.
>
> PETE. With a brick" (*Sav*. 49).

Barry continues to show reasonable moral compass in his marginal sense of responsibility and relative care for the child. His line "Dad'll change its nappies," might be interpreted as sarcastic, except that Colin makes fun of him for showing a protective instinct when he calls Barry a "bloody nutter." By showing genuine compassion the scene is all the more poignant when Barry succumbs to the peer pressure of harming the child. Pete is first to mention "death" and suggests killing the child "with a brick." His words become actions in a matter of moments.

After Mike claims, "'E don't care if it's awake all night" (*Sav*. 49). Barry becomes defensive bordering on protective and displays a playful demeanor. "BARRY.

'Oo don't? I'm like a bloody uncle t' the kids round our way. [*He pushes the pram*.] Doo-dee-doo-dee-doo-dee" (*Sav*. 49). The boys get tired of waiting for Pam and Len to return and speak disparagingly of them. Barry continues to play with the child but succumbs to his need for group approval: "….BARRY *pushes the pram*. BARRY. Rock a bye baby on a tree top, /When the wind blows the cradle will rock, / When the bough breaks the cradle will fall, / And down will come baby an cradle and tree / an' bash its little brains out an' dad'll scoop 'em up and use 'em for bait. *They laugh*" (*Sav*. 50). Barry sings a well-known lullaby that is extremely ironic in its original form in that it is intended to calm a child into sleep by threatening a violent act of nature: the wind blows, breaks a tree limb and the baby presumably is hurt in the process. The violence is tempered by the lyricism of the tune. Barry's addendum to the song is only mildly more disturbing than the original version. Barry does not initiate reference to the child's injurious experience. It is a pre-existing and widely accepted norm. He merely expounds upon it, personalizing and customizing it, making it relevant to his immediate circumstances. He is an active and functional participant in his social morality.

Barry begins to play with the balloon tied to the pram and the boys joke in reference to its phallic appearance. Sex, violence and death become the subject of their jocularity as though, in a world in which they feel helpless, their dramatization of their fears alleviates them by taking power and control over the action. "BARRY *blows*. *The balloon bursts*. COLIN. Got me! [*He falls dead*. BARRY *pushes the pram over him*.] Get off! I'll 'ave a new suit out a you" (*Sav*. 49). While the banter continues, Barry minds the pram; the boys attack Barry for his nurturing instincts and in an attempt to defend himself, Barry puts the child in danger:

BARRY [*pushing the pram round*]. Off the same barrer?

PETE. Ain' seen you 'ere before, darlin'.

BARRY. 'Op it!

PETE. 'Ow about poppin' in the bushes?

COLIN Two's up.

BARRY. What about the nipper?

PETE. Too young for me. [*He "touches"* BARRY.]

BARRY. 'Ere! Dirty bastard! [*He projects the pram viciously after* COLIN. *It hits* PETE.]

PETE. Bastard! (*Sav*. 50).

As soon as Pete is in control of the pram it becomes a weapon and a shield, and the child is disregarded. "PETE *and* BARRY *look at each other*. PETE *gets ready to push the pram back-but plays at keeping* BARRY *guessing*….PETE *pushes the pram violently at* BARRY. *He catches it straight on the flat of his boot and sends it back with the utmost ferocity*. PETE *sidesteps*. COLIN *stops it*." (*Sav*. 50-51). In the subsequent conversation Barry's sense of responsibility is mocked. In retaliation, Barry tries to exploit Pete's sense of guilt:

PETE. Stupid git!

COLIN. Wass up with 'im?

BARRY. Keep yer dirty 'ands off me!

PETE. ‘E’ll ‘ave the little perisher out!

BARRY. O yeh? An’ ‘oo reckoned they run a kid down? (*Sav*. 51).

Barry has protective instincts over the baby and for the first time blames Pete for intentionally killing the child whom he killed in traffic (the subject of Scene Three). “[PETE *pulls the pram from* COLIN, *spins it round and pushes it violently at* BARRY. BARRY *sidesteps and catches it by the handle as it goes pas*t.] Oi-oi! [*He looks in the pram*.]” (*Sav*. 51) The young men notice that the child is awake and something is strange:

COLIN. Wass up? [COLIN *and* PETE *come over*.] It can’t open its eyes.

BARRY. Yer woke it.

PETE. Look at its fists.

COLIN. Yeh.

PETE. It’s tryin’ a clout ‘im.

COLIN. Don’t blame it.

PETE. Goin’ a be a boxer.

BARRY. Is it a girl?

PETE. Yer wouldn’t know the difference.

BARRY. ‘Ow d’yer get ‘em t’sleep?

PETE. Pull their ‘air.

COLIN. Eh?

PETE. Like that. [*He pulls its hair*.]

COLIN. That ‘urt. *They laugh*. (*Sav*. 51)

With fists flailing and eyes closed, the silent child receives its first direct physical torment at the hands of the young men. Pete is the first to pull the baby's hair. The child's lack of response is most intriguing to them:

> MIKE [*comes to the pram*]. Less see yer do it. [PETE *pulls its hair*.] O yeh.
>
> BARRY. It don't say nothin'.
>
> COLIN. Little bleeder's 'alf dead a fright.
>
> MIKE. Still awake.
>
> PETE. Ain' co-operatin'.
>
> BARRY. Try a pinch.
>
> MIKE. That ought a work.
>
> BARRY. Like this. [*He pinches the baby*.]
>
> COLIN. Look at that mouth.
>
> BARRY. Flippin' yawn.
>
> PETE. Least it's tryin'. (*Sav*. 51)

The audience knows that the child has been given an overdose of aspirin and for at least that reason is incapacitated. Fred also has this information but is reasonably ignorant of the expected effects. An audience, however, must be morally outraged at this point in the scene, and the torture is just beginning. What Barry interprets as a yawn could as easily be a silent scream, but the ruffians are determined to elicit the response they expect from the child, and so the instigating activity escalates:

MIKE. Pull its drawers off.

COLIN. Yeh!

MIKE. Less case its ol' crutch.

PETE. Ha!

BARRY. Yeh! [*He throws the nappy in the air*.] Yippee!

COLIN. Look at that! *They laugh*" (*Sav*. 52).

The baby's physical reactions must horrify audience members because they must deduce that the child has been injured enough to have awoken from near unconsciousness:

MIKE. Look at its little legs goin'.

COLIN. Ain' they ugly!

BARRY. Ugh!

MIKE. Can't keep 'em still!

PETE. 'Avin a fit.

BARRY. It's dirty. *They groan*" (*Sav*. 52).

The boys' reaction to the child's distress is patently degrading and insensitive. The continual use of neutral gender pronouns exacerbates the dehumanizing process that escalates throughout the scene; that Colin describes the child's action as ugly diminishes the child's value and right to sympathy. Instead of considering the child's distress as a legitimate reaction to a horrifying and unjust situation, Pete dismisses the behavior as an

uncontrolled reaction and an indication of diminished capacity, which he deems as worthy of disdain.

