

**Mending the Inner-Shattered World:
Euripidean Tragedy and the Possibility of ‘Aesthetic Reparation’**

Tom R. E. Minor

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in Psychoanalytic Studies

Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies

University of Essex

Date of submission (October 2014)

ABSTRACT

The unique and sublime pleasure we derive from a great work of art is called the ‘aesthetic emotion proper’. Considering the magnitude of pain and suffering enjoyed in Greek tragedy, a paradox arises regarding how depictions of dramatic pain translate into pleasurable aesthetic experience in a reader. Drawing from the insights and methodologies of poststructuralist, deconstructionist, Nietzschean and psychoanalytic criticism, this thesis postulates that this pleasure is obtained through identification with the work of art as a whole and with the internal shattered world of the artist’s psyche, as represented by their work. Ergo, all aesthetic pleasure involves an unconscious reliving (*nacherleben*) of the infantile experience of creativity, where creation demands the overcoming of guilt, facing the inner turmoil of the depressive position and rebuilding one’s internal world of objects and self, which have previously and frequently been destroyed during paranoid-schizoid states since infancy.

Klein’s concept of the depressive position enables us to isolate in the psyche of the artist specific factors, which enable the artist to produce a satisfactory work of art, furthering our understanding of aesthetic value and aesthetic experience in the audience. According to Hanna Segal, only lost or dead objects can be rendered into a work of art, implying that creation is really only a recreation of a once loved and once whole, but now lost and ruined object and internal world, and self. The proceeding sceptical, psychoanalytic reading of three Euripides’ the *Alcestis*, the *Heracleidae* and the *Hecuba*, set against the backdrop of Nietzsche’s hermeneutic thought, offers new and original insights into how the forceful contents/processes of identification, ruin, devastation and chaos are contained by the formal qualities of the work. These poetic qualities of literature interact with the psyche of the reader, making whole again the fragmented reality of their inner shattered worlds. Although tragedy bears witness to utter ruin and destruction, it speaks to the author’s capacity to acknowledge his aggression and fragmentation—to restore the chaotic experience to us in a bearable form, begging the question: to what extent *can* we heal ourselves through reading tragedy? This thesis attempts to answer this question with the introduction of a new theory of ‘aesthetic reparation’ or ART (Aesthetic Reparation Theory).

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Conventional Abbreviations of Nietzsche's Works

BT – *The Birth of the Tragedy* (1871)

Wph – *We Philologists* (1875)

HAH – *Human All Too Human* (1878)

D – *Daybreak* (1881)

GS – *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* (1882)

Pr – Preface to BT (1886)

BGE – *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886)

GM – *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887)

A – *The Antichrist*, (1888)

EH – *Ecce Homo. How One Becomes What One Is* (1888)

TI – *Twilight of Idols* (1889)

WP – *The Will to Power* (1883-1888/1901)

PART I: PROGLEGOMENON

“A text is made of multiple writings... this multiplicity is focused [in]... the reader, not the author”
(Barthes, 1977, p.148)

Introduction

From its earliest days psychoanalysis has prospered from a very special relationship with literature. Much of Freud’s case materials read like narrative stories and this is one of their descriptive strengths in shining a light on the complex neurotic formations of the mind. Freud was also honoured in 1930 with the prestigious Goethe prize, a German literary award, which helped ease mainstream opposition to his work. His most pioneering thinking was built from the foundation of the Greek tragedy, Sophocles’ *Oedipus*, and the theory of psychoanalysis is now a recognized form of literary criticism more generally. As a theory of the mind which appreciates the perplexing manifestations of the ‘unconscious’ in human life, psychoanalysis is undoubtedly a significant and powerful tool for the understanding of art. Even the eminent art critic Sir Herbert Read concludes: “in the end... we must admit that our debt to Psychoanalysis is incalculable” (Read, 1951, p.81).

However, the psychoanalytic picture of man is rife with uncomfortable truths; one must be unflinching in regard to these psychological possibilities in order to be open and receptive to the hints they contain about our own fundamental natures. One must also be vigilant to the numerous possibilities of error when it comes to examining ourselves in this way. Ultimately there is no final criterion of truth for any one single perspective on the vicissitudes of human emotion, nor the unconscious determinism of such vicissitudes; for that is already an interpretation. Every perspective is just one of many possible perspectives and depending on the stance taken towards the question of epistemology, alternatives can either be dogmatically overruled, or over-prioritised by the more relativistic and subjectivist accounts. This makes the

project of offering something original or final in respect of our 'aesthetic moment' with the text of Greek tragedy evermore complex and labyrinthine.

As post-modern critics we are empowered to take a stance that allows for the proliferation of interpretations and yet still maintains some criterion of 'usefulness'. One finds support for this epistemological stance in the writings of Nietzsche, who of course presents his own unique problems in terms of validating the consistency of his thought across the major periods of his career. As a Nietzsche scholar, and a psychoanalytically informed critic, I will nevertheless attempt a critical dialogue between Nietzsche's thoughts, through his early (*Wph*, *GS*) to late writings on philology (*BGE*), genealogy (*GM*), 'value for life' (*TI*), Dionysian metaphysics (*BT*) and the 'will to power' (*WP*), and the predominantly Kleinian (British) psychoanalytic contributions to aesthetics (Segal, Bell, Glover) and our understanding of 'aesthetic moment' (Sharpe, Rickman, Heimann).

This thesis asks to what extent we engage with a text on an aesthetically reparative level. This is a psychoanalytic question *par excellence*. The intrapsychic world according to psychoanalysts, is characterized by conflict and painful unconscious phantasies to do with our internal object world of self and other. It has become cliché to say that art has a therapeutic quality to it. Kleinian object-relations theory¹ as articulated by Melanie Klein herself, and her colleague Hanna Segal, with its focus on unconscious symbolism in early infancy, lays the foundation for a theory of creativity and the creative impulse which states that identificatory processes play a crucial role in the interactions between an individual subject (psyche) and the human objects that have an importance to that subject. This can be extended, in phantasy, to interactions with objects of art, such as literary texts, which themselves contain fragmented characterisations of what in the artist's experience, is contained in the human psyche and provides hooks for the audience's attention, even on an unconscious level.

¹ "The term 'object' had been used early by Freud to denote the person (or thing) required in order to mediate instinctual discharge...It now means the person(s) or his (their) inner representative(s), with whom the subject is intensely concerned emotionally." (Gregory, 1998, p.271)

The putative Klein-Segal theory of aesthetics has hardly been coined, let alone fully elucidated or critiqued. There are a number of ways of stating the conclusions that Klein's and Segal's combined theories logically lead to, however, these re-phrasings do not make for consolidated criticism: it being particularly difficult to critique a new, and fairly undocumented theory such as that outlined by Glover in her text of 2009. Adrian Stokes attempts a recapitulation, in his *Form in Art* (1955) published in *New Directions in Psycho-analysis* in honour of Klein's 70th birthday:

“As well as the vivid impress of self contained totalities we renew at the instance of aesthetic sensation the ‘oceanic feeling’, upheld by some of the qualities of id ‘language’, such as interchangeability, from which poetic identifications flow” (Stokes, 1973/1955b, p.110)

Though he may be right, this harking back to a point in Freud's thought where he neither delved further, nor managed to stringently articulate as in the ‘oceanic feeling’, provides neither the systematic relief, nor applicability found in the combined theories of Klein and Segal. Stokes, Winnicott and Milner do not work enough in concert to provide an alternative to the Klein-Segal theory of creativity such that it is inexpedient to even attempt an impartial survey: their non-partisan theories may touch upon aspects of the British object-relations approach, but they stop short in being able to theoretically surpass the object-relations school's depth and breadth of application. The rationale behind the *modus Vivendi* between the contrasting strands of thought within the British School, was a sensible result of the Controversial Discussions during WWII, and each discipline was allowed a future within British Psychoanalysis.

Elaborating the phantastical nature of unconscious symbolism is the particular strength of the Kleinian school, and demands an engagement with the paradox of how the violent and destructive content of Greek tragedy can be transformed into something ‘reparative’ on an aesthetic level, and enjoyed by a reader. Kleinian theory provides the following solution to the paradox: that aesthetic pleasure itself (the aesthetic emotion proper), actually demands a reliving

of archaic intrapsychic loss and despair, in addition to the overcoming of depression, and putting back together of the internal world of objects, emotions and self in the reader, echoing a similar journey from ruin to recreation in the artist. This is important in appreciating how a reader can enter into a reparative engagement with a text. Through the imaginative activity, unconscious symbolism evokes a reliving of painful infantile mental processes as well as the aesthetic reparation of archaic intrapsychic wounds. As this occurs in a third space between the psyche and the art-object, we must make clear that these reparations happen on an aesthetic level of mentation. According to Milner, Glover explains:

“The Kleinians’ phantasy refers to the unconscious psychic representation of an instinct and is predominantly internal reality. Illusion, rather differently, is pointing to a phenomenon that is close to, even partly is, both internal and external reality. The term illusion refers to a ‘third area’—an area that is felt as within the self and yet is also part of the external world” (Glover, 2009, p.171)

This suggests that our aesthetic encounters occur within a transitional space, which brings Winnicott’s (1953)² work into relief, distinguishing it from the Klein-Segal theory.³ Milner, Glover reports, argued that the “Kleinian concepts such as splitting, projective identification and introjection are not adequate to account for all the meanings of such experiences, for which the notion of a healthy return to a state of oceanic oneness is required” (ibid, p.175). To Klein of course, this illusion of oneness only amounts to “a regression to the paranoid-schizoid...part object relations and a sense of omnipotence and manic fusion” (ibid. p.171). Nevertheless, when appreciated in its totality, Klein and Segal’s understanding of creative processes and aesthetic moment, take us further in our quest to understand the potential truths contained in the highly coded and symbolic text of Greek tragedy, and these theories have helped establish the

² Winnicott, D. (1953). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. *IJPA* 34: 89-97

³ “The notion of an object that is neither internal nor external but transcends both inner and outer reality and occupies a potential or transitional space...distinguishes a ‘Kleinian’ from a ‘Winnicottian’ account of aesthetics.” Glover, 2009, p.180

groundwork for a new concept to be introduced within the British school, that being ‘aesthetic reparation theory’, which will, in the future need to position itself more precisely amidst the contention from the independent group not conventionally in agreement with Klein and the object relations camp.

The existence of various art therapies is enough to justify asking the question ‘how’ can an engagement with an aesthetic object (art object), in this case a literary text, lead to an aesthetically reparative process in the psyche of the reader? Another way to ask this question is: how does art contribute to the mending of our inner-shattered world of objects, emotions and self? This is an interesting question because it goes beyond the clinical situation of the analyst-analysand dyad and enters the realm of philosophical aesthetics, concerned with the value of art and whether it is possible to make a distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ artworks.

For most critics, it is the unique symbiosis of both form and content which generates the aesthetic emotions experienced in the viewer. Post-modern interpretations demand the elaboration of the intersubjective nature of aesthetic experience, i.e., that aesthetic experience occurs in an imagined but distinct mental space, which is not determined by the artwork alone, but also by the interaction of the subjectivity interpreting the artwork. As such, this thesis seeks to lay the philosophical justification for a subjective interpretation of the text, using Nietzsche’s hermeneutic approach, and to investigate the nature of the intrapsychic interaction with the text along thematic lines.

What is unique about tragedy as a poetic art form, is the extreme, violent and destructive content played out on the human level within the play. Theories of Greek tragedy from classical times have outlined the poetic devices required to make it ‘tragedy’, at times hinting at superficial psychological speculations. The power of the tragedian to evoke emotions has continually amazed scholars (from Gorgias, to Aristotle, through to Goethe, Nietzsche and Freud) but literary theory leaves us wanting when it comes to understanding ‘how’ the tragedian can

guarantee such an emotive response in the reader. What is equally fascinating when we examine our response to tragedy, is the palpable delight and dramatic joy that can be attested to by almost any spectator of tragedy on the stage, which almost certainly applies to some readers of tragedy as well. This investigation concentrates on the textual nature of the tragedy and the experience of the reader more specifically.

Psychoanalysis can contribute to Nietzsche's theoretical monism regarding pleasure and pain: Freud's contributions to our understanding of the instincts and their vicissitudes have demonstrated that pleasure and pain intermix to the point of being inseparable. Nietzsche's thoughts on the matter predate the birth of psychoanalysis, confirming that pleasure and pain are the products of a more fundamental drive in human nature; what he calls the 'will to power', to ever-increasing power over oneself and other people. This makes the enjoyment of tragedy a central issue in my thesis. The very fact that Greek tragedy as an art form is enjoyed, despite its violent and destructive picture of humanity, has a strong bearing on the direction of my argumentation.

By demonstrating, through original textual interpretations, that the violent content in Greek tragedy can evoke unconscious symbolic associations in the psyche of the reader which beg for psychoanalytic elaboration, I attempt to show how tragedy has the potential to contribute to the mending of our inner-shattered worlds, through an unflinching glance at the depressive components of human nature. The aesthetic enjoyment of tragedy constitutes the aesthetic emotion proper, and indicates that a potentially reparative process has been instigated through the engagement with the text. This ties the psyche of the author and the reader together under the British psychoanalytic theory of creativity. By stating that authentic artworks demand a certain intrapsychic experience of loss and destruction as well as the rebuilding of our internal world, in both the artist and the viewer, we hit upon a psychoanalytic solution to the problem in aesthetics as to how to judge between good and bad works of art. Simply put, if we can find textual evidence for the unconscious symbolic associations psychoanalysts have written about in

relation to this notion of the inner-shattered world, and we can confidently say that there is an aesthetic enjoyment of the tragedy in the reading alone; we can also argue that this unconscious communication is a pre-requisite for the 'greatness' of the work.

The reader-response dialectic is analysed on the level of object-relationships, providing a paradigm within which to identify textual evidence for the 'reliving' of our early instinctual life, and thereby for the reparative potential of Greek tragedy. This investigation deals with reader responses outside of the clinical framework; without a listening other to facilitate or corroborate interpretations. The 'reliving' under discussion can itself be suspect, considering the huge proneness to error within the human memory system; it also necessitates a statement in regard to the position being taken toward 'looking back', history, hermeneutics, etc. To wit: Dilthey's term '*nacherleben*'⁴, adequately deals with all of the above and provides a useful term to characterize the process of 'reliving' that this thesis seeks to posit.⁵ The poetic *form* of Greek tragedy and the phantastical nature of its symbolic *contents*, as well as the necessary fusion of these two aesthetic elements within the text, and in the unconscious register, are also all uniquely indicated in the psychoanalytic aesthetic.

The problem of transhistorical readings of affect is at least partially overcome by the transhistorical nature of both Nietzschean and psychoanalytic formulations, which aim to articulate man's most primitive and basic nature, not just the modern pathologies of a system alienated from his more basic constitution by the civilised morality of contemporary society. With Klein, Dilthey's '*nacherleben*' can be expressed as the reliving of our early unconscious, instinctual, and thereby 'phantasy' life. The argument being that on an unconscious

⁴ Dilthey, W. (1894/1924). *Ideas Concerning a Descriptive and Analytic Psychology*. Berlin

⁵ "the finding of inner meaning from an external objectification" (Makkreel, 1993, p.328); "*Nacherleben* is the creation in the direction of production" (Dilthey, 1910, *GS VII*, p.214); "it does not reproduce the actual process of creation. We neither start with the particular state of mind of the author, nor do we necessarily end where the author ended" (Makkreel, 1993, p.328).

level, the phantasies worked through and expressed through the creative impulse symbolically represent archetypal conflicts from the time before ancient Greece.⁶

The unconscious symbolism may be infinitely varied but the basic elemental forces they represent are always the same, always inexpressible in their entirety. This is one of the fundamental tenets of Jungian analytical psychology, which being a development of Freudian psychoanalytic knowledge is widely misunderstood as a digression from Freud's original impetus. Jung never claims to be going against Freud, even in his development of Freudian ideas, he simply explores the contents of the unconscious with different focal lenses and remains one of the most prolific contributors to the profound and hard won data of psychoanalytic knowledge. We should ask why certain texts have remained so important to us and why has Greek tragedy been so prized and perplexing to the modern imagination? These texts must have some profound aesthetic value, and although it would be a cliché to say their value lies in the lessons contained about our own humanity, this statement is nonetheless plausible on that account. What matters is what a text might mean to someone and we have to thank Jung, as much as Freud, for being able to put this methodological stance front and centre of psychoanalytically oriented literary criticism.

Overall, it seems safe to assume that something fundamental in these texts still speaks to us, and still evokes similar emotional constellations in their readers today as they did for the audience of ancient Greece. If one can accept this much, then the proposition that what is going on unconsciously in the reader (in any era) might well be mirrored in the unconscious activity of the author during his period of creativity, doesn't seem so farfetched. Freud supports such a proposition in 1914, when he states that the artist aims at awakening in us "the same mental

⁶ "For Freud...the unconscious is of an exclusively personal nature, although he was aware of its archaic and mythological thought-forms. A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the personal unconscious. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the collective unconscious...a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us...so far as the collective unconscious contents are concerned we are dealing with archaic...primordial types, that is, with universal images that have existed since the remotest times...myth and fairytale" Jung, C. (1959), *The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious*, CW 9:1, 2-6, pp.3-5)

constellation as that which in him produced the impetus to create” (Freud, 1914, p.212). Indeed, such a proposition would seem to obtain a rich nexus of meaning and significance from these texts. This proposition will be explored through the British psychoanalytic approach to understanding art.

Psychoanalysis does seem uniquely placed to embrace tragedy as a therapeutic source of self-reflection. Through works of art such as Greek tragedy, reparative processes involving identification, mourning, depression, dismemberment and the putting of things back together in the mind, can be called forth. As a result of our own interpretations of those re-called instinctual longings given symbolic form in the tragedy, we can attempt to make reparations to our inner-shattered worlds.

Since the implications of our ‘all-too-human’ destructivity have continued to become increasingly catastrophic in recent times, encountering these darker sides of our object-relationships is an obligation as well as a necessity for the future health and prosperity of our very own humanity. In this respect I am aiming at an elaboration of Euripidean tragedy’s ‘value for life’ as outlined by Nietzsche, whilst linking this value to the reparative aesthetic which Kleinians propose. In the synthesis of the dialogue between Nietzsche’s metaphysics and Klein’s metapsychology, I aim to show that an engagement with an experience of tragedy has an aesthetic, reparative value/power in the reading alone. This value/power can only be articulated in the deeper synthesis of Greek tragedy as understood by Nietzsche, and the reparative processes as understood by psychoanalysts.

I am now going to explore some more general issues involved when we attempt to read and interpret a text, which is an essentially hermeneutic project encountering many philosophical problems.

CHAPTER I: PROPAEDEUTIC

An important question implicit in this investigation into the extent to which we heal archaic intrapsychic loss, pain and conflict through an engagement with Euripidean tragedy, has to be about what happens when we read texts. To attempt a psychoanalytic answer to this question, certain epistemological and methodological considerations must first be taken into account. This thesis will seek a pluralistic and poetic approach to interpretation, which no less complicates than clarifies our inquiries.

What is a text?

“Once the text has been written, it lives a life of its own” (Nietzsche, *HAH*, §208).

Since Greek tragedy forms a relatively autonomous body of myth, we can analyse it *as such*, just as Schelling analyses mythology-as-such in his *Philosophy of Mythology* (1842). However, any sensible analysis would have to come down to particulars eventually. Furthermore, our analysis will always be limited by the fact that we cannot locate the origin of the mythologems and motifs (ideas) contained within the texts of tragedy themselves. Although the emergence of tragedy initiates a burgeoning anthropomorphism within the Greek *mythos*, the human characters introduced therein all stand in genetic relation to gods of the Greek theogony. These gods existed in the Greek consciousness prior to any historical, poetic or philosophical documentation of them. So we cannot even attribute the origin of the *ideas* contained in Greek texts as a whole, nor within the tragic texts as a sub-category, to individual authors as it is arguable (as Schelling does) that these ideas (gods) existed in an 'unprethinkable' era of human consciousness and are therefore not invented at all.⁷

⁷“we present it as an absurdity to view mythology as an invention of an individual—on the other hand joyously answer us: indeed mythology is not invented by individuals; it has proceeded from the people itself. The mythology of a people is bound up with its life and essence in such a way that it could only proceed from out of the people [XI 60]. Besides everything instinctual works more effectively in the masses than in individuals” (Schelling, 1842, p.45), and: “mythology...gives us that which is independent of invention, indeed that which is opposed to all invention...mythology emerges into being through a (in view of consciousness) necessary process, whose origin is lost

The following investigation will take selected translations from classic sources and will treat the texts as *already re-authored* accounts of myths (containing representations of figures and ideas that have existed in man's consciousness since pre-literary times). The gods that play at least an equal part in the dramas (*deus ex machina*) as the human subjects involved, existed as ideas long before the first written accounts of them were made: of this much we are certain. As such, they cannot be determined as having been 'created' by individuals, but must be understood as having a collective origin in a primordial consciousness. This approach is in agreement with Nietzsche who he says that:

“viewing it as a text by a particular individual with particular intentions, desires, etc., inhibits the text's ability to communicate” (Nietzsche, *AOM*, §156; *HAH*, §197).

But what is a text? Nietzsche abstains from answering this question, on the basis of his perspectival epistemology. He says, “A thing would be defined once all beings had asked “what is that?” and had answered their question. Supposing one single being, with his own relationship and perspective for all things, were missing: then the thing would not yet be “defined” (Nietzsche, *WP*, §556). The text itself is not autonomous but is, as the eminent Nietzsche scholar Schrift suggests, the “heuristic aggregate of all possible interpretations which can be imposed on it” (Schrift, 1990, p.196). For Nietzsche himself, the text of Greek history is a “polished mirror, always reflecting something that is not in the mirror itself” (Nietzsche, *HAH*, §218). Thus, there is a difference between the text and interpretation, yet text and interpretation are mutually determined, interpenetrating expressions of the same thing for Nietzsche: ‘the will to power’. Schrift asserts that, “What is reflected in the text is thus our own interpretive style as it is determined by what we respond to in the text” (Schrift, 1990, p.196). Ergo, according to Nietzsche’s ‘will to power’ thesis, interpretation is the text, and the text is incarnated differently by different interpretations. It is not that the text is autonomous and separate from any particular interpretation; precisely because the text is interpreted differently by each interpreter, the text is nothing without the interpretation. This clearly calls for an interpretive pluralism in

in the supra-historical and is concealed from it itself, a necessary process against which consciousness perhaps can resist in isolated moments, but which is cannot stop on the whole and can revoke and undo still less” (ibid, p.134).

respect to our investigations. We must not forget that interpretive pluralism fully anticipates more successful perspectives arising beyond our own interpretive horizons. However, until they arrive, Nietzsche's constrained perspectivism would seem to provide an adequate starting point for any investigation. The text then, from here on in, will be understood *qua* interpretation. In Barthesian terms, at the juncture between structural and poststructural analysis:

“this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilises extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable...; the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language”

(Barthes, 1973, *S/Z*, pp.5-6)

On the *theory* of interpretation

“we can get no more out of texts than what we bring to them” (Nietzsche, *EH*, III, §1).

It is the task of the interpretation to demonstrate how it fits with the object of interpretation; how it is an appropriate theory. The quantum physicist Bohm (1980) in his book *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* offers an etymology of the word 'theory' that highlights the difference between a form of knowledge, and an insight or way of looking at the world, which is the most he believes one can attribute to a theory. Claiming that all thought activity takes the form of insight Bohm states that:

“all our different ways of thinking are to be considered as different ways of looking at... reality, each with some domain in which it is clear and adequate... The whole object is grasped only implicitly as that single reality which is shown in all these views” (Bohm, 1980, pp. 9-10).

Bohm reminds us that the atomistic world-view, with its 'subject/object' division, no longer

stands, stating rather that: “observer and observed are merging and interpenetrating aspects of one whole reality, which is indivisible” (ibid, p. 12), echoing Nietzsche's 'mirror metaphor'.

Bohm calls for a relativistic theory (insight, perspective) that views the world in terms of a: “universal flux of events and processes” (ibid.), reiterating the Barthesian dictum that as readers, we project ourselves into, interpenetrate and merge with the texts we read, and thereby re-author them in interpreting them. Interpretation in this sense is synonymous with ‘understanding’ the text critically and *for ourselves*.

The Hermeneutic Dilemma

In *Nietzsche and Interpretation: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction*, Schrift describes the hermeneutical turn in modern European philosophy that rejects metaphysical and epistemological foundations to philosophy. Foundationalism (metaphysics and epistemology) is offset against interpretive philosophy, which itself faces the problem of: “devising some standard... to adjudicate [between] competing interpretations” (Schrift, 1990, p.1). To wit: if there are always multiple possible interpretations, and yet there are no foundations to knowledge, hermeneutics is threatened by an unmitigated relativism, whereby: “all interpretations are regarded as equally legitimate” (ibid.). This hermeneutical dilemma is relevant for the following study in that the psychoanalytic goal is one of articulating the deeper *psychological* meaning of the texts, for modern readers.

In order to achieve this ‘meaning’, “one must psychologically reconstruct the author” (ibid, p.2), by projecting oneself *into* the author (Barthes)⁸. Thus we are confronted with an impossible constraint upon the activity of interpretation whereby: “interpretation is always guided by the author's intended meaning and... aims to approximate as closely as possible to this ‘original’...

⁸ “This new operation is interpretation (in the Nietzschean sense of the word). To interpret a text is not to give it a (more or less justified, more or less free) meaning, but on the contrary to appreciate what plural constitutes it. Let us first posit the image of a triumphant plural, unimpoverished by any constraint of representation (of imitation).” Barthes, 1973, p.5.

intent” (ibid.). Impossible because we must accept, authorial intent is irretrievable in any logically consistent or epistemic way. What we have is meaning, achieved variously by unique interpreters, where our interpretations of the authorial intent are equally as valid (or invalid) as our interpretations of the meaning of the text without reference to authorial intent. The meaning of the author’s intent is like the meaning of the text itself: ‘up for interpretation’.

Since we cannot legitimately establish an ultimate authority for the meaning of the texts to be interpreted, our goal remains hermeneutical in that we seek to establish something of their psychological meaning for us as readers and for psychoanalysis more generally. Schrift also turns to Dilthey, for whom: “the question of the possibility of historical knowledge raises the question of how a knowing subject comes to know objectively that which has been subjectively created” (Schrift, 1990, p. 3). Preferring to reconstruct the 'historical product', Dilthey eludes the psychologism of trying to reproduce the psychic state of the author, although he still locates the *meaning* of these historical events: “in the mental processes of the historical agents involved [in the interpretation], in their productions, and in our objective psychological reconstruction of them” (Schrift, 1990, p. 3). Barthes says, “the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins” (Barthes, 1977, p.142) by which he consolidates the argument to rule out authorial intent in our interpretations of texts, and legitimizes a subjective interpretation which he believes is all we ever have available.

Nietzsche's perspectivism circumvents the hermeneutic dilemma by assuming that there exist a multiplicity of possible interpretations and by renouncing any interpretive dogmatism (foundationalism), in the same vein as the relativists. Nietzsche's interpretive pluralism overcomes the threat of unmitigated relativism by ranking perspectives according to their 'value for life'. Any dogmatic programme as to how one must rank the value of their interpretations in an order that is meaningful to the ordering subject, is already methodically at odds with Nietzsche’s panoptic perspectivism, whereby we are each free to choose our own rank order according to our own valuations. No one can tell us what to value: this is Nietzsche’s gift to

philosophy and to this thesis.

What follows then, is an attempt to dismantle the traditional border between the activity of interpretation and the activity of original creation. As Schrift says: “no commentary is ever a mere reproduction, nor is any act of creation ever wholly original” (Schrift, 1990, p. 9).

Nietzsche's perspectivism deconstructs the privileged epistemic status of notions such as 'truth', 'meaning,' and 'reality', which disregard the perspectival nature of 'knowing.' Since perspectives and interpretations precede the very judgment of something as 'factual,' 'truthful,' 'meaningful,' or 'real', perspective and interpretation pervade all forms of epistemology. Facts therefore, are not given, but invented: facts are interpreted and this, for Nietzsche, is justifiable. To renounce these inventions on the basis of their falsity would be to renounce and deny life: for untruth is a condition of life in Nietzsche's thought. It is not that the dogmatists arrive at the wrong truth, but that they deny the multiplicity of possible perspectives, which denies a basic condition for life: “a belief can be a condition of life and nonetheless be false” (Nietzsche, *WP*, §483).

Challenging the very myth of objectivity, Nietzsche calls for a 'panoptics' whereby:

“There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity', be” (Nietzsche, *GM III*, §12).

We are reminded here of the mythical, hundred-eyed monster of Greek antiquity, Argus

Panoptes. For Nietzsche, this panoptic perspectivism represents the *pessimism of strength*:

“that every elevation of man brings with it the overcoming of narrower interpretations; that every strengthening and increase of power opens up new perspectives and means believing in new horizons – this idea permeates my writings” (Nietzsche, *WP*, §616).

Reading Well: Nietzsche's Genealogy *apropos* Philology and Perspectivism

Psychoanalysis itself is positioned uncertainly at the boundaries between objective Science, as Freud understood it, textuality (i.e., hermeneutics) and therapy, for which our psychological health is at stake. This makes Nietzsche's thoughts on life, health and philology equally relevant. Schrift also offers some reliable secondary scholarship on Nietzsche in relation to the problematics of interpretation, which consolidates the areas of Nietzsche's thought that I have integrated into the critical methodology of this research. Schrift is the first scholar to systematically identify all of Nietzsche's contributions to interpretation theory and this is the whole focus of his 1990 textbook. I benefit from Schrift's excellent scholarship in giving Nietzsche his dues as it has assisted my problematising of interpretation for the purposes of this research. My goal in this propaedeutic, however, which is different from Schrift's, is the application of Nietzsche's sceptical interpretive approach toward a psychoanalytic end.

The task of philology, *apropos* early Nietzsche, is "to understand our own age by means of antiquity" (Nietzsche, Wph, §7), which Schrift sees as "neither the scholarly, disinterested appropriation of the past nor the wilful creation of the past" (Schrift, 1990, p.162), but rather the promotion of *an attitude conducive to the reception of 'the wisdom of antiquity'*. Genuine philologists are challenged with understanding the past from the perspective of the present, and the present from the perspective of the past: something Nietzsche calls the 'antimony' of philology (Nietzsche, Wph, §7). Striving for an impossible synthesis of the past with the present, philologists must become centaurs who interrogate antiquity and decipher the genealogy of our "modern wrongheadedness" (ibid, §15). Nietzsche's *BT* was to serve as such a model of genealogical philology but it fell on deaf ears in a culture of academic philology labouring towards rigorous restoration and purification of antiquated texts, and the "art of reading rightly" (Nietzsche, *HAH*, §270), which ignored the "rich ambiguity and multiplicity of textual meanings" (Schrift, 1990, p.163). Nietzsche's suspicion of a text's "double sense" (Nietzsche, *HAH*, §8) led him to articulate a transvalued philology as "the art of reading well" (Nietzsche,

A, §52): philology *qua* reading slowly and with delicacy.

Nietzsche proffers a notion of textual autonomy, “insofar as the reader is cautioned to respect the text and remain open to that which the text presents” (Schrift, 1990, p.163). Ruminating upon the text, we must decipher what we read: think and reflect critically. Philology is now about reading facts “without falsifying it by interpretation, without losing caution, patience, subtlety in desire for understanding... as *ephexis* in interpretation” (Nietzsche, *A*, §52). ‘*Ephexis*’, being the Greek term for indecisiveness, reiterates Nietzsche’s sceptical epistemology, where no single interpretation can be understood as correct, nor rule any other out. Striving to keep the question of interpretation open, Nietzsche says “there can be no sole saving interpretation” (Nietzsche, Letter to Fuchs, Aug. 26, 1888, p.164).

“Only through this transvalued sense of philological diligence, directed by a sense of honesty and justice that precludes the overly enthusiastic assertion of any one interpretation as the correct one, will we be able to avoid the fate of all bad philology... in which the text finally disappears under the interpretation” (Nietzsche, *BGE*, §38).

That there exists *a* text, independent of any interpretation of it, and one that can be falsified through interpretation, is taken for granted in Nietzsche’s attack on ‘all bad philology.’ Yet, such textual autonomy is inconsistent with Nietzsche’s own perspectivism, which can posit only “provisional assumptions” (Nietzsche, *WP*, §497). Philology thus posits an, albeit oblique, border between text and interpretation that stands in need of reconciliation with Nietzsche’s perspectivism, and this anticipates the hermeneutic dilemma between dogmatism and relativism. Schrift brilliantly conceives the solution to this problem in a transvalued notion of the text “to accompany Nietzsche’s transvalued conception of philology” (Schrift, 1990, pp.167-68). ‘Reading well’ is not in opposition to perspectivism *per se*, but to bad philology, and the transvalued text although distinct from any one interpretation “itself remains nothing other than interpretation” (ibid, p.168): thus, we cannot obtain the ‘right’ text and our only access to the text is *via* interpretation. This, Schrift says, “suspend[s] adjudication based on the criterion of correctness or accuracy of reproduction of some originary, univocal meaning” (ibid.), echoing

the sceptical call for a more neutral stance towards textual interpretation. Hence, genealogical criteria which “derive from the demands of both philology and perspectivism... give rise to... 'interpretive pluralism'” (ibid.). For this thesis then, perspectivism and philology mark the poles within which a pluralistic approach to interpretation can be conceived.

“In denying the possibility of correctly reproducing the world of becoming in language, Nietzsche critiqued both the correspondence theory of truth and the referential theory of meaning in a way that opened the fields of traditional epistemological inquiry to the creative play of interpretation” (ibid, p.170).

Interpretations under this model are of two types: philological and perspectival. Properly speaking, philology and perspectivism are two interpretations *of the activity of interpretation*. Derrida's position, which is frequently in dialogue with Nietzsche, is, according to Schrift, that “we are not faced with a disjunctive choice between either rigorous textual attentiveness or playful creativity... Rather, a pluralistic approach will refrain from making either choice and will play between these two interpretive styles, *at once* serious *and* playful, attentive *and* creative” (ibid, p.171). This insight of Derrida's into the 'undecidability' of textual interpretations echoes Nietzsche's call for genealogical *ephexis*, and “demonstrates the advantages of a pluralistic approach to interpretation” (ibid.). Derrida explains that “If there is thus no thematic unity or overall meaning to reappropriate beyond the textual instances, no total message located in some imaginary order, intentionality, or lived experience, then the text is no longer the expression or representation (felicitous or otherwise) of any *truth*” (Derrida, 2004, p.262). This also very much supports interpretive pluralism.

Genealogy and interpretive pluralism are married in Nietzsche's thought when he deciphers the values of ideals “in terms of the health/strength or disease/weakness of the will to power that posits them as ideal” (ibid.). It investigates the significance of such affirmations of value and, “must both examine these values in the historical/textual context in which they emerge and question the interpretive privileging of these values by suggesting other interpretive perspectives” (ibid.). By isolating the determination of values and asking who benefits from

such a determination, genealogy straddles perspectivism and philology “insofar as it demands both playful... and meticulous attention to the developmental history of contemporary values” (ibid.). Genealogy does not appeal to any criterion of interpretive truth, but attends to the text and allows for interpretive pluralism, whilst retaining the adjudicating principle of ‘value for life’. Genealogy therefore, can “accept multiple conflicting interpretations without succumbing to an unmitigated relativism” (ibid.). As Nietzsche proclaims:

“the world has become ‘infinite’ for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that it may include infinite interpretations” (Nietzsche, *GS*, §374).

Nothing escapes the activity of interpretation: there are no privileged objects, nor any end in sight for the process of interpretation. Nietzsche's philosophical concepts such as the ‘will to power’, the ‘*Übermensch*’ and the ‘eternal recurrence’ can therefore be criticised as only interpretations but not on “the grounds that Nietzsche's philosophy fails to satisfy some standard (‘truth,’ ‘the facts,’ ‘reality’)” (Schrift, 1990, pp. 182-3), since Nietzsche himself criticises the legitimacy of such a standard. Relativism is only a problem for dogmatists, which Nietzsche is not. Accusing anything Nietzsche says as being untrue, simply tells it like it is. Nietzsche does not claim to know *the singular* truth, but articulates an epistemology whereby a proliferation of interpretations can be adjudicated according to their value for life, in order to more fully, *more* objectively, *see* the multiplicity of truths, which are allocated genealogically within the limits of perspectivism and philology. Interpretive pluralism is thus a tool *and* product of Nietzsche's genealogical method. The ‘will to power’ is merely Nietzsche's interpretation of the activity of interpretation, which itself imposes meaning.

Meta-interpretive Proliferation

According to Nietzsche, there is no interpretive imperative to treat texts as “personal confessions... involuntary and unconscious memoir[s]” (Nietzsche, *BGE* §6), as psychoanalysts are wont to do. The preface is the right of the author, but the post-face is the interpretive right

of the reader. Any factor inhibiting the proliferative play of interpretation gains Nietzsche's antipathy: he deconstructs authorial privilege and renounces any ultimate source that would determine the textual meaning. In this way, "the principle of proliferation emerges as a meta-interpretive standard by which to judge between competing methods of interpretation... within the terminology of enhancement and impoverishment" (Schrift, 1990, p.186). Every exaggeration of a single viewpoint is already for Nietzsche a sign of sickness. He not only refutes the dogmatist's privileged interpretation, but relegates it as life-negating: justifying his ranking it lowest in his Dionysian ordering of interpretations:

"it must offend their pride, also their taste, if their truth is supposed to be a truth for everyman—which has so far been the secret wish and hidden meaning of all dogmatic aspirations" (Nietzsche, *BGE*, §43).