Barry notices that the child's diaper is dirty, but instead of thinking that the child is uncomfortable, scared, and in danger of illness due to lack of hygiene, the young men consider only their own discomfort at acknowledging it. Beyond their ignorance, immaturity, and failure to act responsibly, the boys display an utter lack of compassion in their disdainful response to the child's torment:

> COLIN. 'Old its nose.
>
> MIKE. Thass for 'iccups.
>
> BARRY. Gob its crutch. [*He spits*.]
>
> MIKE. Yeh! COLIN. Ha! [*He spits*.]
>
> MIKE. Got it!
>
> PETE. Give it a punch.
>
> MIKE. Yeh less!
>
> COLIN. There's no one about! [PETE *punches it*.] Ugh! Mind yer don't 'urt it" (*Sav*. 52).

This moment of dramatic craftsmanship is worth noting for the way in which audience sensibilities are deftly manipulated. Colin's threat to suffocate the child is thwarted, which alleviates the dramatic tension for a moment; one can imagine an audience breathing a collective sigh of relief, however short-lived. And, since Barry has shown some genuine concern for the child earlier in the scene, while decidedly

distasteful, his suggestion to spit on the child could be understood in terms of Barry's ignorance, rather than malice, and brings to mind the old-fashioned stereotypical mother who blots a handkerchief with saliva before wiping her child's cheek. But, Pete's line and action take full advantage of a somewhat relieved audience by suggesting that they punch the baby. The hyperbole of it leaves an audience incredulous. When Colin suggests that the child might be hurt after Pete had punched the child, Mike, Barry, and Pete all assure him that babies feel no pain:

> COLIN. There's no one about! [PETE *punches it*.] Ugh! Mind yer don't 'urt it.
>
> MIKE. Yer can't.
>
> BARRY. Not at that age.
>
> MIKE. Course yer can't, no feelin's.
>
> PETE. Like animals" (*Sav*. 52-3).

In this scene, the young men relieve themselves of the possibility of culpability by denying that a child has feelings before a certain age. This provides an odd glimmer of hope in that they consider the concept of blame, or that they could be guilty of something; by supposing that the child has no feelings, they are acknowledging that it would be wrong to hurt the child. The comparison of children to animals is not only quite literally brutalizing, it is also dismissive of the feelings of all living things and rather self-important. Later in the scene, when Mike says, "Call the R.S.P.C.A.," although he is

sarcastic and reducing the child to the level of an animal, he acknowledges the existence of animal and children's rights.

The violence against the baby escalates:

> MIKE. 'It it again.
>
> COLIN. I can't see!
>
> BARRY. 'Arder.
>
> PETE. Yeh.
>
> BARRY. Like that! [*He hits it*.]
>
> COLIN. An' that! [*He also hits it*.]
>
> MIKE. What a giggle!
>
> PETE. Cloutin's good for 'em. I read it.
>
> BARRY [*to* FRED]. Why don't you clout it?
>
> FRED. It ain' mine" (*Sav*. 53).

The rationale has progressed from conjecture that children have no feelings to claims that hitting is beneficial. Pete supports his assertion by claiming to have read it. This unsubstantiated claim to research is a common modern joke in a comedy of manners, and this scene would be comedic genius except for the suffering of the innocent, but the juxtaposition of frivolity with gravity makes it tragic genius. This is similar to the overturned expectations and reversal of fortune in *Bacchae* when Pentheus is dressed like a woman to spy on the Maenads. The situation is potentially hilarious; instead Pentheus is brutally killed. Fred's adamant denial of paternity moves his position

to be in favor of beating the child. One by one, each of the young men has become part of their small group's social morality. Throughout the scene, each time one of the boys has a moment of independent thought against the judgment of harming the infant, the collective social morality dominates their judgment and guides them into violent action. The young men make conscious decisions to perform violent acts, which demonstrate Bond's philosophy when he says, "Our unconscious is not more animal than our conscious, it is often even more human."[139]

With regard to the stoning scene in *Saved*, Rosette Clémentine Lamont quotes Bond as saying, "This scene is an echo from my adolescence. The stones cast into the pram to kill the baby are like the bombs of Nazi air raids. There were many casualties among the poor and uneducated."[140] Later, Lamont quotes him as saying "Social morality is a form of suicide."[141] Critics often read this scene and those subsequent with the decided assumption that Fred is the father of the child. He could be, but at this point in the play, it is not firmly determined. This premise, however, is shared among the play's characters and (judging by published commentary) much of the audience. Although the paternity of the child remains in question, the possibility that Fred is the father is one of the strongest instigating factors toward his violent acts. Given the dialogue, Fred and his friends think they are exacting revenge on, and severing ties with, Pam by harming the baby:

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[139] Bond *Hidden Plot* (2000) 27

[140] Although her source is unclear, this remark is quoted in Lamont's 2003 *Massachusetts Review* article, "Edward Bond's DE-LEAR-IUM."

[141] Ibid.

FRED. It ain' mine.

PETE. Sherker. Yer got a do yer duty.

FRED. Ain' my worry. Serves 'er right.

BARRY. 'Ere, can I piss on it?

COLIN. Gungy bastard!

MIKE. Got any matches? *They laugh*" (*Sav*. 53).

Fred's attitude toward Pam has decidedly changed since their first dialogue in Scene Two when he expressed strong sexual attraction for her: "I'd rather 'ire you out darlin'" (*Sav*. 23). Pam has a child and Fred sees this condition as her deserved punishment. He may not be the father, but he has admitted to having had sex with her. The responsibility legitimately could be his, but he holds Pam's promiscuity (which he happily exploited) against her. As the scene progresses, Fred demonstrates a brief, almost paternal concern for the baby, which his mates abuse. The young men find a way to alleviate Fred's fear that he is the father of Pam's child:

PETE. Couldn't yer break them little fingers easy though?

COLIN. Snap!

PETE. Know what they used a do?

MIKE. Yeh.

PETE. Smother 'em.

BARRY. eh. That'd be somethin'.

COLIN. Look like a yeller-nigger.

BARRY. 'Onk like a yid.

FRED. Leave it alone.

PETE. Why?

FRED. Yer don't wan' a row.

PETE. What row?

MIKE. What kid?

COLIN. I ain' seen no kid.

BARRY. Not me!

PETE. Yer wouldn't grass on yer muckers?

FRED. Grow up. (*Sav*. 53)

Pete and Colin suggest more violence against the baby. Then they begin to insult the child first by noticing the skin color, "Look like a yeller-nigger," (*Sav*. 54) which is a racist insult they have used to describe the enemy of war. Colin refers to the child resembling the people of Asian nations such as India, whom the British had once colonized, and Indonesia, where the British were waging war over control of Borneo. Noteworthy as well is that a yellow-orange coloration of a European baby likely would indicate that the child is jaundiced, an expected condition of malnourished infants. Barry follows suit by saying that the child's nose looks like one expected of a Jewish person. Barry displays anti-Semitism in using another derogatory term of racism and treating the identification of a supposed common genetic trait as an insult. While Colin's comment may have been provoked by an actual observation, Barry appears to have been inspired solely by an impulse to spew racism. This prompts a defensive response from Fred who

tells them to stop, but instead his friends imply that they would deny knowing the child or anything that might happen to the child. They subtly suggest that Fred could end all contact with Pam by disposing of the child by suffocation, assuring him that they would keep it secret and deny involvement. In what turns out to be an ironic twist, Pete challenges Fred, "Yer wouldn't grass on yer muckers" (*Sav*. 53), essentially asking him whether or not he would tell the authorities were they to kill the child, when ultimately Fred is the only one who is punished for the crime.

Up to this point, the scene moves in fits and starts with brief gestures of cruel intent but with a slight variation of intensity that allows an audience to catch its collective breath. Here, the scene focuses on scatological elements. First, Barry "jerks the pram violently" (*Sav*. 54). Pete suggests that the motion recalls a hanging. "Thass 'ow they 'an yer-give yer a jerk" (*Sav*. 54). Pete then "*jerks the pram violently*" (*Sav*. 54). This action causes the baby's soiling:

> MIKE. Look! Ugh!
>
> BARRY. Look!
>
> COLIN. What? *They all groan*.
>
> PETE. Rub the little bastard's face in it!
>
> BARRY. Yeh!
>
> PETE. Less 'ave it! *He rubs the baby. They all groan*.
>
> BARRY. Less 'ave a go! I always wan'ed a do that!
>
> PETE. Ain' yer done it before?
>
> BARRY *does it*. *He laughs*.
>
> COLIN. It's ALL in its eyes. *Silence*" (*Sav*. 54).

The scene reaches a new level of degradation. Fred attempts to reason with his friends with a feeble threat of retribution:

> FRED. There'll be a row.
>
> MIKE. It can't talk.
>
> PETE. 'Oo cares?
>
> FRED. I tol' yer. COLIN. Shut up" (*Sav*. 54).

Mike's seemingly innocuous line defines the situation in which an infant incapable of communicating is horrifically abused. It is also the ideal metaphor for the young men themselves, who live in an environment in which they are uneducated, oppressed, and have no voice in the systems that rule them. Fred's argument is insufficient and his friends become suspicious of his stance. Colin accuses Fred of being scared and Fred becomes defensive:

> BARRY. I noticed 'e ain' touched it.
>
> COLIN. Too bloody windy.
>
> FRED. Yeh?
>
> PETE. Less see yer.
>
> BARRY. Yeh.
>
> PETE. 'Fraid she'll ruck yer. Fred. Ha! [*He looks in the pram*.] Chriss.
>
> PETE. Less see yer chuck that.

PETE *throws a stone to* FRED. FRED *doesn't try to catch it. It falls on the ground*. COLIN *picks it up and gives it to* FRED" (*Sav*. 54).

The young men goad Fred into joining them in throwing a stone at the baby. Fred's actions suggest that he has found a way to appease his peers without actually causing harm to the child:

MIKE [*quietly*]. Reckon it's all right?

COLIN [*quietly*]. No one around.

PETE. [*quietly*]. They don't know it's us.

MIKE [quietly]. She left it.

BARRY. It's done now.

PETE [*quietly*]. Yer can do what yer like.

BARRY. Might as well enjoy ourselves.

PETE [*quietly*]. Yer don't get a chance like this everyday. FRED *throws the stone.*

COLIN. Missed. (*Sav*. 55)

One might reasonably believe that Fred intentionally missed hitting the child, but his friends overcompensate for his gaffe, throwing stones at the child and making a game of it.

PETE. That ain't'! [*He throws a stone*.]

BARRY. Or that! [*He throws a stone*.]

MIKE. Yeh!

COLIN [*running round*]. Where's all the stones?

MIKE [*also running round*]. Stick it up the fair!

PETE. Liven 'Ampstead 'eath! Three throws a quid! Make a packet.

MIKE [*throws a stone*]. Ouch!

COLIN 'Ear that?

BARRY. Give us some [*he takes stones from* COLIN.]

COLIN. [*throws a stone*]. Right in the lug 'ole. (*Sav*. 55)

Again, the boys deprive the child of human qualities, this time by treating the baby like a target at a fair. This subtle perversion makes the baby a kewpie doll, which is usually a prize made in the image of a baby, the target instead of a prize. This imaginative alteration turns the treacherous moment into a playful game. The young men's display of playful imagination is particularly disconcerting because it not only magnifies the callousness of the situation, it does so by their use of an otherwise positive and playful manner. In other words, they possess and display qualities that might have made them positive role models, playmates and guardians of the helpless victim of their abuse. Once the gravity of attacking the child is alleviated by establishing the activity as whimsical, Fred participates:

FRED *looks for a stone*.

PETE. Get its 'ooter.

BARRY. An' its slasher!

FRED [*picks up a stone, spits on it*]. For luck, the sod. [*He throws*.]

BARRY. Yyooowww!

MIKE. 'Ear it plonk! [*A bell rings*.] 'Oo's got the matches? [*He finds some in his pocket*.]

BARRY. What yer doin'?

COLIN. Wan'a buck up!

MIKE. Keep a look out. [*He starts to throw burning matches in [to] the pram*. BARRY *throws a stone. It just misses* MIKE.] Look out, yer bleedin' git!

COLIN. Guy Fawks!

PETE. Bloody nutter ! Put that out!

MIKE. No! You 'ad what you want!

PETE. Yer'll 'ave the ol' bloody park 'ere'! (*Sav*. 55-6)

When Mike begins to throw matches into the pram, Colin shouts, "Guy Fawks!" Fawkes (as it is commonly spelled) is the British historical figure notorious for his punishment for taking part in The Gunpowder Plot to overthrow James I in 1605 in hopes of restoring a Catholic monarch to the throne. Caught guarding a stockpile of gun powder, Fawkes avoided the common brutal punishment of being hanged, drawn and quartered by leaping to his death from the execution scaffold. The annual commemoration each November 5 includes his likeness, "the Guy," burned in effigy, a

fireworks display, and children playfully chanting macabre lyrics.[142] In *Saved*, Bond employs metonymy by evoking Fawkes Day celebratory rites in a similar situation. Sociologically speaking, the ironic Fawkes-Day practices that encourage glorification of barbaric punitive practices could be viewed as a form of ritual sacrifice. Instead of offering a living sacrifice in worship of a god, however, the representation of Fawkes is a symbolic homage to the king and by extension, the system of government and laws that are supported by the people. This shift from worshipping divine law to monarchy reassigns absolute power from the gods and shifts the responsibility to humanity, suggesting that humanity is capable of controlling the universe, or at least subconsciously promotes violence. Even as recently as December 1866, a "new and original burlesque entitled, 'Guy Fawkes, or, The ugly mug and a couple of spoons'" was produced at the Royal Strand Theatre in London[143]. This moment in the play reinforces the idea that young, uneducated people are encouraged to participate in customs that glorify violence and intolerance without fully understanding their genesis. The origin and meaning of sacrifice, having been disconnected from the early rites of worship, completely overturns the intention of the event. Instead of being reverent of the divine, as evident in the case of Guy Fawkes, the practice itself is difficult to justify. Modern society celebrates state violence against the individual and mocks a thwarted revolution by its annual customary re-enactment and various other parodies and pantomimes. It is not unreasonable that individual people or small groups, particularly if they are marginalized, ignorant or misguided, would feel justified in imitating these kinds of actions. Colin is again

[142] Usually sung by children around a bonfire atop which burns an effigy of Guy Fawkes, "Rumour, rumour, pump and derry. Prick his heart and burn his body, And send his soul to Purgatory" is an example of the songs sung at the event.