We must relinquish the tyranny of dogmatism and refrain from succumbing to the fictitious paralysis of unmitigated relativism. There is "no limit to the ways in which the world can be interpreted" (Nietzsche, *WP*, §600), and the truth if it exists at all "will exist as a function of the relationship between objects... and the interpretive perspectives brought to those objects" (Schrift, 1990, p.187). This clearly sanctions interpretive pluralism, submitted to the adjudicatory function of style within genealogical analysis, which itself straddles the epistemological limits of philology and perspectivism. Thus, with Nietzschean perspectivism, the practical relevance of this propaedeutic should now be obvious: we are beholden to take a stance regarding our own very act of interpretation, and depending where one stands in relation to one's right to interpret, the outcome of one's interpretations, and the conditions under which one interprets change. Only a psycho-poetic approach to the text of Greek tragedy stands any chance of revealing the unconscious dimension required for the psychoanalytic aesthetic being fostered in this thesis. Schelling's evaluation that mythology emerges in an 'unprethinkable' human consciousness can be understood from a depth psychological perspective as locating the origins of mythology in the unconscious itself, which now becomes our departure point for investigating the psychoanalytic approaches to mythology of which the tragedies are a subset and about which there is much to be discussed.

CHAPTER II: TOWARD A PSYCHO-*POETICS* OF TRAGEDY

Introduction:

If the thesis holds that all good/authentic art demands some reparative dialectic between the author, the text and the reader, it would seem that the British psychoanalytic aesthetic has an important contribution to make to the discipline of aesthetics more generally. It would have contributed a putative theory that can explain creativity itself as well as how a work of art can be judged to be authentic/good using the text and the corpus of psychoanalytic knowledge to provide evidence for the presence of unconscious symbolism, which indicates the reparative dialectic being proposed. On this account, if, and only if a reader ‘enjoys’ a text then this reparative dialectic *is already* indicated in the author, the text *and* the reader. It is our job as psychoanalytically minded investigators however, to find the supporting evidence in the text. All three points in the triangle (author, text, reader) must be connected through this unconscious dialectic.

No matter how commonplace the assumption that great literature is enjoyable because we learn about ourselves, the psychoanalytic aesthetic, can at least attempt to explain *how* or *what* we learn, is some meaningful depth. This is made especially difficult, however, when our explanations implicate pleasure systems, and the texts we are interpreting contain so much intense pain and suffering; yet psychoanalysis can move forward, even under these paradoxical constraints.

In pursuing the question about the extent to which we engage in an unconscious reparative dialectic with Euripidean Tragedy, we hit upon a uniquely psychoanalytic answer to the perennial debate within aesthetics and literary theory. This research can be seen as my contribution to the British psychoanalytic approach to aesthetics: I postulate that ‘great’ art, which recalls deep joy and delight even in destruction, demands an active *nacherleben* of the depressive position as outlined by Melanie Klein. Perhaps this is why the British psychoanalytic aesthetic is such an

unlikely solution to the wider philosophical debate in aesthetics. To think that classicists and literary theorists would go so far as to judge the authenticity or greatness of art by the Kleinian standard seems a distant reality. Should this investigation assist in the greater appreciation of the British psychoanalytic aesthetic and its potential to resolve one of the longest standing debates in aesthetic theory, as to the possibility of judging the greatness of a work of art, all the better. My insertion of the term *nacherleben* is part of my original synthesis of the material and refers to my methodological stance in regards to the act of looking back and reading texts from ancient times.

Applying these considerations to the texts of three Euripidean tragedies (*Alceſtis*, *Heracleidae* and *Hecuba*), I will provide evidence for the British psychoanalytic aesthetic and deepen our appreciation of the sadomasochistic paradox contained in Greek tragedy more generally. This paradox, I argue, guarantees the reparative dialectic I am proposing in respect to the views of Nietzsche, Freud, Klein and Segal. ‘To what extent is ‘aesthetic reparation’ possible through a reliving, or *nacherleben* of, primitive (and thereby destructive and creative) libidinal psychic forces, given symbolic expression in Euripidean tragedy?’ is already a psychoanalytic question, and requires a definition of the new term ‘aesthetic reparation’, before it can be answered. I intend to show that Aristotle⁹, Nietzsche¹⁰ and Dilthey¹¹ all form an equally necessary coalition toward a contemporary synthesis of my material, and toward my psychoanalytic conclusions.

I began with the problems of ‘text’ and ‘interpretation’, which led me to formulate a fiercely sceptical and perspectival approach to the interpretation of these ancient texts. A broadly hermeneutical framework is elaborated, within which the poetic and phenomenological aspects of our psychological response to tragedy as readers can be brought to the fore. I argue that our internal response to tragedy and the meaning it contains can only be articulated in psychoanalytic terms. What I mean by this is that by examining our reactions to the violent and sadomasochistic

⁹Aristotle (c. 335 BCE). *Poetics: A general estimate of the comparative worth of Epic Poetry and Tragedy*. Translated by S. H. Butcher (1898). Macmillan and Company

¹⁰Nietzsche, F. (1871) *The Birth of the Tragedy or Hellenism and Pessimism*. Translated by W. M. A. Haussmann. (1910); (1901) *The Will to Power* (Notes written 1883-1888). Translated by W. Kaufman and R. J. Hollingdale. (Ed.) (1968).

¹¹Dilthey, W. (1894). *Ideas Concerning a Descriptive and Analytic Psychology*. Gesammelte Schriften. (1924)

action in the plays, we have an opportunity to confront deeply repressed parts of ourselves, which otherwise would have no mirror to reflect their power and prophylactic import.

The symbolism in Greek tragedy speaks to so much of our primitive psychic longings and loss that it is almost impossible to ignore. Ancient Greek thinkers did not neglect the emotional therapeutic aspect of tragedy, and this chapter explores the classical literary reception of Greek tragedy, from Gorgias (485 BC), Aristotle (384 BC), Timocles (324 BC) to Nietzsche in the nineteenth century and post-classical literary critics such as Halliwell, Kitto, Debnar and Allan. The literary approach points to, but does not have the vocabulary or conviction to elaborate in any substance, the unconscious dynamics implicated in the symbolism of tragic texts. The psychoanalytic reception and attempt to understand this profound emotional therapeutic, takes off where classical and literary criticism can go no further, and in this way, the psychoanalytic aesthetic can be seen to be an extension and development of classical philology.

Chapter III on Psychoanalytic Aesthetics examines the dialogue that has been forged historically between the discipline of depth psychology and the philosophical discipline of aesthetics, focussing on the elaboration of pleasurable instances of dramatic pain, toward the conclusion that art can be considered an expression of the depressive position as understood by Kleinians. These chapters make up Part I, which attempts to survey the previous scholarship around tragedy, to both situate my own research within a strong interdisciplinary tradition, as well as to demonstrate how my own particular *psycho-poetic* approach is expedient and original. Part I, as a whole functions as an extended literature review on materials relevant to this project. Although a separate and more precise literature review is conducted later in relation to the introduction of a new term in the psychoanalytic aesthetic nomenclature, when ‘aesthetic reparation’ is looked at more closely in Chapter IV

Part II is my ‘Attempt at Psychological Realism’ in regard to the Euripidean texts. I begin with an overview in Chapter IV of contemporary psychoanalytic aesthetics drawing from *Culture and the*

Unconscious (2007) (edited by Caroline Bainbridge, Susannah Radstone, Michael Rustin and Candida Yates); *Psychoanalytic Aesthetics: An Introduction to the British School* (2009), by Nicky Glover; *Dream, Phantasy and Art* (1991), and *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (2007) by Hanna Segal. I then go on to provide a genealogy for the new term ‘aesthetic reparation’, which becomes crucial in understanding the intrapsychic processes involved in our textual encounters and includes the work of Klein, Segal, Meltzer and Bion. Despite the concept having not been coined until now, there is a lot of work on the reparative dimension of aesthetic moment and this can be considered as supporting evidence for the new term. The final part of this chapter deals more closely with the connection between unconscious phantasy and ‘Beauty’ and offers a psycho-genealogy of aesthetic value, i.e., a brief excursus into the previous attempts to adjudicate between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ art, including some detail around the notions of beauty and ugliness, which form an important component of the British psychoanalytic aesthetic.

Chapter V focuses on my critical dialogue between, Nietzsche and Klein, revolving around the notion ‘No Roses Without Thorns’, which talks about the necessary suffering of the individuating psyche as conceived by Kleinians, as well as Nietzsche’s ‘mystery doctrine of tragedy’, which lends Greek tragedy a prophylactic quality. I then discuss whether Aristotle’s ‘pity’ can be relegated to ‘*decadence*’ as Nietzsche believed, or whether by some interesting turn, it can be re-evaluated in Freudian terms as an expression of the catharsis of a negative, masochistic ‘death-wish’. This of course has an impact on the interpretations which follow and make up Part III of this research. Chapter V also tackles the discrepancy between the Aristotelian and Nietzschean appraisal of Euripides’ stagecraft. Aristotle’s praise for Euripides stands in contradistinction to Nietzsche’s *decadence* critique and I find psychoanalytic support for Aristotle in validating Euripides as a reliable, and indeed rich, source of tragic material.

Part III: Chapter VI offers a wholly original reading of the *Alcestis*, concentrating on its ‘spectacular economy of punishment’ as understood by Nietzsche in his writings on the sadomasochistic spirit, guilt, the bad conscience and the ascetic ideal. I detect an isomorphism

between Freud's sadistic agent of human suffering *qua* the superego, which develops out of a primary sadistic-egoism and is enjoyed masochistically, and Nietzsche's middle works which discuss the transcendence of the will, beyond power and suffering, toward the less objectionable pleasure of asceticism. Alcestis' self-sacrifice and Admetus' sadomasochistic compromise in allowing his wife to die for him to live a life that no man would ever want to live, provides textual evidence that is useful in my characterisation of the *Alkestis* as a play dealing primarily with the themes of destructivity twinned with life, guilt, mourning and loss. The *Alkestis* provides an opportunity to read the tragic material as a set of gestures in phantasy which express a great deal of the Nietzschean picture of 'self-overcoming' and much of the Kleinian picture of projective and introjective identification during the oscillating paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. These motifs suggest the potential for the *nacherleben* of our early instinctual life as described by Klein, and their presence supports the thesis that this play engenders the reparative aesthetic required in order for it to be considered a 'great work'.

In Chapter VII, Euripides' *Heracleidae* provides another example, if not the prototype, for the saviour-heroine motif in the figure of Macaria, who like Alcestis, sacrifices her own life for the good of her family name. This provides more evidence for the splitting of internal imagoes and is derived from the symbolic associations to the Goddess Demeter, who demands the noble daughter's sacrifice, and the old Alcmena who ignores the prophecy foretelling the polluting nature of any vengeance on Eurystheus. Alcmena throws Eurystheus to the dogs for tormenting her son Heracles. With Macaria we have the image of 'giver of life', and with Alcmena and Demeter the image of 'taker of life' dominates, and this is one of the fundamental symbolic splits in the image of Mother detectable across the spectrum of Greek myth, and beyond. In the association between Eurystheus' *death* and the *dogs* we can detect "the anxiety engendered by the threat of the loss of the object" (Halpert, 1980, p.391), incumbent upon "the wish to eat and be eaten by mother" (*ibid.*). This symbolic association has also been confirmed by the analysis of dreams, to represent early super-ego precursors *via* identification with the aggressor. This slight, but final image of Alcmena throwing Eurystheus to the dogs indicates the

potential *nacherleben* of our early oral-sadistic impulses toward our mothers, and according to my thesis would be the hook guaranteeing our aesthetic pleasure: making the *Heracleidae* categorically a great work of art, according to the British psychoanalytic aesthetic being applied.

The *Hecuba*, by Euripides in Chapter VII, also offers an exquisite opportunity to ‘relive’ the anxieties associated with the phantasy of the devouring mother, which Kleinians believe is ubiquitous in the paranoid-schizoid position. *Hecuba* herself is shrouded in the associations between ‘dog’, ‘death’, and ‘mother’. In Greek legend she turns into a dog and her rage “that her dead son will be devoured by dogs” (ibid.), is understood by Halpert as the expression of the wish to ‘devour the vitals of that man [Achilles] leeching into his living flesh’ (ibid.). Hecuba *becomes* the devouring dog “expressing her own and her dead son’s wish for revenge” (ibid.). As such she represents the orally incorporating phallic mother, herself a consequence of the devouring infantile psyche. A deeper appreciation of the figure of the devouring mother as containing “the projection and displacement of the child’s own rage at being abandoned” (ibid, p.392), reiterates the *Hecuba’s* potential to evoke a *nacherleben* of early infantile struggles according to the Kleinian developmental scheme. Such potential again confirms the *Hecuba’s* place amongst Euripides’ greatest works.

Chapter VIII relays my conclusions and re-addresses my textual interpretations in conjunction with the theoretical contributions of this thesis. Re-focusing the reader on the over-arching themes of loss, mourning, punishment and guilt, to wit: the whole gamut of primitive emotions surrounding destructive urges being twinned with life, in my readings of Euripides plays. I will restate my research questions in this discussion and re-iterate the necessity to more fully appreciate the contribution British psychoanalytic aesthetics can make to our investigations in art. Further research questions will also be discussed here.

I) *Tragic Paradox and The Classical and Post-Classical
Reception of Greek Tragedy*

Early Greek literary criticism (and certain later developments) emphasise the role of the emotions in tragedy: tragedy *qua* emotional therapeutics. This raises the question as to whether such emotions are ‘deep’ and genuinely transcendent of particular cultures (i.e., basic human emotion) or whether reconstructing an emotional culture requires a complex effort of historical imagination or is impossible. In either case, exploring the psychoanalytic dimension is imperative because (a) otherwise, such attempts to describe tragedy are often beholden to superficial psychological insights; (b) psychoanalysis has already paid specific attention to tragedy and the emotions; (c) psychoanalysis has made tragedy central to its theoretical constitution. Although I am working toward a psychoanalytic contextualisation at this point, without a general theory of tragedy, I am beholden to classical literary criticism in order to begin this investigation.

Gorgias’ *Encomium of Helen* (424B.C./1999) is possibly the earliest critical model of tragedy we have access to. It describes the “pity, fear and other passions the soul undergoes or ‘suffers’... when listening to poetry” (Halliwell, 2005, p.396). Gorgias makes a number of decisive statements about tragedy, which bear repeating here:

- (I) “Speech is a powerful lord, which by means of the finest and most invisible body effects the divinest works... can stop fear... banish grief... create joy and nurture pity” (§8);
- (II) “Fearful shuddering... tearful pity and grievous longing come upon its hearers, and at the actions and physical sufferings of others in good fortunes and in evil fortunes, through the agency of words, the soul is wont to experience a suffering of its own” (§9);
- (III) “Sacred incantations sung with words are bearers of pleasure and banishers of pain, for, merging with opinion in the soul, the power of the incantation is wont to beguile it...persuade it and alter it by witchcraft” (§10), and
- (IV) “The effect of speech upon the condition of the soul is comparable to the power of drugs over the nature of bodies. For just as different drugs dispel different secretions from the body, and some bring an end to disease and others to life, so also in the case of speeches, some distress, others delight, some cause fear, others make the hearers bold, and some drug and bewitch the soul with a kind of evil persuasion” (Gorgias, 424B.C./1999, §14).

As one of the first articulations of ‘aesthetic’ processes, Gorgias already hints at much of what I aim to detail in this thesis, such as the emotional content, which I believe is genuinely transcendent of culture and therefore is basic human emotion, and the intermingling of pleasure and pain, for which I turn to Nietzsche and Freud to substantiate. Halliwell, a prominent literary critic, discerns ambivalence in Gorgias’ attitude toward the blameworthiness of deception ‘poetic or otherwise’ and favours bringing out the “metaphors of soul-magic and soul-medicine, with the traditionally acknowledged delight of poetic ‘bewitchment’”¹² (Halliwell, 2005, p.396). This highlights the serious tragic paradox: how does one acquire wisdom through “an emotionally psychotropic experience” (ibid, p.397)?

Aristotle saw tragedy as, the ‘mere improvisation’ (*mimesis*) (cf. *Poetics* c. 335 BC, IV) of a ‘form of action’, which aided the ‘*katharsis*’ of emotions in the audience members or readers, such as pity-and-fear (ibid, VI). On this reading ‘*katharsis*’ means ‘purgation’ of pent-up emotion. The psychoanalyst, Alford, however prefers to read ‘*katharsis*’ as “the clarification of the emotions: truth telling about the passions, including the confusion and disruption they bring” (Alford, 1993, p.23), which he borrows from the eminent critic Martha Nussbaum (1992). Tragedy invites psychoanalytic speculation regarding our own emotions and motivations by representing actions as being caused by *thoughts* and *characters that we can identify with*. By paying close attention to these internal elements of our response to three Euripidean tragedies, I believe we can see what Aristotle is talking about when he says that the lesson we learn from tragedy is that: “character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse” (Aristotle, *Poetics*, VI). Hence, it is primarily the *action of the tragic characters that we imitate in our phantasy, and by virtue of which we feel either comfort or despair* (provided the artwork is ‘great’ according to the Kleinian standard which will be detailed later).

¹²“This leaves enough room to infer that poetic ‘deception’ may have either a positive or a negative force: negative, if it simply distorts belief, but positive if it arouses rewarding emotions and induces hearers to grasp an underlying insight beneath the surface of stories” (Halliwell, 2005, p.396).

The *Poetics* extracts the principles of tragedy, which constitute the elements necessary for readers to respond in the emotional-cathartic way Aristotle lays out. The tragic hero must first demonstrate their recognition [*anagnorisis*] of ‘who is who’: “Recognition... is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune” (ibid, XI). Then there must be an accompanying reversal [*peripeteia*] of the situation: “a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity” (ibid.). Recognition, combined with reversal produces “either pity or fear... [and] it is upon such situations that the issues of good or bad fortune will depend” (ibid.). Finally, there must be a *Pathos*, or destructive act. The reversal of the situation and recognition “turn upon surprises” (ibid.), whereas the ‘scene of suffering’ turns upon “a destructive or painful action such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds and the like” (ibid.). During what Aristotle calls the ‘Complication’ (ibid, XVIII) of the play, the protagonist, carrier of Fault (*hamartia*), is inexorably compelled to progress from a confusing ambiguity of doubles, where “Each Yes hides a No. Each No bears the shadow of a Yes” (Green, 1975, p.356), through *metaphora* (the art of discerning similarities), to the ‘Unravelling or Denouement’ (cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, XVIII), which includes the recognition of true identities and the necessary suffering of *pathos* that this entails. Aristotle goes on to differentiate between the imperfect though simple plot, whereby either a virtuous man moves from prosperity to adversity, or a “bad man pass[es]... from adversity to prosperity” (ibid, XIII), and the more perfect but complex plot involving a “character between these two extremes... who is not eminently good and just... whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty” (ibid.). Misfortune is key in the Aristotelian model: the tragic hero must experience the reversal of good fortune in order for pity-and-fear to be purged or cleansed in the spectator.