[143] The Royal Strand Theatre was demolished in 1904.

dehumanizing the child by comparing the child to an often grotesque effigy. It may also be worth noting that British slang "give him the guy" means "to get away from," the American equivalent of "to give him the slip," which happens to be what they think they are helping Fred to do (to end his attachment to Pam) and what they plan to do themselves when it is time to escape without punishment. This lack of accountability is further proof of their delinquency.

In continuation of their denial of responsibility, the young ruffians of *Saved* conspire to leave the scene without detection:

> *A bell rings*.
>
> FRED. They'll shut the gates.
>
> PETE [*going*]. There's an 'ole in the railin's.
>
> BARRY. 'Old on. [*He looks for a stone*.]
>
> PETE. Leave it!
>
> BARRY. Juss this one! [*He throws a stone as* PETE *pushes him over. It goes wide*.] Bastard! [*To* PETE.] Yer put me off!" (*Sav*. 56).

The dramatic tension in this moment depends upon the urgency of the boys' departure. In the final moments, before Barry insists upon throwing one last stone at the pram, the audience may reasonably wonder whether or not the child is dead, but in the immediately subsequent lines, all doubt is dispelled. "PETE. I'll throttle yer! BARRY. I got a get it once more! [*The others have gone up left. He takes a stone from the pram and throws it at point blank range. Hits*.] Yar!" (*Sav*. 56). Colin and Pete initiate the group's

departure; Fred runs back to get his fishing gear but winds up leaving one of the boxes behind; Barry hoists his last insults: "Bleedin' little sod! [*He hacks into the pram*….]"(*Sav*. 56) and they all get away without notice.

Scene Six ends with Pam returning to find the pram and walking home with it. Her neglect of the child in this moment is overwhelmingly poignant for an audience who has just witnessed the baby-killing.

> PAM. I might a know'd they'd a left yer. Lucky yer got someone t' look after yer. Muggins 'ere. [*She starts to push the pram. She does not look into it. She speaks in a sing-song voice, loudly but to herself*.] 'Oo's ad yer balloon. Thass a present from grannie. Goin' a keep me up 'alf the night? Go t' sleepies. Soon be 'ome. Nice an' warm, then. No one else wants yer. Nice an' warm. Soon be 'omies." (*Sav*. 56-7).

Ironically, Pam displays the first signs of maternal caring and protection. This moment implies that Pam may after all be capable of developing compassion for her child. Her tone is sweet, she speaks baby-talk and she takes pride in her maternal role, but the gestures are pretentious, hollow language, and she does not look at or touch the child. She only notices that the balloon is gone. The scene ends without discovery of the baby's condition. Bond does not present the reactions of the main characters when they learn of the child's death by torture; only the aftermath of Fred's trial is portrayed.

In Scene Seven Pam visits Fred in a jail cell. The dynamics of their relationship change. Fred is incarcerated and Pam appears to be his only ally. Although he is accused

of killing her child, she remains solicitous of his attention and acceptance. He has been chased by citizens to whom he refers as "housewives" who expressed their discontent with jeering and violence. He complains to Pam about his unjust treatment and the lack of protection he has received from the police. She is very sympathetic to his situation and grateful for his forced attention in a disturbing situation with him as the captive and her as the audience. Fred maintains his innocence or at least his defense saying that it is reasonable that he could have been trying to help the child. Len arrives later in the scene with cigarettes for which Fred is grateful. Pam exits and Len tells Fred that he witnessed the incident during which the baby was killed. Fred confirms that Len has not reported this to the police, but it seems likely that Len's information helped the investigation. Certainly testifying would be Len's best strategy to keep Fred away from Pam.

Scene Eight depicts Len observing Harry ironing his clothes. This domestic duty is a strong symbol and brings to mind terms like "pressing," "getting things straight," "ironing out wrinkles," which complement the dialogue between Len and Harry, who discuss their positions in the home and male relationships. Harry does not ask either of the women to help with chores, explaining that he learned to do these things for himself in the military. The military is associated with discipline and power, but Harry's claim supports the idea that the military oppresses the independence of its constituents, teaching them to be obedient and to accept the system rather than confront it or any of its anomalies or injustices. Len tries to understand Harry in this scene, posing intimate questions about his relationships at home and at work. There is only one probe about Harry's tragic past, which goes unacknowledged, "LEN. Yer lost a little boy eh?" (*Sav*. 61) The significance of this question depends on its timing: Len's perspicacity is also a

form of escape from the topic Harry broaches. Harry is trying to discuss the fact that Fred is about to be released from jail. They are interested in each other's feelings but unwilling to share their own.

When Pam enters the scene, the atmosphere becomes tense through her contentious discussions with Len. Harry does his best to ignore the row by carrying on about his business. The dynamics of Len and Pam's discussion are similar to those between Len and Harry. The more important subject of Fred's impending release and Pam's unrealistic hope that he will come to live with her weaves in and out of the petty argument over a misplaced magazine. With only one line each does the audience understand the core of their conflict:

> LEN. I'm tryin' t' 'elp.
>
> PAM. Yer wouldn't 'elp a cryin' baby.
>
> LEN. Yer're the last one a bring that up!" (*Sav*. 67).

In this short exchange it is difficult to know whether Pam knows that Len witnessed the child's death, if this is a figure of speech, or if she is literally chiding Len for not taking on the responsibility of childrearing. In any case, the question of her involvement with the case against Fred remains unanswered.

Scene Nine reveals the cordial relationship Len and Mary have developed, which is also more manipulative than would be expected of a simply economic contract between boarder and landlady. Mary walks around dressed only in a slip (behavior for which she admonished Pam earlier) and talks about sex while Len polishes his shoes, then hers. The

scene becomes increasingly flirtatious and provocative, until the action peaks at Len on his knees darning a run in Mary‘s stocking and biting off the end of the thread, all while she is wearing it. While the scene is much more modern and revealing than is called for in Sophocles’s work, this moment alludes to the Oedipus myth, seeing Len as a young man replacing the father as the romantic partner of the mother. This is magnified by Bond’s use of repetition by opening the scene with Len performing domestic chores when Harry’s domestic chores opened the previous scene.

Scene Ten takes place outside the home in a café. Len accompanies Pam, who sits waiting in conjectured anticipation of Fred’s arrival. Eventually Fred and his friends along with Liz (mentioned earlier but not seen until this scene) enter. Pam’s unrealistic expectations again result in her disappointment and humiliation. Liz enjoys a position that we can only assume Pam has held. Liz is obviously welcome and accepted among the group and has Fred’s attention. One might imagine that Pam may have experienced this kind of relationship with Fred and his friends, but Bond is careful never to demonstrate it. Pam and Len offer to house Fred to which he responds, “Yer must be kidding!” (*Sav*. 78). Throughout the scene, Fred recalls his time in jail. It is obvious that he has only become more debauched, disrespectful, violent and wary of the system when he says, “Ain’ my sort a life. Glad I done it once, but thass their lot. Ain’ pinnin’ nothin’ on me next time” (*Sav*. 79). The implication is that there will be another similar incident and that experience has taught him to avoid punishment. Fred’s behavior exhibits no effect other than having developed further disdain for penal and judicial systems. Institutional response to the crimes Fred and his friends have committed is negligible if at all useful, but when Len gets Fred alone and hints at the criminal incident, the personal

confrontation horrifies Fred. Fred has been recounting incidents of his time while incarcerated so when Len shifts focus to the subject of the crime itself, Fred is taken off guard. They are interrupted many times, but Len trains his mind on the interrogation, and asks Fred the same question six times:

LEN. No. What was it like?(1)

FRED. No, talk about somethin' else.

LEN. No, before.

FRED. Yer 'eard the trial….

…

LEN. What was it like? (2)

FRED. I tol' yer.

LEN. No, before.

FRED. Before what?

LEN. In the park.

FRED. Yer saw.

LEN. Wass it feel like? (3)

FRED. Don't know.

LEN. When yer was killin' it.

Fred. Do what?

LEN. Wass it feel like when yer killed it? (4)

….

LEN. Whass it like, Fred? (5)

FRED [*drinks*]. It ain' like this in there.

LEN. Fred.

FRED. I tol' yer.

LEN. No yer ain'.

FRED. I forget.

LEN. I thought yer'd a bin full a it. I was--

FRED. Len!

LEN. Curious, thass all, 'ow it feels t'-- (6)

FRED. No [*He slams his fist on the table*.]

LEN. Okay.

FRED. It's finished.

LEN. Yeh.

Fred [*stands*]. What yer wan'a do? *The juke box starts*.

LEN. Nothin'.

FRED. Wass'e getting' at?

LEN. It's finished. (*Sav*. 80-1)

Len attempts to make Fred accountable for his actions more effectively than the judicial system has been able to do. The frustration Fred displays is the strongest, most serious and focused display of emotion Fred shows throughout the play. Len succeeds in having Pam to himself by confronting Fred with the only honest acknowledgment of his actions and the truth of his involvement. Len fulfills the quest of a tragic hero by pursuing knowledge/truth. This scene demonstrates that by allowing Fred to lie

throughout the process of his court case and punishment, he never has to admit his moral or absolute truth. There has been no justice until this scene. This scene solidifies Len as the tragic hero of the play. He stands as one who is imperfect and yet the most morally responsible character in the world of the play; and in so being, he maintains a dual role within a dramatic context as well as in the external world of audience reality, much like the role of a priest, as emblematic of the integrity necessary to maintain a functional society.

In the scheme of quintessential tragedies, the tragic hero survives tragic events and does not hold a prominent position of power or wealth (while he may have at another point in his history), but he thrives morally for having suffered emotionally, physically, intellectually, and materially. Oedipus, Medea, Lear, and Len are not without fault, but their fate allows them to continue to learn and to teach life's lessons. Suffering tragedy enriches the souls of the characters involved, especially the hero, but arguably all characters who acknowledge and survive tragedy benefit from it. To the extent that a character acknowledges tragedy, he or she advances spiritually.

Pam notices that Len has upset Fred and pleads with Fred to protect her from Len, again trying in vain to elicit sympathy from him. Fred maintains his disdain for Pam and, although the timing is inconvenient, he mobilizes everyone to depart, leaving Len and Pam alone. It is apparent to everyone except Pam that Fred is dangerous. His disregard and disdain for Pam have already led to the fatality of her (possibly, their) son. Len takes strides to protect Pam from Fred. Once Fred is gone, the third point in the love triangle is eliminated, and Len is able to plead his case to Pam once again:

> I'll see yer 'ome. I'm late for work already. I know I'm in the way. Yer can't go round the streets when yer're like that. [*He hesitates*.] They ain' done 'im no good. 'E's gone back like a kid. Yer well out a it. *[He stands*.] I knew the little bleeder 'ld do a bunk! Can't we try an' get on like before. [*He looks round*.] There's no one else. Yer only live once. (*Sav*. 83)

Len does his best to console Pam and to provide emotional support and protection. There is a brief moment of tenderness that is shattered by the opening of the subsequent scene.

In *Saved*, as in *Hamlet*, the conceit of spying is an important component of the plot. Bond adds a voyeuristic dimension to the play when Len reveals that he was in the woods and saw what happened. This adds a layer of identification between the audience and the tragic hero of a modern play: witnesses who know the truth. One must deduce that the fishing box Fred leaves at the scene provided enough evidence for authorities to question him, but his guilt is reinforced by Len's cross-examination. Len has Fred convinced that he saw him murder the baby or at least he has maintained this position since Scene Seven. Len says, "I saw the lot" (*Sav*. 59), but that does not definitively mean that he saw all of what happened or all of the young men involved. It could as well be a clever lie designed to elicit Fred's confession. One could well imagine that Len only surmised Fred's guilt on circumstantial evidence: means, opportunity, and motive. The audience learns this fact after the action has transpired and must wonder about the veracity of Len's claims. In similar retroactive fashion, Harry explains that he witnessed Len and Mary together in Scene Nine. It is difficult to know what Harry actually saw.

Perhaps he, too, only saw a provocative scene and deduced that there was sexual activity. One must consider that Harry could have known that the interaction had not led to much, but by pressing the situation, he thwarts the potential of consummation. Harry's accusations of Mary's inappropriate sexual intentions toward Len are the foundation of their argument. Eventually, their words turn to actions and while Harry and Mary argue, a chair is broken, and Mary injures Harry by hitting him with a teapot full of hot tea. The teapot operates both as a symbol and symbolically in that it was a wedding gift to Harry and Mary and now it is a point of contention, an item Mary does not want to share. This domestic item is meant to serve as a parochial tool in which to brew a comforting warm beverage which holds its own symbolic meaning of comfort and civility in British culture, and yet Mary alters its meaning when she uses is as a weapon against her husband.