Aesthetically speaking, Aristotle believed that in superior poetry, “Fear and pity may be aroused by... the inner structure of the piece... that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt into pity at what takes place” (ibid, XIV). This confirms that the proper pleasure, or ‘thrill’, that *Aristotle* demands of tragedy is the pleasure afforded us

through the quality of pity-and-fear that we experience, *through imitation (mimesis)*, aroused by the inner structure of the piece. What makes these narratives so compelling to us as psychological creatures is alluded to by Aristotle when he states that this quality of pity-and-fear “must be impressed upon the... tragic incident[s]... *between those who are near and dear to one another...* [and] the deed must... be... unwittingly... *perpetrated in ignorance, and the discovery made afterwards*” (ibid, my italics). For this reason, the tragedians were compelled to source the miseries of their plots from the songs of those houses “whose history contains moving incidents like these” (ibid.)¹³. In representing men who are “irascible or indolent, or have other defects of character” (ibid, XV), the poet, according to Aristotle, “should preserve the type *and yet ennoble it*” (ibid, my italics). Thus, according to Aristotle’s *Poetics*, tragedy is understood as a preservation and ennoblement of the emotional consequences of human error within the human family and the observance of its action as an opportunity for the release or clarification of difficult emotion.

Gorgias’ *Encomium*, Halliwell’s ‘*soul-magic*’, Aristotle’s *Poetics* and Alford’s ‘*katharsis*’, all emphasise a quasi-psychological approach to tragedy. Therefore there is legitimacy in deepening our psycho-poetic sense of the violent and irrational emotion struggling to find expression in the text. Such a deepening must involve a further engagement however with the complicated subject of the tragic paradox. Philosophy would seem well equipped to tackle the ‘paradoxical’ in tragedy, and to look at tragedy philosophically begs the question “what counts as tragedy”? (Halliwell, 2005, p.400). To ask such a question presupposes a valuation of existence itself and forges a re-evaluation of life on the anvil of extreme suffering (Halliwell, 2002, pp.98-117). This suggests, in a profoundly psychoanalytic mien, that:

“Tragedy... as poetry... condenses a whole evaluation of life into scenes of convulsive human grief and failure. By doing so it... draws out, but also reinforces, deep grief-directed instincts within the psyche: tragedy is rooted, the argument suggests, in the conflicting propensities of the human mind itself” (Halliwell, 2005, p.400).

This re-evaluation could be guided by the conscious selection or distortion of material by the

¹³As when Admetus thinks that he can avoid destruction by allowing his beloved wife to sacrifice herself for him, only to discover that he cannot live with the guilt of what he has done; or when Oedipus unwittingly kills his father and sleeps with his mother, upon the discovery of which she kills herself and Oedipus blinds himself.

tragedian towards a particular emotional or moral purpose. Plato sees this pulling of the mind from 'higher truth' to 'lower falsehood' as something to be transcended with "philosophical wisdom that sees beyond the attachments expressed in human emotions" (ibid, p.401). Aristotle, however, sees the very same emotions that Plato seeks to transcend as valuable in and of themselves. Aristotle's *Poetics* comes closest to a theory of tragedy than anything in the classical period. He sees tragedy *qua* poetic art, servicing a "quasi-philosophical human instinct to understand the world" (ibid, p.402). Combining analytical and historical considerations, Aristotle aims at the essence of tragedy and poses a working definition:

"tragedy is the representation of an action... of magnitude, in language embellished by distinct forms... employing the mode of enactment rather than narrative, and through pity and fear accomplishing katharsis of such emotions" (Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1449b, 24-28)

Action and character interact in a way that, when understood properly, "grasp[s] the 'universals' that Aristotle believes poetry... somehow communicates... not didactic messages but... a rich subtext of meaning that underlies the integrated depiction of 'actions and life'" (Halliwell, 2005, p.404). *Katharsis* is here understood as the "overall ethical benefit that accrues from such an intense yet fulfilling integrated experience... not reducible to either 'purgation' or 'purification'. But... with an old Greek tradition... of deep sensitivity to the soul-changing powers of poetry and music" (ibid, p.406). This is not quite the meaning of catharsis in psychoanalysis, but it does bring us to the 'soul-conjuring' significance of tragedy.

Postclassical literary revaluations also containing the seeds of psychoanalytic criticism have focused on "the exhibition of great suffering, pathos and... the arousal of pity... beyond that... a debate about the relationship between tragedy and history" (ibid, p.405). Tragedy betrays just how disastrous our lives can become and the Stoics' "larger enterprise of reforming human emotions... change[s] the very idea of what constitutes the tragic" (Halliwell, 2005, p.406).¹⁴ For

¹⁴"Arguments for eradicating most emotions were the Stoic thesis that one misvalues indifferents, the approval of serenity, and the point that pleasant emotions are inextricably tied to unpleasant ones, and that ordinary love turns to hate. The case against eradication is not always well argued. For the Stoic eradication is not suppression or gritting of teeth, but re-evaluation, nor do the Stoics remove all motivation. Freedom from emotional judgements, even if not from non-judgmental shocks, is imaginable from Epictetus' description of his training methods, and it was further pictured by Aristotle, Cicero, and Christians by imagining the situation of God or of the next life" (Sorabji, 2002, p.182).

Epictetus “misery is measured by the tragic subject’s own tortured reaction to the loss of external prosperity. ‘Tragic ‘suffering,’ pathos, is truly in the mind like all Stoic virtue and vice” (ibid.). Epictetus prescribes a more detached evaluation of the hero’s *pathe* (sufferings); “recognizing how the latter’s unhappiness is really self-inflicted... the result of false judgments of value” (ibid.).¹⁵

All of these views concentrate on protagonists. However Nietzsche, *contra* Aristotle brings the choral performance and its attendant emotional response in the audience to the fore, which “anticipates his future argument in *BT*, where he derives tragedy ‘from the [Dionysian] spirit of music” (Henrichs, 2005, p.448). Emphasising the theatrical and performative function of tragedy as something carried by the song and dance of the chorus¹⁶, howbeit a missing dimension of tragedy for contemporary readers, elevates Nietzsche’s approach to the status of “one of the precursors of dominant trends in the current criticism of tragedy” (ibid.). The Chorus, which is, according to Nietzsche, pleasing to the Platonic ear, represents “an ideal poetic construct that transcends and transforms reality” (ibid, p. 451)¹⁷, and the tragic idea is “that of the cult of Dionysus: the dissolution of individuation into another world order: guidance toward the belief in transcendence through the horrible terrors of existence” (ibid, p.449). The hero for Nietzsche is a ‘mere mask’ (Nietzsche, *BT*, §10) of the suffering Dionysus, and in contrast to the Socratic rationalism, which he believed infected Euripidean drama especially with an optimistic dialectic, Nietzsche argues that the tragic worldview originates from “the deep spring of shared suffering... [and] is by nature pessimistic” (Henrichs, 2005, p.452). Whenever Nietzsche deals

¹⁵“tragic characters make big mistakes about the significance of death (and therefore the value of life). From this perspective, to understand and learn from tragedy will be to grasp the nature of such mistakes, not to be emotionally moved by their perpetrators” (Halliwell, 2005, p.408).

¹⁶“music provided the model of “solemnity, sorrow and passion” that inspired the tragedians” (Henrichs, 2005, p.449).

¹⁷“the Greek man of culture felt himself neutralized in the presence of the satiric chorus: and this is the most immediate effect of the Dionysian tragedy, that the state and society, and, in general, the gaps between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of oneness, which leads back to the heart of nature. The metaphysical comfort, - with which, as I have here intimated, every true tragedy dismisses us—that in spite of the perpetual change of phenomena, life at bottom is indestructibly powerful and pleasurable, this comfort appears with corporeal lucidity as the satiric chorus, as the chorus of natural beings, who live ineradicable as it were behind all civilisation, and who, in spite of the ceaseless change of generation and the history of nations, remain for ever the same.

With this chorus the deep-minded Hellene, who is so singularly qualified for the most delicate and severe suffering, consoles himself: -- he who has glanced with piercing eye into the very heart of the terrible destructive processes of so-called universal history, as also into the cruelty of nature, and is in danger of longing for a Buddhistic negation of the will. Art saves him, and through art life saves him—for herself” (Nietzsche, *BT*, §7).

with ‘pessimism’, it would be fair to say that Schopenhauer is not far away from his mind:

“Schopenhauer’s ‘principle of individuation,’ his doctrine of universal suffering with its innate pessimism, and the privileged role he assigned to music made a lasting impression on Nietzsche and determined his understanding of Dionysus, Greek art and Greek tragedy... According to Schopenhauer, the driving force behind every activity on the human and cosmic level is a primordial and irrational ‘will’ which expresses itself in the world of phenomena, a dream world based on illusion as the ‘will to life.’ Individually this force is experienced through one’s awareness of one’s own self as will. This process of the objectivation of the universal will in individual bodies, urges, and life-experiences – the *principium individuationis*, which is invoked in eleven of the twenty-five sections of *BT* – is an ongoing, never-ending effort because the eternal striving of the will cannot be satisfied. Dissatisfaction with the insatiability of the will is the cause for endless suffering in the world. The only escape from suffering is the complete surrender of one’s own individuality, which is tantamount to a renunciation of the individual will to life” (ibid, p.454).

That Nietzsche’s tragic vision was as daring and irresistible as it was iconoclastic is neither in doubt nor under discussion here, although perhaps it should be. Henrichs finds it necessary to resist Nietzsche’s argument that tragedy “constitutes a mirror image of the universal scenario of cosmic and human suffering” (ibid, p.455) on the basis that the Apollinian and Dionysian impulses Nietzsche integrates in his thesis, play *very different roles* in what actually remains of Greek culture and tragedy. Nevertheless, Rorty is correct to honour Nietzsche with the inauguration of a paradigm shift in disciplines such as “classics, philology... [and] comparative literature” (Rorty, 2004, p.4). Since Nietzsche was one of the fiercest critics of Euripides, my selection of Euripidean tragedy also puts me in direct opposition to him. For this reason, and for reasons to be discussed, Nietzsche deserves a place in this brief genealogy of how Greek tragedy has been received in the past, and helps to position this thesis in a broadly pluralistic stance in terms of my own reception of Greek tragedy and its quasi-psychological dimension.

Admittedly, “dramatic figures of Greek tragedy are not coloured by much explicit psychology (Euripidean tragedy is the most explicitly psychological)” (Henrichs, 2005, p.481). Literary criticism stops short of locating the dramatic and theatrical energy inside the very psychology of the characters themselves, finding such a location “extremely demanding” (ibid.). Whereas, depth psychology takes this location as its starting point and elaborates in fine detail just how

that energy operates on the human subjects involved: between the characters themselves as well as in the author and audience/reader. Psychoanalysis it would seem, is our best hope of understanding the unconscious dynamics at play in this triangular situation.

Having now drawn the evidence for my own particular approach to tragedy, the following remarks will take account of, albeit disparate contemporary insights which approach tragedy differently, and either bolster or conflict with the psycho-poetic approach fostered in this thesis.

Halliwell argues that ancient Greek tragedy inaugurated “one of the major traditions of Western drama and poetry... motivated a history of critical reflection and theorizing that has continued unbroken to this day” (Halliwell, 2005, p.394). He also argues that theories of tragedy cannot escape paradox nor a “confrontation with extremes of action and experience that stretch comprehension to its limits” (ibid.). Halliwell appeals to the puzzle put forward by Augustine (Confessions 3.2.2) as to why we should desire to witness the terrible events in tragedy¹⁸.

Highlighting the problem of taking an Archimedean standpoint “at one further remove, [toward]... what arguably lies beyond the reach of explanation” (ibid.), i.e., the paradoxical striving of tragedy to “give articulate form and voice to realms of consciousness that resist the resources of coherent expression” (ibid.). Despite this ‘remove’ the very idea of tragedy, has certainly been a preoccupation of the western tradition. Classical responses such as Timocles’, which we find quoted at length in Athenaeus’ *The Deipnosophists*¹⁹, is noteworthy for its precision:

“Man is an animal by nature miserable;
And life has many grievous things in it.
Therefore he has invented these reliefs
To ease his cares; for oft the mind forgets
Its own discomforts while it soothes itself
In contemplation of another’s woes,
And e’en derives some pleasure and instruction.
For first, I’d have you notice the tragedians;
What good they do to every one. The poor man
Sees Telephus was poorer still than he,
And bears his own distress more easily.
...So that every one,

¹⁸“What is the purpose and value of tragedy? Can its audiences really learn something, or somehow benefit, from watching the sufferings of characters who often go to the edge of what is possible even to imagine?” (Halliwell, 2005, p.394)

¹⁹The date of this text’s origin is unknown though it is suspected to have been written in Rome in the early years of the 3rd Century A.D, by an Egyptian (Hellenistic) scholar Athenaeus of Naucratis.

Seeing that others have been more unfortunate,
Learns his own griefs to bear with more content”

(Timocles Fragment: ‘Women celebrating the Festival of Bacchus’).

Timocles highlights the greater misfortune of the tragic hero, and “Building on the folk wisdom that life is hard” (Halliwell, 2005, p.395), magnifies the scope of our reflection on human suffering: “a reflection that affords spectators a perspective on their own lives and makes their troubles seem more endurable” (ibid.). We must not forget, that psychoanalysis seems best placed to account for the content and dynamics of the ‘troubles’ that Halliwell speaks of. Timocles’ identification of the “imaginative-cum-emotional enthrallment, *psuchagogia*... ‘soul-conjuring’²⁰... related to pleasure, hedone... [and the] process of edification or enlightenment... *paidentheis*” (ibid.), indicates a didactic element in the reception of tragedy as well: the audience enjoys and is educated “as though pleasure and understanding are somehow interwoven in the viewing of tragic drama” (ibid.).

For Kitto, the meaning of Greek tragedy registers deeply, apprehensively and non-dogmatically: it is “something as intuitive as that, whatever it is, which moves a composer to activity” (Kitto, 1939/97, p.vi), thereby initiating an identity between the poetic impulse of the author, which fostered or engendered the culmination of the work itself, and the meaning imparted to the viewer or reader. Such an identity of poetic and meaningful force may turn out to be a difficult proposition to verify. However, based on a sound understanding of the psychoanalytic notions of projection, introjection and projective identification, such a proposition will be defended.

Interestingly, Kitto prescribes treating the plays “as plays and not as documents” (ibid, p.vi) in order that we free ourselves from ‘the tyranny of the subject.’ Perhaps embracing this tyranny is exemplified in my particular approach but I do not thereby deny that the texts dealt with here, were written as plays. They are plays; I simply restrict myself, for the reasons already mentioned,

²⁰“‘Soul-conjuring’ could clearly encompass various aspects of tragedy’s capacity to compel the minds and imaginations of its audiences. The idea distilled a culture of emotionalism (scrutinised, with an ironic eye...) that undoubtedly surrounded tragedy in classical Athens was rooted in the psychological intensity of the plays themselves.” (Halliwell, 2005, p.395).

to their interpretation as texts, textuality being their most basic constitution. I am interested in the significance of the sadomasochistic action in Euripidean tragedy, through a psychoanalytic lens, not in distinguishing whether tragedy should be read or performed, although clearly both mediums would contribute to a greater appreciation and interpretation of the art form. Kitto, like myself, seeks to grope toward “the fundamental tragic conception of each play” (ibid.), in order to (contrary to my aims) “explain their form and style” (ibid.). We both agree that, “there is no such thing as ‘the form of Greek Tragedy’” (ibid.), only I argue that, at some deeply unconscious level *there is a form to our response to tragedy, revolving around a sadomasochistic core*, which psychoanalysis with the help and hindrance of Nietzsche’s philosophy can at least contrive to articulate. Still, following Kitto:

“the meaning contained in many a dramatic speech or chorus may be as direct as the meaning of a passage in Aristotle’s Ethics, but that meaning... is... more akin to the meaning of a Rembrandt or of a Beethoven sonata” (ibid.).

Kitto’s task is to “without discredit begin with what is in the poet’s head, without inquiring how it got there” (ibid, p.vii). Whereas I am trying, without discredit, to grant what was in the poet’s head an ontological status, which would explain how it was mirrored *via* the work of art, to the psyche of the viewer, and thereby to examine the significance of those tragic contents with a psychoanalytic explanation of how they got there. For Kitto, Euripides’ unique fashion of tragic thought explains the drama, whereas, in my opinion the same fashion of thought helps to explain the content and force of our response as readers. It is a subtle modification but explanatory nonetheless. We will come back to Kitto’s literary treatment of Euripidean characterization later. The other scholarly source I will draw from is the Oxford ‘Companion to Greek Tragedy’ (2005), edited by Gregory and containing many useful articles on the contexts of, elements in, approaches to, and reception of Greek tragedy.

In view of the context Debnar asks, “What is the relationship between tragedy’s mythical past and fifth-century Athenian audience’s present?” (Debnar, 2005, p.4), highlighting the primary historical context of Greek tragedy within fifth-century Athens. ‘History’ for Debnar, refers

(only in one sense) to what Pelling calls “real world events” (Pelling, 1997b, p.213), but she insists that history “does not consist of empirical facts to which poetry responds. Historians as well as tragic poets compose narratives” (Debnar, 2005, p.5). Here we have a proposed identity between history and tragic poetry, which would be supported by the fact that the first histories were written by poets. First was a history of mythology, and poetry was the tool used to express it. On some level, this does blur the distinction between factuality and fantasy, but only in a way that allows for a deeper analysis of meaning than would be possible by imposing such a violent dichotomy. It is not important here whether the events narrated in the tragedies actually happened or not: what matters is *what* the portrayal and witness of such mythical events *means to someone*.

For Allan, “the dramatic context discourages any naïve optimism about the human condition: suffering and death dominate the action of these plays” (Allan, 2005, p.78), just as they dominate the action of life. If we want to understand the significance of this *pathos*, we must look to psychoanalysis. The final context elucidated by Allan is the role of ethics in tragedy. He sees in tragedy an exploration of such ethical questions as: “Is revenge justified? How can the emotions be controlled? How is one to live well?... Can I know anything? and How should one live?” (ibid, pp. 80-81), and based on the “variety of character, attitudes, principles, and emotions presented in each play” (ibid, p.80), he poses a ‘moral universe’ which “provokes and challenges the sympathies and moral judgments of the audience” (ibid.). Tragedy *qua* the dramatisation of conflict and suffering obtaining to the heroic myths, addresses:

“knowledge, politics, religion, and ethics in ways that overlap with early Greek philosophy. Like the interlocutors of a philosophical dialogue, the characters of tragedy present various points of view on...complex issues... yet each play, taken as a whole, does not lead the audience to a single definitive answer: rather than expound dogma, tragedy provokes further questions” (ibid, p.81).

Tragedy does not elucidate a philosophical system nor establish theoretical thinking but

Euripides in particular does explore various philosophical problems.²¹ As a whole, Allan sees the genre of tragedy as facilitating a more reflective appreciation of what it is to be human, or what it is to be, as Oedipus expresses it, ‘a Child of Chance’. Thus, Allan can maintain that tragedians sustained the “poet’s traditional role as a figure of wisdom... [and] contributed significantly to the development of Greek thought” (ibid.). Oedipus was, as we know, the particular pursuit of Freud’s during the inception of his most pioneering and misunderstood psychoanalytic thinking.