Pam is nonplussed throughout the scene and particularly upset to learn that her mother and Len were found in a compromising position. Pam cries and repeats, to no response, lines with the words "the baby's dead….Baby dead….Baby dead" (*Sav*. 87-8). Pam's reality is ignored but tempers and emotions flare at imagined indiscretions. Given Pam's behavior until this point, it is difficult to believe her grief is much more than a convenient manipulation meant to return attention to herself. If her emotion is sincere, it is more likely due to the loss of her perceived connection to Fred than to the lost life of her child, evinced by the final words of the scene: "PAM [*crying*]. No 'ome. No friends. Baby dead. Gone. Fred gone" (*Sav*. 88).

Scene Twelve takes place in Len's bedroom shortly after the row in Scene Eleven. There is an open suitcase on the bed with a few things packed in it and Len is listening

for Pam through the floorboards. He believes she has brought a suitor home with her. Harry enters and explains that Pam is alone and crying. Len assures Harry that he did not carry on an affair with Mary. Harry forgives Len and explains that his arguments with Mary are often contrivances meant to demonstrate affection and to release pent-up frustrations. The salient information garnered from this scene pertains to the dead children in Harry and Mary's lives, their son and now, their grandson. Harry's family obviously is impoverished materially, but it is more than economic virtue that impels Harry's relationship with Len. The moral and emotional support of Len's presence provides an even greater value to the family. Harry convinces Len to stay, but then advises him to avoid Pam when it seems apparent that she requires immediate comforting.

> HARRY. Listen!
>
> LEN. What? [HARRY *holds up his hand. Silence*.] Still cryin'?
>
> HARRY. She's gone quiet. [*Silence*.] There—she's movin'. *Silence*.
>
> LEN. She's 'eard us. HARRY. Best keep away, yer see. Goodnight.
>
> LEN. But-
>
> HARRY. Sh! [*He holds up his hand again. They listen. Silence. Pause*.] Goodnight.
>
> LEN. 'Night. HARRY *goes*" (*Sav*. 94)

The final part of the play is Scene Thirteen, a very short, almost completely visual epilogue one might call a pantomime marked by an odd number of symbolic resonance.

From some perspectives 13 is a lucky number, while others view it as a portent of bad luck. This controversy relates to readings of this play: Critics generally view *Saved* as having a bleak and pessimistic view of western 20th century culture, while others, including Bond himself, claim that the work is optimistic. The scene depicts the domestic situation of the four main characters. Harry, Mary, and Pam do frivolous bits of business (sitting, reading, filling out a betting sheet, clearing a table), while Len enters and immediately engages in the practical, useful act of repairing the chair that had been broken during Harry and Mary's fight. The scene is silent until Len utters the only line: "Fetch me 'ammer" (*Sav*. 95), which no one does. Len works with the chair ingeniously. In lieu of a hammer, he bangs the foot of the broken leg into the ground in an attempt to secure the leg. The condition of the chair improves, but it is not fully fixed by the end of the play. Len continues to work at it as the curtain falls. Len's attempts to repair the chair are a visual metaphor for his attempts to repair the broken lives of the family. Bond offers this insight about Len: "He lives with people at their worst and most hopeless (that is the point of the final scene) and does not turn away from them. I cannot imagine an optimism more tenacious, disciplined or honest than his."[144] It seems apparent that Len stands out in contrast to the other characters as one who perseveres against adversity, and rises above difficult circumstances to act productively. Some might argue that the final scene serves as evidence that *Saved* is a tragicomedy. But, as Bond says in the opening of the Author's Note,

[144] Bond Introduction to *Saved* (1965) 5

> *Saved* is almost irresponsibly optimistic. Len, the chief character, is naturally good, in spite of his upbringing and environment, and he remains good in spite of the pressures of the play. But he is not wholly good or easily good because then his goodness would be meaningless, at least for himself. His faults are partly brought home to him by his ambivalence at the death of the baby and his morbid fascination with it afterwards.[145]

To claim that Len is the modern equivalent of the classical tragic hero is not to say that the plots in which they appear are similar. In fact, the play is in many ways an inversion of the Oedipus myth, but the nature, behavior, and morality of the tragic heroes serve similar functions in their respective environments. In other words, the philosophy, thought or motivation behind the actions of the characters is patently similar. Interpretations of Oedipus's behavior, after all, are foundational reference points of psychology. Bond compares the two characters in his introductory note. He points out key differences in Len's character, specifically that he does not play the "traditional role in the tragic Oedipus pattern of the play," meaning that he does not leave the tribe or supplant Harry:

> The first scene is built on the young man's sexual insecurity – he either invents interruptions himself or is interrupted by the old man. Len has to challenge him, and get him out of the house, before he can continue. Later he helps the old man's wife, and this is given a sexual interpretation by the onlookers. Later still the old man finds him with his wife in a more

[145] Bond. Intro. (1965) 5

> obviously sexual situation. The Oedipus outcome should be a row and death. There is a row, and even a struggle with a knife – but Len persists in trying to help.[146]

Len, however, is not the obvious counterpart of Oedipus, per se. He is an unsuccessful or undesirable mate for Pam and his attempts at flirtation with Mary, although well received, are never consummated. Rather than achieving an elevated status associated with virility, Len remains rather impotent. In terms of his relationship to the characters of *Oedipus*, Len is more like Tiresias. Len, after all, is responsible for forcing Fred to admit the truth of his own personal guilt. This, in turn, redefines our supposition of Oedipus as a tragic hero. As the *Poetics* delineates the tragic hero, Oedipus fulfills the role, but it may be an equally valuable exercise to consider Tiresias, one who introduces truth and reality, confrontation, examination and accountability to society through one key figure, as a character whose function is crucial to defining the hero who is more like a morally average man who becomes spiritually enlightened through tragedy. Tiresias is a priest and figuratively simulates the role of an ancient priest in a sacrificial rite. But Tiresias functions as a controversial figure both within the context of the play and within the context of Ancient Greek society, which extends beyond its place in history and becomes a common cultural controversy: the question of rational thought and the application of critical thinking compared to questions of faith. As this sentiment pertains to *Saved*, Bond clarifies in his introductory notes:

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[146] Bond (1959) in Stuart (2000) 24

> If we are to improve people's behaviour we must first increase their moral understanding, and this means teaching morality to children in a way that they find convincing. Although I suppose that most English people do not consciously disbelieve in the existence of God, not more than a few hundred of them fully believe in his existence. Yet almost all the morality taught to our children is grounded in religion. This in itself makes children morally bewildered – religion has nothing to do with their parents' personal lives, or our economic, industrial and political life, and is contrary to the science and rationalism they are taught at other times. For them religion discredits the morality it is meant to support.
>
> Their problems in studying science and art are those of understanding – but in a religious morality it is one of believing. Most children, as they grow older, cannot believe in religion. We no longer believe in it ourselves, and it is therefore foolish to teach children to do so. The result is that they grow up morally illiterate, and cannot understand, because they have not been properly taught, the nature of a moral consideration or the value of disinterested morals at all.[147]

In *Saved*, we observe the Bond application of the Sophoclean presentation of knowledge witnessed through the character of Tiresias. Oedipus is a hero in that, as a leader, he fights in earnest to pursue knowledge that eventually disquiets him, but ultimately reveals truth, makes him wise and restores the functionality of the kingdom. Len, like Tiresias, encourages the development of wisdom in a variety of characters by

[147] Bond Intro (1965) 7

instigating self-examinations with varying degrees of success. Jocasta is both a delinquent and a victim in the Oedipus myth, who loses her life in sacrifice to her tribe for the placation of the gods. Figuratively speaking, Jocasta's life is based on denial so, in admitting the truth of her and her husband's crimes, the philosophy on which she bases her life and therefore, literally, her life must end. That she takes it upon herself to do so relieves her son of maintaining his duty to protect her as her husband, which in turn allows him to fulfill the will of Apollo and Zeus and live in exile away from his kingdom. Ultimately, Oedipus is morally elevated to the stature of Tiresias in gaining knowledge and wisdom, and Oedipus symbolically emulates Tiresias by blinding himself. If it can be said that Fred is held accountable for his involvement in the child's death, that accountability is more effectively meted out on the personal plain by Len than by the penal system that briefly incarcerates him. Bond reinforces this in his notes:

> For several reasons morals cannot be slapped on superficially as a social lubricant. They must share a common basis with social organization and be consistent with accepted knowledge. You cannot, that is, "have the fruit without the root." Most people, when they think about this, ask only what *they* believe, or perhaps what has been revealed to them. But if they are interested in the welfare of others they should ask "what is it possible for most people to believe?" And that means teaching, oddly enough, moral skepticism and analysis, and not faith.[148]

[148] Bond Intro (1965) 7

If Fred is to be considered in relation to the Oedipus myth, he takes the place of Laius, the difference being that Fred is successful in killing (what he assumes to be) his progeny. *Saved* offers a response to the question of what would have happened had Oedipus died as a baby on Mount Cithaeron: There would be no myth of retribution, Laius would have succeeded in infanticide and avoided the fatal prediction of patricide. The implication of which would be the impotence of the gods, because the edict had come from Apollo, and if it had been successfully thwarted, there would be no reason to revere a religion based on the laws of these gods. In *Saved*, Fred, therefore, becomes the modern equivalent of Laius, and is spared retaliation from his child. For having murdered what was likely his child, Fred is never forced to face the consequences of irresponsibly bringing life into the world.

Although Len is protective and demonstrates greater integrity than any other character in the play, Len is comparatively, but not typically, virtuous. He is, however, a realistic character, a quality which is critical to the credibility of modern tragedy. Credibility is crucial in Bond's work and to an audience that is already skeptical. The modern audience is the silent modern counterpart to Ancient Greek choruses.

The language of *Saved* defines modern tragedy in much the same way that Attic Greek in dactylic hexameter defined ancient tragedy. In both cases there is a distinct rhythm, meter, and tone that defines the style of the drama. The form of the communication combined with the content yields a distinct aesthetic that is then recognized as the genre tragedy. Arguably, the language standard in the tragedies of Sophocles, Euripides, and Shakespeare is considered superior and more elegant than the common speech of their times, whereas Bond employs the vocabulary, style and tone of a

"class" lower than that of the expected audience. It is, in fact, difficult to extract or detach *Saved* from its original setting as the slang intentionally refers to and reveals the myopic and insular view of the world that the characters have. Generally, Bond claims and critics agree that most of his plays are not set in any particular time period. With this legacy, the work can maintain its relevance and be produced in any time. In the case of *Saved*, however, the place is very distinctly London. I would also like to suggest that *Saved* is not simply set in the 1960's (the time in which it was written), but is an amalgam of time from the 1940's to the present with an emphasis on 1940. Bond has referred to the play as somewhat autobiographical in that his childhood and young adulthood would have been marked by poverty and wartime experience. Some have assumed that Pam's reference to her brother having been killed by a bomb in the park is indicative of a terrorist bombing, and it may well be because that would apply as well to the 1960's and up throughout history and into the present. The parties responsible for bombing may have changed, but terrorism remains constant. The argument for a 1940-inspired bombing in London is strengthened by the violent history of the area. Specifically, London parks underwent a very violent time with not only a year of Irish Republican Army terrorist bombings, but also Germany undertaking the Blitz along the same area.[149] Bond translates his personal history into a timeless commentary on the nature of violence in contemporary culture. This longevity can as well be said of the legacies of Sophocles and Euripides writing about the ancient house of Cadmus hundreds of years after its existence and Shakespeare writing in the early 17th century of a king who lived before the Common Era.

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[149] *The Guardian* "7 September 1940 was the first day of the German bombardment that lasted 76 consecutive nights."

Some critics view the title of the play, *Saved*, as ironic if not bordering on sardonic. Bert Cardullo, forms his 1986 essay on the premise that the reference is religious and argues that Len saves the family. "The title of *Saved* is ironic. No one achieves religious salvation in the play. The possibility of achieving it does not seem to exist for the characters: no one prays, even though everyone is in some kind of misery; characters invoke God's name mostly in anger, disgust, or impatience…."[150] Cardullo claims that the image of Len on the fixing the chair recall the iconic image of Jesus being crucified. This claim is difficult to support because while the text would require Len to engage with the chair, the precise staging is mutable. Judging from the published version, however, the physical form of the moment is closer to Michelangelo's *Piétà*, devoid of maternal presence, which could be the story of the baby who is killed without maternal protection. To argue that the intention of the scene is for Len to be seen as a savior would best be supported by the simple connection of Jesus as a carpenter and by the simpler act of repairing a domestic item as being symbolic of repairing the family. I suggest that Cardullo's argument is incomplete and to support it one might add that in addition to "the family" Len has saved Pam from Fred and Fred from Pam. He has saved Harry from being lonely and feeling worthless, Mary from feeling unloved or unattractive to her husband, and, therefore, he has saved their marriage.

Just as others are said to be saved by the martyrdom of another, or the sacrifice of a martyr, Pam's child is the subject, the victim, the martyr of *Saved*, but then the question remains of who receives the benefit of that salvation. Cardullo argues that Len survives, and although he is unable to prevent the murder of the child, he has saved the lives of the people around him. A cynical argument would claim that death saves the child from a

[150] Cardullo, 62.

miserable life. I would argue that the modern audience receives the intended salvation of *Saved*. While the action onstage may be a work of fiction, it depicts a reality and is in its depiction, its own reality. When audiences leave the theatre, they have the moral responsibility to react to their real world with the knowledge they have recently acquired. The imitated act of killing a child, just as the early sacrificial rites of western culture, were performed for a society in order to worship and form a common bond, and the tragedies of ancient Greece presented the subject matter of philosophical debates among critics throughout history. Bond presents moral questions in his tragedies that only an audience can respond to in a meaningful way. The modern audience replaces the Greek chorus. In modern terms, Bond has been compared to Brecht, a comparison he eschews, and yet, Bond's work, while perhaps executed differently, yields a meta-Brechtian response, instigating thought and action in an audience. This audience response is related to the assumed foundation of theatre as having come from religious ceremony.