II) Freud and Greek Tragedy

“Suffering of every kind is thus the subject-matter of drama, and from this suffering it promises to give the audience pleasure” (Freud, 1906, p.307)

Freud never devoted an extended discussion to tragedy as a whole. There are, however, a number of rubrics to the Freudian oeuvre which help to systematise the following discussion. These are: his psychosexual theory as expressed in his early articulation of the Oedipus complex; the role of identification in mental processes; the introduction of the death drive; sadomasochism; and finally the context of familial conflict. There are also some very insightful secondary sources on Freud and tragedy, which will form an important component to this chapter. As a special class of myth, the tragedies have an endopsychic constitution within the psyche: as psychological projections. The contents of Greek tragedy are, therefore, amenable to psychoanalytic interpretations like dreams, as texts. What follows is an attempt to lend support to Freud’s broad scope when it came to tragedy: not just to identifying what is ‘tragic,’ but in using psychoanalytic knowledge to actually try and explain something about the core of tragedy and its effect on us as readers.

²¹An example that will be explored in this thesis is Admetus in Euripides *Alcestis*, who goes through a process of painful learning.

1. Oedipal Themes in Tragedy

In his treatment of Sophocles' *Oedipus* in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) Freud says that “His destiny moves us only because it might have been ours—because the oracle laid the same curse upon us before our birth... to direct our first sexual impulse towards our mother and first hatred and... murderous wish against our father” (Freud, 1900, p.262). For Freud, our dreams convince us that these oedipal longings are real, forging an indestructible link between myth and dream at the very heart of psychoanalysis. The Oedipus tragedy is taken to be “the fulfilment of our own childhood wishes” (ibid.), and importantly, our moral or instinctual retreat from the narrowly sexual Oedipus motif is sensed by Freud to be a measure of “the whole force of repression by which those wishes have since... been held down in us” (ibid, p. 263). So not only does Freud use the tragedy as inspiration for his theory of the Oedipus complex, he also uses our modern reaction to the incestuous and castrating (psychosexual) themes therein, as evidence for his theory of repression. For Freud, oedipal thoughts, wishes and phantasies that are objectionable to the ego, are converted unconsciously into symbols only when they are repressed, and this objectionality tends to revolve around sexual contents. Therefore, as the neo-Freudian critic Merkur makes clear “the omnipotence of symbolism in human life implies the omnipotence of unconscious sexuality” (Merkur, 2005, p.16).

The theme of self-blinding in Oedipus is interpreted by Ferenczi (1912) as a symbolic representation of castration (also central to Freud's model) and an amplification is added with the etymological derivation of ‘swollen foot’ from ‘Oedipus’, as alluding to an erect penis. Whether this kind of ‘free-association’ hinders or fortifies Freud's project is not under discussion here, although it clearly begs for investigation. What is important is that predominantly, the orthodox psychoanalytic interpretations of oedipal motives and themes revolve around the phantasies of the child and do not address the concomitant phantasies, also alluded to within the text, of the adults (Jocasta's abandonment/incest; Laius' fear/abandonment/jealousy, etc.).

There are a multitude of foci, even within the domain of oedipal themes, which different schools of psychoanalysis have highlighted: the differences are not so much in their theories of tragedy but in their theories of what the unconscious contains.

Merkur reminds us that Freud was almost singular in his perspective that the psychoanalysis of the Oedipus play evinced the psychodynamics of Sophocles and not of Oedipus *per se*. Rudnytsky (1987) notes Sophocles' omission of the curse of Laius as an anticipation of Freud's rejection of paternal seduction and culpability in favour of “the son as a tragedy of self-knowledge” (Rudnytsky, 1987, p.255). French neoclassicism, *via* Seneca's *Oedipus*, introduced love stories “and reduced... Oedipus to a subplot” (Merkur, 2005, p. 10), whereas German Romanticism valued the “Faustian heroism of opposing fate, no matter how hopelessly” (ibid.). Freud himself simply claims the universal validity of the Oedipus complex, as Rollo May (1961) says: “Freud proposed a view of the infant as destructive... For Freud... the Oedipus myth was genuinely tragic” (May, 1961, p. 45), and it was this destructive side of the tragedy that contained its central meaning.

Oedipal themes are central to the Freudian approach to the interpretation of Greek tragedy. Born from Freud's psychoanalysis of Sophocles' *Oedipus*, these interpretations indicate instinctual longings involving the child and their parental figures. Since these familial dynamics are rife in the corpus of both tragic and mythic texts from ancient Greece and beyond, they provide a useful starting point for a psychoanalytic interpretive method. This will be explored further in subsection 5.

2. The role of 'identification' in aesthetic encounters

Psychoanalysis can itself be seen as a development of tragedy and the kind of thinking around tragedy that was initiated in the classical period. It too is concerned with the emotional consequences of human error within the human family, and it too offers the chance of releasing 'pent-up emotion', by which is meant, *repressed emotion that is significant in symptom-formation*. We can view Aristotle's *Poetics* through a depth-psychological lens, and appreciate that when we add Freud's notion of identification we gain a deeper understanding of why and how the recognition, reversal and *pathos* of the hero can provide any kind of release in the reader whatsoever. For Aristotle, we experience pity-and-fear *for* the hero, and are thereby purged or cleansed of those emotions, but this leaves the hero as 'other'. Whereas, according to depth psychology, *we identify with the hero and experience internally, everything the hero experiences in the play*.

Perhaps it is going too far to say that from a depth-psychological perspective we experience every thought, wish, action and suffering of the hero. Yet, from this perspective, however much we do experience, we experience as 'other-within-the-self', for we have projected ourselves *onto* the hero, much as we have introjected *from* the hero, and it is precisely *this* that guarantees our emotional-cathartic involvement in the play, precisely *this* that guarantees our getting anything out of it whatsoever. In 1906, Freud explains the role of identification in the spectator-stage actor paradigm. The spectator, Freud concludes:

"longs to feel and to act and to arrange things according to his desires—in short, to be a hero. And the playwright and actor enable him to do this by allowing him to *identify himself* with a hero" (Freud, 1906, p.305).

Without an identification with the hero on the stage or in the play, there is little possibility of enjoyment for Freud. The 'mental act' of identification, Freud says in 1900 during a discussion about hysteria: "consists in the unconscious drawing of an inference" (Freud, 1900, p.149). It is an intrapsychic "assimilation on the basis of a... resemblance... derived from a common element

which remains in the unconscious.” (ibid, p.150) This is about as much as Freud says on the matter until the paper on Group Psychology (1921), when we find, to our great relief, a whole sub-chapter devoted to the subject. Identification, by this point in his career, was known to Freud and psychoanalysis more generally as “the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person” (Freud, 1921, p.105). Identification, then, has a close connection to object relations, or object-cathexes, as Freud called them. Fundamentally ambivalent, identification, Freud says:

“can turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal. It behaves like a derivative of the first, oral phase of the organization of the libido, in which the object that we long for and prize is assimilated by eating and is in that way annihilated as such” (ibid, p.105).

Freud believes identification, between a boy and his father for example, is the equivalent of the boy wanting to be like the father. This kind of oedipal identification “is therefore already possible before any sexual object-choice has been made” (ibid, p.106). Such identification “endeavours to mould a person's own ego after the fashion of the one that has been taken as a model” (ibid.). Freud also detects identification “under the conditions in which symptoms are constructed, that is, where there is repression and where the mechanisms of the unconscious are dominant” (ibid, p.107), as such, “in a regressive way it becomes a substitute for a libidinal object-tie, as it were by means of introjection of the object into the ego” (ibid, pp.107-108). Our identification with the tragic hero means that our enjoyment of tragedy is based on an illusion. Our suffering is mediated by the fact that we are not actually the suffering hero, and as Freud says, because “after all it is only a game, which can threaten no damage” (Freud, 1906, p.306).

3. The Death-Instinct

It would be difficult to characterise the Freudian contribution to the interpretation of Greek tragedy without managing the complex issue of the death-instinct. In his paper on 'The Uncanny' (1919), Freud discusses the instinctual character of unconscious repetitions as well as their independence from the pleasure principle:

“For it is possible to recognise the dominance in the unconscious mind of a 'compulsion to repeat' proceeding from the instinctual impulses and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts – a compulsion powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their daemonic character” (Freud, 1919, p.238).

Whereas the programme of the pleasure principle, as the binding of excitations and the fulfilment of frustrated instinctual demands had been the primary foundation to human motivation pre-1920, Freud's detection of the repetition compulsion in three clinical phenomena forced him to find a place for unpleasure, pain and even death, in his instinctual theory. Those phenomena were:

“(1) the traumatic neuroses of war, in which anxiety dreams, repeated the original traumatic situation, seemed to contradict the wish-fulfilling function of the dream; (2) children's play, in which a child's repeatedly throwing away and recovering his toy seemed to represent an attempt to master separation from his mother and to convert a passive experience of loss into an active one of recovery; and (3) unconscious repetitions in the transference of painful infantile experiences by acting out instead of remembering.” (Gifford, 1964, pp.633-34).

These clinical instances demonstrated to Freud that his basic instinctual theory of the pleasure-principle as a regulatory principle aiming at the reduction of instinctual tension, had to be re-examined. Now, instead of the reduction of tension caused by instinctual frustrations, the fundamental driving force behind life became the tendency to return to “the inorganic state before life began” (ibid, p.634). Claiming to have “unwittingly steered our course into the harbor of Schopenhauer's philosophy, the ‘aim of all life is death’” (Freud, 1920, p.37), Freud concludes that the organism, regardless the “ever more complicated detours... wishes to die only in its own

fashion” (ibid, pp.38-39). The new dual-instinct theory required that the ego instinct of self-preservation, as well as the aggressive and sadistic instincts all be considered manifestations of the death instinct:

“Freud postulated a primary masochism of destructive drives invested in the self, by analogy with the primary narcissism of the sexual drives” (Gifford, 1964, p.165).

It was now the death drive which aimed at the reduction of instinctual excitation, not through the removal of obstacles to pleasure, as before with the pleasure principle, but through the abolishment of excitation altogether, via the death of the organism.

“the meaning of... evolution... is no longer obscure to us. It must present the struggle between Eros and death, between the instinct of life and the instinct of destruction, as it works itself out in the human species. This struggle is what all life consists of... evolution... as the struggle for life” (Freud, 1930, p.122).

We can trace Freud’s growing cognizance of the death instinct back to several sources. In the ‘*non-vixit*’ dream (Freud, 1900, pp.420-25), Freud encounters Fleiss on the street in conversation with a deceased friend. When Freud tries to explain to Fleiss that the friend will not understand (“non-vivit”) because he is dead, he says that the friend will not live (“non-vixit”): a death-wish disguised in a dream thought if ever there was one! In the ‘breakfast-ship’ dream (Freud, 1900, pp.463-465) the dream-thoughts dealt with the future of Freud’s family after his premature death, reversed in the dream as the sudden death of the Governor Herr. P, which made no impression on Freud in the dream, and led him to analyse this as part of the dream-work trying to disguise his death-wish. Freud makes more explicit findings in 1913/1914 (during the difficult break with Jung) in the form of *Totem and Taboo*, *The Theme of the Three Caskets* and *The Moses of Michelangelo*. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913) Freud discusses the mentation of a bereaving widower, linking obsessive self-reproach with a typical reaction to mourning. In a cunning turn, Freud explains that these self-reproaches, when neurotic and pathological, are justified in the unconscious of the sufferer:

“It is not that the mourner was really responsible for the death... None the less there was something in her – a wish that was unconscious to herself – which would not have been dissatisfied by the occurrence of death” (Freud, 1913, p.116).

In this connection, Freud also discovers the motive behind the belief of “primitive peoples” (ibid, p.117) from pre-history, that the souls of the dead are “transformed into demons” (ibid.) who are felt as persecutory and hostile and against whom the survivors must be defended. Freud now ties the obsessional neurotic's ambivalence toward their emotional life, with the pre-historic urge to “produce a reaction against the hostility latent in their unconscious” (ibid.). This hostility, Freud tells us, is “distressingly felt in the unconscious as satisfaction over the death” (ibid.). Whereas obsessional neurotics displace the hostility towards their own egos in their self-reproaches, because in the unconscious the death wish is felt to be responsible, Freud's picture of pre-historic man paints him as displacing the hostility onto the object of hostility itself, that being the dead themselves. This “defensive procedure” (ibid.), Freud accurately calls 'projection'. So we begin to see how Freud's early forays into the topic of death helped to make sense of new and unforeseen nuances in the literature and history on psychology. One also gains a sense that Klein worked from these papers in her own formulations on the matter.

Klein too, would have derived much material from *The Theme of the Three Caskets* (1913), where Freud elaborates on the symbols of death in the unconscious paying close attention to the dream-work of substitution and reversal in the myth of the Moerae:

“Man, as we know, makes use of his imaginative activity in order to satisfy the wishes that reality does not satisfy. So his imagination rebelled against the recognition of the truth embodied in the myth of the Moerae, and constructed instead the myth derived from it, in which the Goddess of Death was replaced by the Goddess of Love and by what was equivalent to her human shape. The third of the sisters was no longer Death; she was the fairest, best, most desirable and most lovable of women. Nor was this substitution in any way technically difficult: it was prepared for by an ancient ambivalence, it was carried out along a primaeval line of connection which could not long have been forgotten. The Goddess of Love herself, who now took the place of the Goddess of Death, had once been identical with her. Even the Greek Aphrodite had not wholly relinquished her connection with the underworld, although she had long surrendered her chthonic role to other divine figures, to Persephone, or to the tri-form Artemis-Hecate. The great Mother-goddesses of the orient... all seem to have been both creators and destroyers – both goddesses of life and fertility and goddesses of death. Thus the replacement by a wishful opposite in our theme harks back to a primaeval identity” (Freud, 1913, p.299).

Sometimes it is necessary to allow Freud to speak for himself and here he explains so much in one passage, regarding the symbol of mother in the unconscious and its inextricable tie to the theme of death, as well as the inextricable link to the theme of life and fertility. We almost find Freud handing Klein the tools she needs to elaborate her own conceptions of the splitting of maternal imagoes, and the phantasy of the devouring mother, which will be discussed in Chapter VII, but, more importantly, this shows Freud's use of myth and literature to articulate psychic truths to his reader as well as his unavoidable concentration on the theme of death, during this period.

Finally, in *The Moses of Michelangelo* (1914b), Freud offers a reading of the Moses which does not construct the artist's unconscious libidinal history, but relies on Ivan Lermolieff's procedure of distinguishing authentic artworks. Through the "rubbish heap, as it were of our observations" (Freud, 1914b, p.222), Freud points out neglected details from the statues' previous interpretations, such as the position of the Moses' right hand, and the Tablets with the Ten Commandments, also the twist of the beard that the Moses holds. These neglected factors are analysed by Freud as displacements in the mind of the interpreters and reveals their hidden meaning in such a way as to prove the involvement of the death-drive, in the forces of negation in the mind. These three works define the archaeological and prehistoric aspects of the human psyche according to Freud, and they also crystallise Freud's ideas regarding the "study of themes from drama" (Politzer, 2006, p.132), and art.

In *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* (1915b), Freud sees it as inevitable that we should "seek in the world of fiction... literature and... theatre compensation for what has been lost in life" (Freud, 1915b, p.293). He even hints at what it is we have lost, when he explains that in tragedy, "we still find people who know how to die" (ibid.). It is precisely this 'reconciliation-*with*-death' that Freud sees as being fulfilled by our engagement with tragedy: "We die with the hero with whom we have identified... yet we survive him, and are ready to die again just as safely with

another hero” (ibid.). The war, on the other hand, Freud was certain would “sweep away this conventional treatment of death” (ibid.). The death-instinct in the tragedies is not written off as a ‘bad’ thing: somehow, it moves the play, and the reader along. It is always in the background: the great *pathos* underlying all tragic drama, and its presence is emblematic of its ontological status in human nature according to Freud. Tragedy thus becomes a dialogue with death and with the repetition compulsion, which comes as a great relief to modern readers.

The psychoanalytic theory of drives has an important bearing on psychoanalytic interpretation of tragic action. My thesis is that every action is seen as a vehicle toward the symbolic gratification of some kind of instinctual impulse. The psycho-poetic ‘truths’ contained in tragedy can thus be located in the meaning of the symbolic action depicted in the text, and this action can be interpreted in terms of Freud’s drive theory and Kleinian object relations theory, which will be discussed in the next chapter. *Broadly, we are dealing with masochism and sadism*, which involve both drives *and* objects.

4. Sado-masochistic pleasure

As a result of our identification, whatever defeat the hero experiences leads to masochistic satisfaction in Freud’s spectator. This requires a foray into the topic of guilt, which contributes to the solution of the general problem stated at the outset of this thesis as to how pleasure can be derived from pain. Since the tragic hero is burdened with great suffering, our enjoyment *via* identification overcomes the tragic paradox of deriving pleasure from pain. Freud accounts for this paradox with his model of psychic masochism, which explains that the basis for:

“the erotogenic, masochism—pleasure in pain... must be sought along biological and constitutional lines and it remains incomprehensible unless one decides to make certain assumptions about matters that are extremely obscure... the most important, form assumed by masochism has only recently been recognized by

psycho-analysis as a sense of guilt which is mostly unconscious; but it can already be completely explained and fitted into the rest of our knowledge” (Freud, 1924, p.161).

Freud's assumptions about these ‘extremely obscure matters’ include the following:

- The libido is responsible for the inoculation against, and deflection of the destructive instinct;
- A portion of the destructive instinct plays a part in the sexual function. This portion of the destructive instinct is primal 'sadism' proper;
- Another portion of the destructive instinct “remains inside the organism and, with the help of the accompanying sexual excitation... becomes libidinally bound there” (ibid, pp.163-64). This portion is the original erotogenic masochism;
- That there is “extensive fusion and amalgamation, in varying proportions” (ibid, p.164) of the libido and destructive instinct;

“The sadism of the super-ego and the masochism of the ego supplement each other and unite to produce the same effects” (ibid, p.170);

- Erotogenic masochism proper is thus “evidence of, and a remainder from, the phase of development in which the coalescence, which is so important for life, between the death instinct and Eros took place” (ibid.);
- Secondary masochism can be added to the original erotogenic masochism, *via* introjection of the primal sadism previously projected outwards;
- Erotogenic masochism “accompanies the libido through all its developmental phases” (ibid.) and specific phantasies according to each psycho-sexual phase can be identified:

“The fear of being eaten up by the totem animal (the father) originates from the primitive oral organisation; the wish to be eaten by the father comes from the sadistic anal phase which follows it; castration, although it is later disavowed, enters into the content of masochistic phantasies as a precipitate of the phallic stage... and

from the final genital organisation there arise... the situations of being copulated with and of giving birth” (ibid, p.165);

- Moral masochism has a weaker connection to the libido, and shows an unconscious sense of guilt which translates as a strong need for punishment of the ascetic variety.