CHAPTER 5

WORSHIPPING DIONYSUS/WITNESSING TRAGEDY

The previous chapters have been presented as an introduction to a theory of tragedy based on the premise that the form maintains significant elements from its genesis as sacrificial and ecstatic rituals associated with Dionysus. In terms of participation, women and children (particularly female children) are often placed in the role of sacrificial victim. So then, even if we do not have absolute proof of a linear progression from primitive altars to a modern stage, the comparative relationship of the respective themes and participants is demonstratively valid. Having re-examined the traditional tenets of dramatic theory regarding tragedy, relying heavily on Aristotle's *Poetics* for a foundational framework, this study demonstrates the persistent use of ritual, particularly sacrifice, in the form of abuse toward children, through sexual and violent means, as a defining factor of tragedy as a genre.

Dionysus, the regenerative god of perennial fertility, personifies the great paradox associated with rebirth: the implication that death is concurrent with life, and that respect for one implies respect for the other. It is in this paradoxical spirit that Dionysus is worshipped. The same paradox applies to sacrificial rituals and tragedy. For all of the joy associated with celebrating a new cycle of life, all new possibilities imply death, loss, or replacement of the preceding lives. Celebration and mourning require equal attention. Whether or not one adheres to traditional theories of tragedy having emerged from

primordial rituals of sound, action, and group participation led by a spiritual leader, this dramaturgical study demonstrates how tragedy as a dramatic form shares persistent, salient aspects with sacrificial rituals. The myth of Dionysus is mimetically re-enacted in all of the tragedies we have reviewed in themes of sexuality, violence, and child abuse. This observation emphasizes the existence and importance of the recurring theme in tragedy of children suffering abuse by their own parents.

The first consideration of this theory is the idea that the archetypal participants in these primal rituals persist in roles that have developed into hierarchical characters of tragedy, which may be classified as heroes, victims, delinquents, and witnesses. Second, is that the requisite communal response classically defined by Aristotle as the purgation of pity and fear, relies on the subjects of sexual tension and violent aggression in order to achieve catharsis, since they are precursors and universal metaphors of life and death. Implied in this fact is that an audience possesses the requisite knowledge and emotional intelligence in order for tragedy to be effective. The third part focuses on the roles of the heroes and victims and argues that not only are the heroes often victims themselves, but that victims, in tragedy are children who have been abused or neglected by their parents.

With minor exceptions, this study treats tragedy as a literary and philosophical, not a theatrical, enterprise. To demonstrate the thematic consistencies resulting from the questions humanity faces within a culture of violence, this study focuses on exemplary tragedies from three distinct phases of the evolution of the genre: Ancient, Renaissance, and Millennial. Except for Bond's *Saved*, the plays examined in this study were selected in part because they are widely recognized as exemplary instances of tragedy. *Oedipus the King, Medea, Bacchae,* and *King Lear,* besides exemplifying the codes, goals, and

evolution of the genre, also confirm the persistent presence and resonant qualities of ritual in tragedy. By establishing this foundation, I have tried to show that Bond's *Saved* deserves to be called a Millennial tragedy. Study of these works has shown that the origin of the tragic hero can be traced to the priest of ancient ritual and that the sacrificial victims, apostates, and disciples are also represented in tragedy. The heroes emerge as martyrs as Oedipus, Medea, Agave, Cadmus, Lear and Len survive injustices including their own improprieties and, by their actions, render a form of justice and hope for those they leave behind. The children of the heroes are often killed in tragedy. The case of Oedipus differs somewhat in that he is the hero, but he is also the victim of his parents' aberrant actions. Oedipus escapes their attempt at infanticide only to carry out the will of the gods by committing the patricide that was predicted for him in retaliation for the crimes committed by his father. In all of the Greek examples, however, the will of the gods prevails, and the children who die as innocent victims (Medea and Jason's sons and Pentheus) are lost at the hands of their parents. Children suffer in tragedy both directly and indirectly in retribution for crimes committed by their parents. Jason's sons are killed for his having disrespected Medea, and therefore the gods. Agave's son and Cadmus's nephew, Pentheus, is killed for his mother's slights against her sister, Dionysus's mother, but also for his own resistance to the god himself. In the Greek tragedies, the children suffer as collateral damage in a battle between the gods and their parents.

One of the transitions from Ancient to Renaissance tragedy is in the relationship between individual and communal responsibility. Whereas earlier tragedy shows the effects of the individual on society, whether beneficial or detrimental, it is a study of how the microcosm affects the macrocosm. Oedipus learns that he is the cause of society's

ills; he takes action to correct this fact and heal his kingdom by leaving it. Oedipus has the authority, and therefore the responsibility, for correcting a situation he did not create. Heroically, he fulfills his obligation by learning the cause of society's problems and then taking the necessary action to correct them. Oedipus demonstrates compassion by sacrificing himself for the benefit of his kingdom. The Renaissance examples demonstrate a mereological relationship: Lear, having created a corrupt environment, falls victim to it, and is then redeemed. The evolution here in terms of tragedy is Lear's peer status in his world. He has agency to create his fate and uses that same authority to overcome personality flaws, which are demonstrated by his own catharsis. He is a hero for having learned, via human and earthly Nature, the harsh realities of his abilities and his limitations as a mortal. But, in his learning, Lear achieves greater spirituality and compassion. Lear suffers, but survives, whereas his children perish and (as in the case of Jason's children) terminate the legitimate bloodline. Through his rash acts of selfishness and irresponsibility, even though Lear is redeemed, he is also punished for eternity. The deaths of all three daughters, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia, are necessary to dismiss the possibility of reconciliation and punctuate the end of Lear's lineage.

This study also demonstrates the value in investigating works like *King Lear* for accuracy and viability in staging. Other productions have hinted at the unseemly relationships between Lear and Gloucester with their children, but it would be of great interest to see the theories I present here put to practical use in a theatrical production. There is more than ample evidence to suggest that Goneril, Regan, and Edmund behave in a way that naturally evolved from their environment. When Lear and Gloucester are seen as culpable, arrogant, and abusive fathers who also happen to rule the kingdom, the

behavior of their children, which is usually treated as unfathomable, makes more sense. Considering the overwhelming possibility that Goneril, Regan, and Edmund have been raised in abusive, hostile, or neglectful environments sheds new light on these characters as victims, not villains.

Millennial tragedy inverts the exchange of Ancient tragedy, making society powerful in affecting individuals. Instead of the individual having obvious agency to affect society, as is the case in Ancient and Renaissance works, modern society is a system out of control, like a machine set in motion and beyond the control of its operators. While audiences continue to be traumatized by the stoning scene in *Saved*, hope for a wiser community that values compassion and functionality exists. Thus, the efficacy of tragedy, through sacrificial demonstration persists. The hero stands apart, persevering to conserve human qualities, especially compassion. He demonstrates heroism in simply remaining human in an ever-more-dehumanizing world.

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