Guilt, or 'conscience' is a function attributed to the superego in Freud's model of the psyche. The superego, being an introjection of our first libidinal objects (our parents), represents a de-sexualisation of our primary object-cathexes: it therefore arises with the overcoming and de-sexualisation of the Oedipus complex. The superego retains the strength and severity of our early introjects as well as “their inclination to supervise and to punish” (ibid, p.167).

Consciousness of guilt then, is seen as an expression of “a tension between the ego and the super-ego” (ibid.). In perceiving its own inadequacy in relation to the ideal, posited by the superego, the ego fears and is afraid of being punished by the superego, which according to Freud, may become “harsh, cruel and inexorable against the ego” (ibid.). Beyond that, the masochistic ego actually provokes punishment “from this last representative of the parents” (ibid, p.168), by doing inexpedient, self-defeating and ruinous things, which “destroy his own real existence” (ibid, p.169). Moral masochism originates in the destructive instinct and corresponds to that residue of primal sadism left behind in the psyche: since the subject cannot destroy himself “without libidinal satisfaction (ibid, p.170), it also “has the significance of an erotic component” (ibid.).

In an earlier and keynote paper on the Instincts and their Vicissitudes, Freud states that “sensations of pain, like other unpleasurable sensations, trench upon sexual excitation and produce a pleasurable condition, for the sake of which the subject will even willingly experience the unpleasure of pain” (Freud, 1915, p.128). Freud observed that the masochist “shares in the enjoyment of the assault upon himself” (ibid.). As masochism equates to “sadism turned round

upon the subject's own ego" (ibid, p.127), all that is different between the two processes, is the object at which the aim of destruction is directed. It seems fair to say that the tragic paradox of deriving pleasure from pain is no longer so obscure, to psychoanalysts at least. Our masochistic identification with the tragic-suffering hero, can now be understood as one of the keys to our enjoyment.

Since the hero demonstrates *hamartia*, or 'fault', we can now offer a deeper analysis of what this means for the resultant tragic effect. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Aristotle's *hamartia*, or 'fault' is understood as unconsciously determined. Even errors satisfy wishes: we are just not aware of those wishes until perhaps we realize that something inside willed us to commit the error, at the time unbeknownst to our conscious ego. Nothing therefore, is accidental for psychoanalysis, and the disaster that man brings upon himself and those closest to him cannot be understood without recourse to the theory that he "harboured a secret wish – deeply repressed as it may be – that just such a disaster would come to pass" (Eissler, 1971, p.59). We do not, therefore, merely wish destruction upon that which we hate; we also harbour such wishes toward ourselves and those we love. This is how the theory of the unconscious changes the theory of tragedy: it is no longer the gods that pour misery and suffering on human beings: we bring it upon ourselves.

The situation is complicated by the fact, puzzling as it is, that aggressive acts can be classified as libidinal, and that "the drives in the service of the preservation of life are [also] derivatives of the death drive" (ibid, p.60). This, coming from Eissler, an analyst considered "the official watchdog on behalf of psychoanalytic orthodoxy" (Roazen, 1992, p.14), and secretary of Freud's archives in collaboration with Anna Freud, goes to show that even Freud's most devout disciples, still wanted to clarify some of the more difficult and at times contradictory aspects of his thought. I believe that if we conceive of the life and death drives as essentially one, the paradox of love feeding hate or of hate turning to love is at least comprehensible from an economic

stand point. The basic duality in Freud's metapsychology must be integrated to understand how pleasure and pain can intermix, and Freud even admits this himself:

“the two kinds of instinct seldom—perhaps never—appear in isolation from each other, but are alloyed with each other in varying and very different proportions and so become unrecognizable to our judgement. In sadism, long since known to us as a component instinct of sexuality, we should have before us a particularly strong alloy of this kind between trends of love and the destructive instinct; while its counterpart, masochism, would be a union between destructiveness directed inwards and sexuality—a union which makes what is otherwise an imperceptible trend into a conspicuous and tangible one” (Freud, 1930, p.119).

Psychoanalysis also makes the case that “more frequently than not parents are the undoing of their children, even though the children are... what lies closest to their hearts” (Eissler, 1971, p.57), and this would seem to be supported by the intergenerational transmission (repetition compulsion) of tragic *hamartia* in the plays. It is therefore difficult to deny, from a psychoanalytic perspective, that in mankind, there is a “secret tendency... to destroy just what he loves the most” (ibid.), and this has great importance for our appreciation of the meaning and significance of the actions in the tragedies. Every act of destruction can now be more properly understood as an expression of *both love and hate*, which are two sides of the same coin in the psyche. Such ambivalence will be discussed later in dealing with the depressive position as articulated by Melanie Klein. This subsequently lends new meaning to the sadomasochistic action in the plays under consideration here: we must accept the tragic paradox that life and death coexist in every tragic action, and typically, the poetic approach to understanding is superior in generating such acceptance. Such a poetic approach goes beyond conventional and common sense psychologising about morality and human nature.

With psychoanalytic concepts, we can offer deeper insights into the inner workings of tragedy on the psyche of the reader; leading us to the profound consideration, that tragedy teaches above all else, that man is responsible for, and more than capable of his own downfall. Nietzsche would say: “one perishes by no one but oneself” (Nietzsche, *TI*, §36). We would add perhaps, that one enjoys nothing more than, to perish by oneself. I have not forgotten Freud's statement about an

organism wishing to die in its own fashion: this conflict will be further explored in my psychoanalysis of sadomasochistic action in the Euripidean tragedies (the *Alcestis*, the *Heracleidae* and the *Hecuba*). Finally, it must be noted that in Greek drama Freud identifies an “indispensable toning-down” (ibid.) of the hero’s unconscious sadomasochistic motivation, into “a compulsion by destiny which is alien to him” (ibid.). A purely historico-philological exegesis is therefore an inadequate methodology for examining these unconscious contents: we require a psychoanalytic technique.

5. The Familial Context

By and large, the actions in the tragedies are neither univocally constructive nor destructive. Although every call to war can be considered a manifestation of the death instinct, there is always alloyed to it, the instinct for life, for survival, for honour and peace. We are, therefore, not given the opportunity to feel unequivocally negative towards the violent action in the play, because it is laid out in front of us rhetorically, as the lesser of two evils. Somehow, we are supposed to believe that suppliants and dead bodies are worth dying for.

The family is critical as the carrier of continuity: the family is really the main ‘character’ in all the plays, the individual figures merely constituting elements of that primary symbol. The family is a symbol almost everyone can identify with on some level, and to some extent the inevitable conflicts of identity and duty created by the mere existence of individuals within the family along with the roles they are assumed to play, guarantee this symbol a very rich and vibrant meaning space within most readers’ psyches. To put it another way: the family is where we all experience our first love, first injustice, first disappointment, first rage and thus any tale involving a family can legitimately evoke *nacherleben* of those same emotions and conflicts. As Andre Green puts it:

“Freud was right to see the effects of the tragedy in the identification – the recognition that Aristotle speaks of – that each spectator experiences, seeing in Oedipus, so far as repression allows it, the child he once was” (Green, 1979, p.222).

Alford sees the protagonists in Greek tragedy as raging against death and “unable to construct a meaningful connection between life and death” (Alford, 1992, p.129). His essay on ‘Greek Tragedy: The Place of Death in Life’, demonstrates how the tragedians illuminate the problem of “death and the continuity of life” (ibid, p.130), the symbol for which is the family. Alford insists that we should abandon all doctrines “that deny the significance of annihilation” (ibid, pp.130-31), and turn to tragedy in order to compensate for the deficit in our culture (similar to the deficit in ancient Greek culture, which spurred the emergence of tragedy) of symbols of transcendence, which have to do with death, fear, awe, continuity and the family. In order to illustrate the primary familial dynamics wherein the conflict, violence and sadomasochism of tragic literature is most pronounced, Freud says:

“The hero commits the deed unintentionally... this latter element is however taken into account in the circumstance that the hero can only obtain possession of the queen mother after he has repeated his deed upon the monster who symbolizes the father” (ibid.).

Thus, we can affirm that in the Freudian interpretation of tragic drama, limited oedipal triangulations regarding the familial figures of mother, father, son and daughter, reign supreme.

Having now established Freud’s five-pronged contribution to our psychoanalytic understanding of tragic paradox and tragic effect, a few tertiary comments remain which fall outside his contributions dealing with the psychosexual oedipal theory, identification, the death drive, sadomasochism, or familial conflict.

Freud’s use of classical sources was illustrative rather than probative: tragedies help us to understand human behaviour, but are inexact in that they are compensatory devices responding

to unfulfilled unconscious wishes. The confluence of aggressive and sexual themes makes Greek tragedy particularly amenable to the standard psychoanalytic interpretive scheme. In giving the instincts of love and death names derived from the Greek theogony (Eros and Thanatos), Freud translates metaphysics into metapsychology. However, Merkur concludes: "Efforts to rework myths as psychological theories may... only... perpetuate myth" (2005. p.12). The success of the psychoanalytic approach to dream-interpretation is measured experimentally, by the therapeutic value of the interpretation, but tragedies are not subject to psychoanalytic interview as are the dreams of analysands. Nevertheless, the therapeutic value of uncertain truth in tragedy is akin to the therapeutic value of the uncertain insights transmitted in therapy; fictionality causes no offence to therapy (or theory), in fact it may be a central component of it.

In an interesting passage from the paper on 'Parricide', Freud states:

"We must, I think, give up any hope of penetrating the triple layer of obscurity into which the bad preservation of the text, the unknown intention of the dramatist, and the hidden purport of the legend have become condensed. But I should not subscribe to the objection that investigations like these are idle in face of the powerful effect which the tragedy has upon the spectator. The dramatist can indeed, during the representation, overwhelm us by his art and paralyse our powers of reflection; but he cannot prevent us from attempting subsequently to grasp its effect by studying its psychological mechanism." (Freud, 1928, p.322).

Freud used our response to tragedy, which he considered powerful, overwhelming and even paralyzing of our critical functions, not to penetrate the 'triple layer of obscurity', but to study the psychological mechanism through which such a response can be induced. Freud, however, despite his authoritative tone, is not always immune to the critique of modesty, since he quite clearly does much to elucidate the obscurity presented by our aesthetic investigations. As early as 1908, he tackles *Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming* and states that:

"The unreality of the writer's imaginative world, however, has very important consequences for the technique of his art; for many things which, if they were real, could give no enjoyment, can do so in the play of phantasy, and many excitements which, in themselves, are actually distressing, can become a source of pleasure for the hearers and spectators at the performance of a writer's work" (Freud, 1908, p.144).

By noticing this very subtle and insightful aspect of dramatic art, Freud overcomes the paradox of pain leading to pleasure, surpasses the hedonistic theory of motivation and demonstrates why we require the psychoanalytic viewpoint to elaborate our aesthetic engagements with tragedy and turmoil. Freud's attempts to articulate the psychological processes involved in our enjoyment of tragedy, touching on oedipal longings, identification, the death drive, sadomasochism and familial symbols, help elevate the psychoanalytic approach as the most viable recipient of the 'wisdom of the ancients'. There is still the matter of post-Freudian aesthetics to deal with, in the guise of British object relations theory and the Kleinian school, which represent the first contributions forming anything vaguely approaching what we might be able to call a British psychoanalytic aesthetic and will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER III: TOWARD A PSYCHOANALYTIC AESTHETICS

I) *The Dialogue between Depth Psychology & Aesthetics*

By promoting a depth psychological interpretation of aesthetic experience, we are able to locate the transformational potential of the text within the psyche of the reader, or within the transitional space between the reader's psyche and the text, understood as the product of the author's psyche. The psychoanalytic aesthetic is an intersubjective epistemology. The reader's experience is mutually determined by the text and by their reading. The psychoanalytic interpretation of the text, therefore involves the dissolution of traditional subject/object divisions. What we bring to the text matters for the psychoanalytic aesthetic, as does the text itself. The text contains the symbolic material that will call forth our subjective responses, and the text mingles with our subjectivity, generating an intersubjective experience which can have value and meaning for those who have ears for it.

Psychoanalysis, in spite of Freud's historic modesty toward aesthetics, has been able to provide a model for aesthetic experience, locating its origin in "the mother's idiom of care and the infant's experience of this handling" (Bollas, 1978, p.386). Bollas describes how this first human aesthetic (Winnicott's 'holding environment', Bion's 'maternal reverie' and the 'alpha function'), informs all later object-relations, and considers it 'transformational' in the sense that in holding and caring for the infant, the Mother gives form to the infant's inner world "where the unintegrations of self, find integrations through the form of the transformational object" (ibid.).

When we interrogate aesthetic 'moment', as Bollas calls it, with an eye to 'depth', we begin to appreciate the importance of granting the reader's response greater value in our quest to understand the potentially reparative possibilities of a text. Accepting the psychoanalytic

paradigm for aesthetic experience, as being “an existential recollection of an experience where being handled by the maternal aesthetic *made thinking irrelevant to survival*” (ibid, p.388, my italics), we begin to glean some hope in getting to the bottom of what it is that could be being repaired through the pains of aesthetic pleasure. For Bollas, the ego internalizes not only an object (mother) but “a process (her aesthetic of transformation) and this process is a paradigm of subject relating to an object that transforms the subject’s being” (ibid, p.389). Thus, he focuses on the “unique moment of deep subjective rapport between the reader and the text” (ibid, p.392), in order to demonstrate that the reader’s arrest in the aesthetic experience “is not a reflection of the content, but the way the content has been held and transformed by the poetics of the text” (ibid.). Here, the formal poetic qualities act as ‘mother’, holding us in rapture and transforming us without thought. This presents no fundamental problem to the Kleinian approach to aesthetics.

Psychoanalytic aesthetics is not a unified and coherent ‘whole’. In Britain alone, there are three ‘official’ training groups and ‘established trends’ in psychoanalytic training and study: a result of the ‘Controversial Discussions’ during WWII, and the *modus Vivendi* achieved between the opposing factions, in order to stay within the British Society. This could lead to some fairly divergent views on aesthetics, but on the whole it is the Kleinian and post-Kleinian approach to creativity and the origins of the creative impulse, drawing from Freud’s scattered remarks on the subject, which I have found to be informative in my formulation of the theory of aesthetic reparation. Winnicott, Bollas, and Bion, classed as ‘independents’ but connected to Klein in terms of their theoretical lineage, ultimately bolster the psychoanalytic aesthetic from various angles. It is testament to the Kleinian way of thinking that, in the main, the pioneers come from her camp. The primary questions concerning psychoanalytic aestheticians, according to Glover are: “what kind of dialogue is possible?” (Glover, 2009, p.xiv) between psychoanalysis and aesthetics, and ‘how does psychoanalysis add value to this dialogue?’

Spitz insightfully maps out the terms of this dialogue and the three psychoanalytic approaches to understanding works of art, which, she says, “all bear upon the question of form and content” (Spitz, 1982, p.547). Friedman promotes the conversation between psychoanalysis, which “In the course of explaining human activity and feeling... has inevitably sought to explain the production and enjoyment of art” (Friedman, 1958, p.371), and philosophy, which probes “the nature of aesthetic experience... or beauty, as it is already created or found” (Spitz, 1982, p. 548). Philosophy begins with the concept of ‘beauty’ or ‘art’ and works its way back to particular structural sources, thus localizing “the aesthetic fact or object whose properties he attempts to describe and from which he then infers more general principles” (ibid, p.547). Psychoanalysts, on the other hand, are concerned with genetic, historical explanations about “the origins of aesthetic experience... [and] the genesis of both the artist’s creativity and the viewer’s response” (ibid, p.548).

There are, of course, a number of thinkers, including the philosopher Susanne Langer, who blur this distinction between psychoanalytic and philosophic approaches to aesthetics. Langer was deeply concerned with the origins of aesthetic feeling, Freud’s structural theory, and the relation of aesthetic pleasure to other aspects of mental functioning. The eminent English art critic, Sir Herbert Read, manages to distinguish, however, between the psychoanalyst interested in the ‘processes’ and dynamics of aesthetic experience, though “not with value judgments” (Read, 1951, p.75) and the philosopher interested in ‘products’ and for whom a criterion for comparative evaluation “is essential, and does exist” (ibid.). Read classifies Freud’s ‘Moses of Michelangelo’ as a “classical example of the fallacy of identification” (ibid, p.77), where Freud’s identification with the artist, in order to discover his intention, provides only a subjective interpretation of the content and provides nothing for the appreciation of the formal qualities of the work. ‘Identification’, for Read, is certainly a necessary preliminary to aesthetic experience, but it is not sufficient in itself. It is, however, in Freud’s analysis of Michelangelo’s Moses, where his most profound and original statement regarding aesthetic effect can be found:

“In my opinion what grips us so powerfully can only be the artist’s intention in so far as he succeeds in expressing it in his work and in getting us to understand it. I realise that this cannot be merely a matter of intellectual comprehension; what he aims at is to awaken in us the same emotional attitude, the same mental constellation which produces in him the impetus to create” (Freud, 1914, p.212).

So, even where Freud is open to criticism, he also provides invaluable insights, which helped shape the psychoanalytic aesthetic, and Read was more than appreciative of this. Summarising Ehrenzweig’s (1967) ‘surface versus depth perception’ thesis, which corresponds roughly to the secondary and primary processes respectively, Read concurs that:

“Our depth mind, obeying the archaic pangenital urge, projects a sexual meaning into any perceived form, while our surface mind counteracts this projection by projecting, in its turn, an aesthetic (‘good’) Gestalt into the external world” (Read, 1951, p. 79).

Read reminds us that the basic unconscious sexual nature of the symbolic material of art is elaborated by our conscious feelings of ‘beauty’. This fits with Freud’s sublimation model which describes “an antimony created by the simultaneous operation of the libido (the life principle) and the destructive urges (the death principle)” (ibid, p.80) and the importance of “producing the impression of ‘the integrity of the object’... of beauty” (ibid.). Rickman (1940) sees creativity in beauty, and destructivity in the ugly, and Hanna Segal argues convincingly for the inclusion of both beauty and ugliness in the aesthetic experience proper. It is to the contribution of these (and other) thinkers, that we owe our debt for Read’s authoritative conclusion that “in the end... we must admit that our debt to Psychoanalysis is incalculable” (Read, 1951, p.81). For Read, an eminent art historian and literary critic, to admit that art has “hidden symbolic significance” (ibid, cf. Ehrenzweig) and that its civilizing power lay in its “expression of the deeper levels of the personality” (ibid.) provided a scientific justification for the long felt belief in his tradition that art was “more than just appearances” (ibid.). Psychoanalysis had shown, Sir Read professes, “that the process of symbolic transformation which is fundamental to the creative process in art is also biologically fundamental” (ibid.), by which he is referring to the “necessary transformation of the archaic into the civilised, the passage from the id to the superego” (ibid.). Thus, in historical and evolutionary terms, psychoanalysis has demonstrated that “art is symbolization

from the beginning” (ibid.).

Spitz demonstrates that psychoanalysis adds much value to philosophical aesthetics, based on the isomorphism between psychoanalytic constructs “such as displacement, distortion, reversal, projection and condensation” (Spitz, 1982, p. 549), and the ‘aesthetic qualities’ inevitably encountered by philosophy in its struggle to ‘understand’ the nature of art. There are however, several complicating factors when it comes to applying psychoanalytic knowledge to works of art. An exhaustive meta-analysis is beyond both the means and the needs of this investigation, although the issues of form and content, locality of genesis (in the artist) and reception (in the viewer) of both creativity, and what is ambiguously called ‘aesthetic feeling’ have all been indicated here. Depending on how psychoanalysis treats or neglects any, or all of these things, determines “the nature and scope of possible interpretations... the attribution of value to both art products and processes... [and] tentative answers to questions about the different kinds of pleasure and energy involved in aesthetic experiences” (ibid.). The three major psychoanalytic approaches, none of which exhaustively account for aesthetic phenomena *in toto*, all concentrate on ‘form and content’, and are as follows according to Spitz’ expert analysis:

I) Freud saw form as “a pleasurable disguise however elaborate, for content originally derived from forbidden instinctual wishes of an erotic or aggressive nature” (ibid, p.550). His main concern is with the “relation between the artist’s inner life and the artistic product rather than with the aesthetic object *per se*” (ibid, p.551). Freud’s artist seeks, through sublimation, to “satisfy instinctual wishes through his creation... [and] gives pleasure to others who also feel dissatisfaction with the need to renounce such wishes” (ibid.). The stress is on communication, and the value of aesthetic experience for the audience and artists “comes from a process of identification” (ibid.) and not on the “specific latent content of the artist’s work... be[ing] mirrored... or... revealed to, the audience” (ibid.). The identification Freud speaks of, is, according to Spitz, an identification with:

“the general process of circumventing renunciation, of outwitting censorship, by gratifying wishes in fantasy, [and] constitutes the essence of the aesthetic experience. He [Freud] focuses on instinctual content at the core of the artist’s product but intimates that its elaboration into form by the ‘special gifts’ of the artists makes possible the objectification of pleasure and reality reconciled and the potential for communication” (ibid. pp. 551-552).

The pleasure associated with artistic form, for Freud in 1908, constitutes a ‘bribe’ for the superego, given in order to reach some deeper, forbidden gratification, but he felt that content, too, could lead us to an equally fundamental internal reality. Form and content thus fuse, and stimulate aesthetic experiences that have the potential to transgress hitherto impassable boundaries within the self and between the self, reality and illusion, i.e., between the primary and secondary processes.

II) Alternatively, the elaboration of form can be seen as “representing the relatively autonomous functioning of the ego... independently of drives and instinctual energy” (ibid, p.550). For Rank (1932), form represents the ‘ego ideal’, i.e., man’s longing for transcendence beyond the limitations of biology and society, and Bush (1967) argues that the psychoanalysis of form always seems to reduce itself to the psychology of the ego and ego-functioning.

III) Winnicott, traces aesthetic experience to:

“the potential space between the individual and the environment, that which initially both joins and separates the baby and the mother when the mother’s love, displayed as human reliability, does in fact give the baby a sense of trust, or of confidence in the environmental factor” (Winnicott, 1967, p.372).

This potential space of aesthetic experience is highly variable from individual to individual, whereas the psychic reality and the actual world are ‘relatively constant’: “one being biologically determined and the other being common property” (ibid.). It is here that the individual, according to Winnicott, experiences creative living, and when this area is ‘exploited’ “it leads to a

pathological condition in which the individual is cluttered up with persecutory elements of which he has no means of ridding himself” (ibid.). Hence the aesthetic object for Winnicott represents an ‘intermediate area of experience’ between the self and the outside world, possessing a fused form and content “which can be separated only by doing violence to it and thus depriving it of its status *qua* aesthetic object” (Spitz, 1982, p.550). Transitional phenomena in infancy provide a model for adult investments in cultural objects; transitional objects are therefore the prototypes of aesthetic objects.

Spitz provides a useful starting point for any literature review, or genealogical attempt to delineate the multiple indices of consideration provided by the traditional psychoanalytic corpus on aesthetics. Calling for scepticism and toleration, even the pursuit of ambiguity, Spitz reminds us that some questions must always remain open and some puzzles must always remain unsolved: yet we must still passionately seek to answer and resolve them.

II) *The Pleasures of Dramatic Pain*

Ramazani deftly replaces Aristotle’s ‘pity’ and ‘fear’ with Freud’s transference and ego-anxiety respectively; ‘*katharsis*’ becomes libidinal discharge, and Freud’s concept of identification can replace Aristotle’s ‘*mimesis*’. The new system of interrelations can be articulated thus: “Discharge (*katharsis*), in sum, arises from a transference (pity) that overpowers... [and] disturbs censorship, thereby creating [ego] anxiety (fear)” (Ramazani, 1991, p.82). Freud’s conception of emotional catharsis presupposes the Aristotelian model on the point of discharge, however Freud’s catharsis refers to the recollection and release of *mental processes responsible for symptom-formation*. We enjoy tragedy, on this reading, “because it fulfills repressed wishes” (ibid, p.78). Rather than just being a dramatic effect, as per the Aristotelian model, catharsis, for Freud becomes a *perennial therapeutic goal of the mind*.

Early psychoanalysis itself resembled this model of seeking to release strangulated affect, and could be called a modernization of tragic drama on that account. Later, however, Freud redefines pity from the positive transference involved in our identification with the hero, to a negative transference and a *masochistic* attitude toward the hero. Fear is reformulated as the castration complex rather than censorship anxiety and catharsis retains a trace of the ‘release of strangulated libido’ model but now becomes primarily the discharge of the destructive instinct (negative catharsis) which is nonetheless pleasurable from an economic point of view. So, we see how Freud, with his concept of the death-drive, can provide a schematic bridge between the opposing theories of Aristotle (purgation/clarification of pity-and-fear) and Nietzsche (enjoyment in destruction/will to power as tonic to decadence) regarding the therapeutics of tragedy.

In order to describe the pleasures of dramatic pain we require a depth-psychological perspective, which includes an aesthetic theory of how the formal qualities of the art ‘work’ on the spectator. Freud certainly emphasized how the aesthetic features of the play had to lull the ego’s resistances with bribes in order for repressed affects to rise-up to the surface; to be lifted from the unconscious. However, on the matter of how the poet achieves this, Freud had little to offer, saying that to understand the poet’s “innermost secret” (Freud, 1908, p.223) would require a greater knowledge of the “ultimate sources of the creative impulse and of sublimation” (Segal, 1952, p.197) than were available to him in the pre-Kleinian days. Hanna Segal, with the benefit of Kleinian thinking, offers some poignant remarks about aesthetics, which go some way toward explaining their part in our response to the play. She considers the strange formal harmony between the poetic requirements of the play and the total destruction narrated therein, suggesting unconsciously that, “even the most intense hatred and aggression need not destroy all order” (Alford, 1993, p.20). Such a formal harmony allows for the depression aroused in the audience by the tragedy to be resolved *via* the aesthetic pleasure of the perfect form. Segal throws new light on the psychology of the artist and the aesthetic pleasure produced by the art, with recourse to Klein’s notion of the depressive position, “the reparative drives that are set in

motion by it, and her description of the world of inner objects” (Segal, 1952, p.203). For Klein, in the context of her analysis of the Oresteia:

“The creative artist makes full use of symbols; and the more they serve to express the conflicts between love and hate, between destructiveness and reparation, between life and death instincts, the more they approach universal [perfect] form. He thus condenses the variety of infantile symbols, while drawing on the full force of emotions and phantasies, which are expressed in them. The dramatist's capacity to transfer some of these universal symbols into the creation of his characters, and at the same time to make them into real people, is one of the aspects of his greatness. The connection between symbols and artistic creation has often been discussed, but my main concern is to establish the link between the earliest infantile processes and the later productions of the artist” (Klein, 1963, p.299).

Segal runs with this precision of Klein's and claims that the work of art is the artist's “most complete and satisfactory way of allaying the guilt and despair arising out of the depressive position and of restoring his destroyed objects” (Segal, 1952, p.203), and it is precisely this that makes the work so satisfying for its public. Our aesthetic pleasure is derived from an identification with the work as a whole and “with the whole internal world of the artist as represented by his work” (ibid, p.204). In Segal's view, all aesthetic pleasure involves an unconscious re-living of the artist's experience of creation, which resembles the comment of Freud's that the artist aims at awakening in us “the same mental constellation as that which in him produced the impetus to create” (Freud, 1914, p.212). Segal draws upon Dilthey and his concept of ‘*nacherleben*’ (re-living), which can be signified as meaning that we “understand other people from their behaviour and expression, we intuitively reconstruct their mental and emotional state, we live after them, we re-live them” (Segal, 1952, p.204). This process, resembling *mimesis*, is often “deeper than introspection can discover... [and the] equivalent to unconscious identification” (ibid.). In the case of classical tragedy, the hero commits a crime but “the crime is fated, it is an innocent crime, he is driven to it. Whatever the nature of the crime the result is always complete destruction” (ibid.). In the end, according to the Kleinian reading, we always arrive at “a picture of the phantasies belonging to the earliest depressive position where all the objects are destroyed” (ibid.). We react as follows:

“The author has, in his hatred, destroyed all his loved objects just as I have done, and like me he felt death and desolation inside him. Yet he can face it and he can make me face it, and despite the ruin and devastation we and the world around us survive. What is more, his objects, which have become evil and were destroyed, have been made alive again and have become immortal by his art. Out of all the chaos and destruction he has created a world which is whole, complete and unified” (ibid.).

Tragedy is excellent in that it represents an unflinching stance toward the horror and fragmentation of depressive and schizoid phantasies *within* a formal aesthetic and harmonious whole. By fully symbolising his depressive phantasies and anxieties, the artist “does work similar to... mourning in that he internally re-creates a harmonious world which is projected into his work of art” (ibid.). Whilst the reader identifies with the author, through the medium of his work of art, and thus, “experience[s] a successful mourning, re-establishes his own internal object... world, and feels, therefore, re-integrated and enriched” (ibid, pp.204-05). Segal’s aesthetics suggest that both beauty and ugliness are required for a complete aesthetic experience. The ugly is found in the complete ruin, destruction and chaos of the content, and the perfect form of the tragedy provides the order of the beautiful.

“Rodin writes: ‘We call ugly that which is formless, unhealthy, which suggests illness, suffering, destruction, which is contrary to regularity—the sign of health. We also call ugly the immoral, the vicious, the criminal and all abnormality which brings evil—the soul of the parricide, the traitor, the self-seeker. But let a great artist get hold of this ugliness; immediately he transfigures it—with a touch of his magic wand he makes it into beauty’ (Segal, 1952, p.205).

Beauty includes the sublime in having the capacity to make one feel sadness and happiness at once, and for this reason is felt as an awe-inspiring “purge for the soul” (ibid, p.206). For the great poet Rilke, beauty is “nothing/ but the beginning of terror that we are still just able to bear” (1912-1922, First Elegy, p.1), which Segal interprets as meaning “beauty still embodies the terrifying experience of depression and death” (ibid.). For Freud, the enjoyment of beauty afforded “little protection against the sufferings that threaten us, but it can make up for much” (Freud, 1930, p.21). Approaching Nietzsche, Freud says beauty “has a special quality of feeling that is mildly intoxicating... has no obvious use, nor is it easy to see why it is necessary to civilization; yet civilization would be unthinkable without it” (ibid.). So, the beautiful form of Greek tragedy actually requires the sublime, chaotic and destructive content, in order to fully

maximize its intoxicating effect. Intoxication can be understood as the realization and sublimation of the depressive position, through our '*nacherleben*', in which we share in the hero's "triumph of achievement and his final detachment" (Segal, 1952, p.206).

Segal demands that the artist acknowledge the death instinct, both "in its aggressive and self-destructive aspects, [along with]... the reality of death for the object and the self" (ibid.). She finds support for this demand in Freud's Michelangelo's Moses where he demonstrates that the latent meaning of this work of art was: "the overcoming of wrath" (ibid, p.207) and in the analysis of the theme of the Three Caskets, where he says that in overcoming death, "No greater triumph of wish-fulfillment is conceivable" (Freud, 1913, p.299). Overcoming wrath and overcoming death do not necessarily mean triumph and avoidance of death, but successfully dealing with death; the triumph is for the ego, which enjoys this successful negotiation and feels strengthened by it, just as the depressive position, although including 'depression' brings with it the joy of integration and the lessening of conflict. Thus with the acknowledgement of the death instinct "as fully as can be borne" (Segal, 1952, p.207), tragedy reinforces the "needs of the life instincts and creation" (ibid.).

In this respect, tragedy *qua* reflecting the horror or absurdity of existence, simply tells uncomfortable truths, which become bearable, pleasurable, even therapeutic through the aesthetic form of the play. Tragedians, however, are not to be seen as therapists offering a bitter prophylaxis for the strong hearted, perhaps as the Nietzsche of *BT* would have believed, but as artists, in the Aristotelian sense - truth-tellers, concerned with the universal form of truth that renders poetry superior to history, rather than factual truth. If tragedy is not therapy, psychoanalysis remains relevant only, as Alford calls it, 'an unflinching worldview' concerned with the conflicting, confusing and divisive emotions of love and hate internally, as well as their projection onto the external world. From the Kleinian perspective, we must be unshrinking in our comportment toward intrapsychic conflict and pain:

“The stylized gestures, the masks, and the formal language of tragedy all suppress individuality, with the result that one can see the conflict of emotional forces even more clearly... living a life of their own... much the way... Klein views psychic conflict... whereas Klein is hopeful that individuals may come to integrate their love and hate, and so come to see the world as a whole, neither all good nor bad, the tragic poets... had little hope that this could be accomplished at a cultural level” (Alford, 1993, pp.24-25).

So we begin to see how the appraisal of psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic aesthetics, can contribute an element of affirmation and resolution to the otherwise depressing and painful insights occasioned by tragedy: that man is his own downfall, that he enjoys his downfall, and that he is both of these things *unconsciously*. By paying equal attention to the emotional content *and* the formal harmony of the play, we experience the pleasure of a co-constructed heightening of excitability, or ‘intoxication’ of the Dionysian and Apollinian impulses (or masks) that Nietzsche introduced into aesthetics (Nietzsche, *BT*, §10). In other words, we re-live the trouble and turmoil of the hero’s thorny past, and consequently recollect and release difficult parts of our own. My suggestion here, for which I am indebted to Segal, is that thanks to the aesthetic harmony produced by the beautiful form of the play, we experience a successful mourning and re-create our internal worlds from the shattered ruins of the hero’s, our own, and the poet’s past. In the same way as flowers grow from ruins, as roses break forth from thorny bushes: if we dare to be tragic, as Nietzsche says, our suffering may be redeemed. Yet, roses only bloom for so long, and the thorns of existence always remain; nevertheless poetry makes beautiful that which is too unbearable to speak:

“*How meter beautifies*. Meter lays a gauze over reality: it occasions some artificiality of speech and impurity of thinking; through the shadow that it throws over thought, it sometimes conceals, sometimes emphasizes. As shadow is necessary to beautify, so ‘muffling’ is necessary in order to make clearer.

Art renders the sight of life bearable by laying over it the gauze of impure thinking” (Nietzsche, *HAH*, §151)

Thus, we can state that according to Aristotle, Nietzsche and depth psychology, the aesthetic form of tragedy allows for the rendering of dramatic pain into pleasure. Aristotle’s pleasure comes from the lifting of negative emotion; Nietzsche’s is the pleasure we get from affirming the will to power, which includes pleasure in destruction; Freud’s pleasure is at first the pleasure of

unconscious wish fulfillment (the pleasure-principle), before becoming pleasure in venting the destructive drive. Finally, Kleinian metapsychology expresses Nietzsche's metaphysics, with the chaos and dismemberment of the Dionysian mask i.e., the paranoid-schizoid position, and the Apollinian production of a 'glance into the secret and terrible nature of existence', which like the depressive position heals the wounds of life-denying splitting processes, through a radical monism or integration of terms and affects.

This genetic sequence of thinkers lead us to the powerful conclusion that tragedy tells us tall tales about living as humanly as possible in a world where man himself is hostile to his own humanity; helping us to "live responsibly under the yoke of [this] necessity" (Alford, 1997, p.164). If we hide behind the spectator's mask, which "hides our true self-participation in the drama" (Green, 1975, p.361) we may miss the representations, which move and enable (or ennoble) the mind to "recognize something of our most primitive self without being aware that it is our personal world" (ibid, p.363). The only way in which tragedy, or any literature for that matter, can be meaningful, is by virtue of our psychological involvement in it. Therefore, we must discover ourselves being as-guilty-and-triumphant-as-the-hero, if we are to gain anything from the play. In this way, perhaps, we can begin to understand how we can gain self-knowledge through the transfiguration of pain into aesthetic pleasure in great tragic literature. We have to accept the wisdom of depth-psychology, that beneath the surface there are many wishes seeking fulfillment: through symbolizing these instinctual longings, tragedy offers the ego an opportunity to recognize and deal with at least some of the psychic affects associated with these drives and their incommensurability with the dictates of the super-ego and culture at large.

III) *Art qua the Depressive-Position*

Segal's pioneering contribution to psychoanalytic aesthetics can be summed up by referring to her focus on the relation between authentic art and the artists' capacity to "face and deal with

pain, ugliness, death – art and the Depressive position” (Joseph, 1990, p.xi). In this sense, Segal is concerned with the artist’s highly developed symbolic relation to reality, which is where her account of artistic creativity surpasses Freud’s inadequate wish-fulfilling, day-dreaming, and sublimation accounts.

The dream represents everything with its opposite by way of reversal: changing traumatic situations into wish-fulfilling ones. The analysis of the dream “proceeds against resistance” (Segal, 1991, p.12) to the revelation of distressing experience, hidden by the dream work. The depth and power of the unconscious phantasy rooted in the dream, according to Segal, can never be fully remembered, thanks to a ‘contact barrier’ protecting the ego from being completely overwhelmed by libidinal impulses and their concomitant phantasy elaborations. The change in Freud’s thinking from ‘anxiety caused by repression’, to ‘repression caused by anxiety’ (post 1920), implicated the ego within the realm of defence and replaced the ‘censor’ with the superego. Freud’s revision of the theory of dreams in 1933, however, did not articulate that:

“the work of the dream is not only to reconcile the forbidden wish and the superego or ego, but also to find a compromise resolution for contradictory unconscious wishes, and the basic conflict between the life and the death instincts” (Segal, 1991, p.14).

Segal even detects a solution to Freud’s theoretical problem, in his ‘evolved’ concept of working through, which he unfortunately did not apply to the dream work. Freud had excluded symbolism from the dream-work, which for him made the dream akin to psychosis, whereas Segal saw the psychic work involved in the dream as being “precisely what is lacking in psychosis” (ibid.).

Freud’s attention to phantasy can be traced all the way back to 1897 in a letter to Fleiss (21 Sep) where he says that, “there are no indications of reality in the unconscious, so that one cannot distinguish between truth and fiction that has been cathected” (Freud, 1897, p.264). In 1914 Freud talks about the ‘hysteric’s’ fictional and “phantasy” (Freud, 1914c, p.17) trauma, which underlie their symptoms, and says that, “this psychical reality requires to be taken into account

alongside practical reality” (ibid, pp.17-18). Again, in 1925 he speaks of phantasy as *the* psychic reality, “as far as the neurosis was concerned” (Freud, 1925a, p.34), and claims to have discovered “under the primitive scheme of the universe known as ‘animism’ the principle of the over-determination of the importance of psychical reality – the belief in ‘the omnipotence of thoughts’” (ibid, p.66). Despite its importance, Freud never devoted a whole piece of work to the concept of phantasy. Nevertheless, Segal is able to extract Freud’s position on phantasy as essentially a wish-fulfilling idea, consequent upon a frustrating reality and therefore, subordinate to the pleasure principle, but “formed by the ‘secondary process... characteristic of the Systems Preconscious and Conscious” (Segal, 1991, p.14). Freud’s phantasy is “a rather late phenomenon, appearing only when the reality principle and the capacity for logical thinking have been firmly established” (ibid, pp.16-17). Conscious fantasies and day-dreams are known *not* to be true, whereas the wish-fulfilling fantasy “becomes unacceptable to consciousness... is repressed and becomes unconscious phantasy” (ibid, p.17), and is thereby indistinguishable from true memory.

Freud’s phantasy is highly organized but refers to whole objects only, disbaring a whole plethora of primitive part-object phantasies from his description. This is understandable within the context of Freud’s forgivable neglect of pre-verbal and pre-visual psychosomatic functioning: “he does not connect early hallucinatory wish-fulfilment with phantasy, but only with memory” (ibid, p.18), says Segal. Unconscious phantasy, for Freud, is connected with pathology, although he is aware of the fine line between the symptom and artistic creativity. He gives unconscious phantasy the status of the source of sublimation “seeing it as a kind of repressed day-dream” (ibid.), but he cannot quite account for this, which opens him up to criticism regarding his theorizing about art. Segal’s impression is that Freud’s unconscious phantasies are “like islands in the sea of mental life” (ibid, p.19) whereas reading Klein we glimpse “an internal phantasy world like a vast continent under the sea, the islands being its conscious, external, observable manifestation” (ibid.). The crucial difference being that, for Klein, unconscious phantasies are active much earlier than they were for Freud:

“In the omnipotent mind of the infant and child desires become wish-fulfilling phantasies, and such phantasies are viewed by Klein and Isaacs as a direct expression of instincts and impulses” (ibid.).

This raises the British psychoanalytic aesthetic to the bar of pre-oedipal interpretations, and frees it from the dogma of Freud’s narrowly oedipal focus. Such pre-verbal, pre-oedipal phantasies are ubiquitous in the Kleinian view because we share what Segal calls “a common instinctual endowment and ways of dealing with it” (ibid. p.20) which is not the same as the Freudian account which postulates that oedipal phantasies reproduce actual events from prehistory. Segal points out the inadequacies in Freud’s model and demonstrates how Klein’s work, both filled the gap and penetrated more deeply into the symbolic recesses of the infantile mind. Since for Klein the ego was developed sufficiently to experience anxiety, form object relationships and use defence mechanisms, in reality and phantasy, at a much earlier stage than for Freud, the operation of the death instinct and the unconscious wishes deriving from it during infancy, are much more clearly observed by her:

“What Freud described as the deflection of the death instinct by the organism is seen by her [Klein] as a projection by the ego of the death instinct into an object, giving rise to phantasies of an object which is destroyed and destructive” (ibid, p.21).

Klein’s description of the movement from the ‘paranoid-schizoid’ to the ‘depressive position’ in 1946, introduces, for the first time, “the wish to restore and regain the lost object – reparation” (ibid, p.28) the implications of which, Segal says, are still being worked out today. For Freud, phantasy is comparable to, and shares roots with symptoms, dreams, art, and thinking, but is yet “not a primary activity” (ibid, p.30), whereas in the Kleinian oeuvre unconscious phantasy is a core activity, and an:

“original expression of both impulses and defences... continually interacting with perception, modifying it but also being modified by it... Hence... unconscious phantasies underlie dreams, symptoms, perception, thought and creativity. They do not intrude into a dream; they are ‘such stuff that dreams are made on’” (ibid, p.30).

Klein’s increasing attention to aggression, anxiety and guilt extend her theory of symbol-formation far beyond the remit of Freud’s, giving symbolization a developmental significance in

ego-development, that when arrested by “excessive anxiety in relation to the mother’s body and the onset of guilt” (ibid, p.34) could be seen (for the first time by psychoanalysts) to underlie autism. Segal goes one step further, in differentiating between the concrete symbolization and symbolic equations (concrete dead body within the psyche) of paranoid-schizoid functioning, such as underlie pathological mourning, and the true symbolism or symbolic representations of the depressive-position, where the lost internalized object can undergo reparation in order for successful mourning. Symbols, Segal says “are needed to overcome the loss of the object from one’s aggressiveness. A symbol is like a precipitate of the mourning for the object” (ibid, p.40).

The artist’s sensitivity to the despair of the depressive position and his inner shattered world demand his efforts at re-creation and the restoring to wholeness of this inner world. When Freud talks of sublimation as the renunciation of an instinctual aim, Kleinian object-relations theory interprets the giving up of the possession of an object: something Freud too, understood could not happen without an internalization of the object. This, Segal thinks, goes some way to explaining “the depths of satisfaction and the quality of the uplift that any aesthetic experience gives us” (ibid, p.89). Since art depends on the loss and repair of the depressive position, “it enables us to participate in a creative act” (ibid.).

Greek tragedy, with all its ugliness, including: “hubris, treachery, parricide, matricide – and the inevitable destruction and death of the participants” (ibid, p.91) provides an exemplary and unflinching glance at the depressing reality of our inner worlds, symbolized (properly) by the action and characters in the play. This comportment engenders, “beauty in the feeling of inner consistency and psychological truth in the depiction of those destructive forces of conflict and their inevitable outcome” (ibid.) in the recipient. The violent content is counterbalanced by the beauty, harmony and rhythm of the poetic form and order, characteristic of the Aristotelian unities, containing hitherto unbearable feelings and contents. All this is achieved by means of the artist’s psychic work on the material, and is not ‘some mystery’ to Segal: “In tragedy it is

mainly the content that represents aggression and the internal disaster, and form which restore a harmonious world” (ibid.). Segal finds support for this ascendant re-evaluation of Greek tragedy, in the work of Nietzsche, who argues “that there is no great art without tension... maintained to the last moment... no truly beautiful surfaces without dreadful depths” (ibid, p.93). This tension or dreadful conflict, in the depths of the unconscious, is the very foundation of creativity for Kleinians:

“In brief, the link I see between the creative impulse and the means of evoking the aesthetic emotion is this. The act of creation at depth has to do with an unconscious memory of a harmonious internal world and the experience of its destruction; that is, the depressive position. The impulse is to recover and recreate this lost world. The means to achieve it has to do with the balance of ‘ugly’ elements with beautiful elements in such a way as to evoke an identification with this process in the recipient. Aesthetic experience in the recipient involves psychic work. This is what distinguishes it from pure entertainment or sensuous pleasure. And we know that people vary in their capacity to accomplish such work. Not only does the recipient identify with the creator, thereby reaching deeper feelings than he could do by himself; he also feels that it is left to him to look for completion” (ibid, p.94).

To recap, Segal’s contribution to psychoanalytic aesthetics has been to show that creativity arises from a successful achievement of the depressive position along with the overcoming of guilt and ‘adequate mourning’ for lost objects, i.e., the instigation of reparative impulses. Successful (authentic/good) art is a symbolically meaningful communication from the unconscious of the artist to the unconscious of the recipient, *via* the aesthetic object. The artist seeks to reconstruct inevitable, and therefore ubiquitous truths, and to symbolically express them in a way that engenders *nacherleben* in the recipients, impelling us to continue the search. Art, therefore, involves a great deal of psychic work and the overcoming of pain, and this distinguishes it from all other types of imaginative activity (symptom, dream, and play). The artist’s capacity to face the guilt, envy and torment of his internal world, and to repair the damage done by the primitive states of mind, sets his type of creative activity apart from that of the psychotic, the dreamer, and the playing child. The artist’s pleasurable translations of deep conflicts achieve “lasting reparation in reality as well as in phantasy” (ibid, p.109), and as such, we have much to gain in following the tragedian into the battleground of unconscious phantasy. Perhaps we too can experience ‘lasting reparation’ in giving the full weight of our aesthetic response to the art

objects we engage with?

We must remember that Freud's contributions to aesthetics were written before he conceived of the unconscious ego, which works through conflicts. It is not incidental that art, for Segal, is "an expression of this working through" (ibid, p.80). By paying close attention to the nature of the psychic conflicts and the artist's efforts to resolve them deep within their unconscious egos, we are closer, with Segal, to perceiving the 'significant form' of the aesthetic pleasure proper. For art to really have an impact, the artist must, according to Segal: "mobilize, via the associative emotions, deeper unconscious ones" (ibid.). This is not the same as Freud's 'pleasurable release of inhibition' or 'omnipotent wish-fulfillment' hypotheses. 'Form' takes on symbolic significance in the unconscious, and embodies meaning for Segal, evoking "a certain kind of archaic emotion of a preverbal kind" (ibid, p.81), similar to Green's 'literalness of the unsaid' (Green, 1979, p.31). Whereas for Freud, the artist escapes but always finds the way to reality, for Segal, the artist never fully departs reality and is, in fact, in search of psychic truths: ironically, this the same psychic reality that Freud himself qualified.

Despite the impossibility of completing his theorizing on human nature, Freud's discoveries and fascination with art (a total of 22 papers dealing directly or indirectly with art, literature, creativity), whatever its shortcomings, make it "difficult to do full justice to the contribution, which Psycho-Analysis has made to the understanding of art" (ibid, p.74). Segal concedes, like Read in 1951, that Freud's contribution to aesthetics is 'incalculable'.

Part II: Aesthetic Value *qua* 'Aesthetic Reparation'

“What the fragile ego of the child cannot sustain and is riven by, the lifetime of development strives to restore, so that the beauty of the object may be looked upon directly, without doing “damage to the soul”, as Socrates feared” (Meltzer, 1973, p.130).

CHAPTER IV: AN ATTEMPT AT PSYCHICAL REALISM

In Part I the epistemological foundations of this research are mapped out as involving a subjectivist prioritisation of the individuals' reception of the text. Genealogical criteria deriving from the demands of philology (reading well) and perspectivism (multiple possible perspectives), *apropos* Nietzsche, justify the pluralistic approach to interpretation conceived in this thesis. Since there is no final criterion of truth for any single perspective, a poetic approach to the interpretation of Greek tragedy is fostered *via* an engagement with British psychoanalytic aesthetics, which analyses the reader-response dialectic on the level of object relationships and provides a paradigm within which to locate textual evidence for the aesthetic re-living (*nacherleben*) of early instinctual life (as conceived by Kleinians).

I argue that the British school aesthetic contributes an explanatory theory of creativity, which can be used to determine whether a reparative dialectic is present in a text, such as a tragedy. Our internal response to the sadomasochistic themes in tragedy confronts deeply repressed longings and wounds from our infancy, providing an opportunity for healing. I link Euripidean tragedy's value for life with the reparative aesthetic Kleinians propose, thus forging a link between Nietzsche's metaphysics and Kleinian metapsychology. The classical and post-classical reception of Greek tragedy is discussed in order to demonstrate the kinds of approaches to tragedy that have been documented in the past, and to show how my own approach is unique. The dialogue between depth psychology and aesthetics is surveyed, and highlights the paradox involved in the pleasure of dramatic pain. In conclusion, art can be conceived as an expression of what Kleinians call the depressive-position, and this forms part of the psycho-poetic approach to

Greek tragedy fostered in this thesis. In order to provide the necessary background for both, my attempt at psychical realism, where three Euripidean tragedies are evaluated for their capacity to reflect the ‘unpalatable realities that constitute unconscious life’ (cf. Radstone, 2007, p.246), and my introduction of a new term into the British school aesthetic, the following overview, genealogy and psycho-genealogy of the discussion on the value of art become necessary and will be pursued henceforth.

I) *Overview of the Discussion on Value of Art*

“Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience them” (Tolstoy, 1899/1987, p.51).

For Tolstoy at the turn of the last century, the value of art is the equivalent to the value of empathy: fellow feeling. It acts as a means to a special kind of knowledge, or insight into the human condition. Psychoanalytic thinking can be seen as an extension of Tolstoy’s position, into the realm of unconscious communication of feelings, by means of internal symbols. Depth psychology has deepened our knowledge of these processes and is able to compare and differentiate the value of art for the creator and spectator. Whatever benefit (or otherwise) is attributed to art for the individual (either creator or spectator), it *should* benefit (or otherwise) the larger society and assume a place of importance for the wider culture. There is a long history in the tradition of granting such an important status to art: in the wider cultural milieu of millennia past, artistic creation has always been respected, cherished, envied and valued. This thesis takes the assumption that individual psychology is sufficiently uncertain and complex to warrant sole attention in our approach to the problems of aesthetics. Our investigations into ‘what happens when we read a text?’ or ‘how the work affects the reader?’ must be conducted within the framework of a two-person depth psychology which takes for granted several things that have a bearing on our aesthetic interpretations. These items include the existence of a dynamic unconscious, and the interplay between the structures of the psyche and their instinctual (erotic/aggressive) contents. These instinctual contents are endowed by our natural

constitutions as human beings, with primary drives for object-relationships which propel or inhibit our psychological and physiological development, and provide a model for all future object-relationships including those with cultural (i.e., aesthetic) objects.

Since we cannot interrogate the poets of Greek tragedy, already we are limited in what we may be able to say about the author's intention in writing a play containing so much death and destruction. We cannot ask Euripides how he manages to evoke 'tragic delight' or 'joy' in his audience despite his depressing subject matter, so it would seem sensible, and indeed, in line with the remit of psychoanalysis as a science of subjectivity, to focus our attention on the subjective response of the reader and to ask 'what' happens there and 'how' aesthetic value is constructed in relation to that response. If we are able to come to some conclusions here, perhaps more can be said about the nature of creativity itself.

Hanna Segal has articulated a refined aesthetic theory which can tie the artist and his audience together at the intrapsychic level, in their mutual achievement of the depressive position, and their mutual overcoming of guilt, anxiety and aggression *via* the reparative impulses to re-create the lost and ruined internal world of objects and self. It took a long time to get to Segal's essentially Kleinian aesthetic, and many disagreements remain in the discipline as to where, and what we should be looking for when we try to understand the value of art. If we are to attribute any kind of restorative, redemptive, or reparative value to aesthetic experience, we depend, as contemporary aesthetic philosophers and thinkers concede, (Langer, Read, etc.) on psychoanalysis.

Over recent years several texts have been published which are of particular importance for psychoanalytic thinking in the area of aesthetics. They are *Culture and the Unconscious* (2007), edited by Caroline Bainbridge, Susannah Radstone, Michael Rustin and Candida Yates; *Psychoanalytic Aesthetics: An Introduction to the British School* (2009), by Nicky Glover; and *Dream, Phantasy and Art* (1991) and *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* (2007) by Hanna Segal. These are but a

few of the writers and clinicians at the forefront of the defensible and significant application of psychoanalytic theory to the understanding of aesthetic value, and our aesthetic response to objects of art, including literature.

Until the end of the eighteenth century, aesthetic theory was considered to be a theory about perception, at which point, “it comes to mean the theory of art and beauty” (Bowie, 2003, p.271, Glossary). The change of focus, from perception toward ‘art and beauty’, is not so severe: the former leads organically to the latter. Any aesthetic theory is first and foremost a theory of perception and always secondarily a theory of art or beauty. Nicky Glover summarises aesthetics as concerning “the nature of the creative process and the experience of the artists; the *interpretation* of art; and also the nature of the aesthetic encounter” (Glover, 2009, p.xiv).

Psychoanalytic aesthetics sees the artist as both creator and spectator of his own work, which he must assess critically: “The sensitive critic and the audience enter into the ‘potential space’ between the art object and the private world of fantasy (Winnicott) and engage in aesthetic reciprocity with the object... imaginatively re-creating aspects of the work encountered” (ibid.). Karl Figlio (Bainbridge et al., 2007) supports, in his chapter on ‘The New Naturalism’, the claim that psychoanalysis is uniquely placed to discuss this realm of intersubjectivity, where strict divisions between subject and object do not hold.

Glover elevates British psychoanalysis to the level of a multi-faceted ‘conglomerate’, which offers unique insights into all the areas of aesthetic functioning: “intra-psychic processes involved in creativity... the formal structure of art... the impact of outward objects upon inner experience – the artist’s physical engagement with his medium, and the spectator’s response to the art object *qua* object” (Glover, 2009, p.xxiii). The ‘British Aesthetic’ Glover is at pains to establish is not being debated here, however, her research provides a useful reference for this thesis. There are moments in the genealogy of the British aesthetic, deserving more attention than Glover devotes in order to draw a sharper demarcation between traditional aesthetic theory and more contemporary psychoanalytic aesthetics (which it must be appreciated, owes a lot to traditional

nineteenth century aesthetics).

Traditional Aesthetic Theory and the Form/Content Problem

In terms of literary theory, 'Formalists' and the proponents of the 'New Criticism' approach aesthetics *via* the text and do not get "mixed up", as Wimsatt (1965) understands it, with the 'actual experience' of the recipient. The reader's role in the aesthetic encounter is ignored entirely and only that which is within the text itself is considered to constitute the meaning of the text. There is no appeal, whatsoever, to the authority or intention of the author, nor the psychology of the reader. It is difficult to imagine how formalism or the new criticism could contribute to the goals of this thesis, to investigate the potential of aesthetic reparation *via* the text of Greek tragedy, since 'reparation' is itself a term embedded within depth psychology, and could not be investigated without recourse to the psychology of the reader.

Formalism and the New Criticism correspond to the dominant trend in philology, of paying 'rigorous and meticulous' attention to the text, something Nietzsche questioned and transvalued in his attempt to act as midwife to the re-birth of tragedy and the Dionysian affirmation of life, and *our interpretation of it*, in *The Birth of the Tragedy* (1871). 'Reader Response Theories' in traditional aesthetics, however, rightly conceive that we are a "part of the fiction of the poem" (Wimsatt, 1965, p.216). The reader controls and drives the whole experience of reading, and in order to understand the aesthetic experience, or the meaning of the text, we must look at the processes used by readers to create meaning and experience. Psychoanalytic criticism can be seen to support the claims of Reader Response theories.

Traditional text-oriented critics assume that the text can be understood independently from the culture and personality of the investigator and accuse the reader response camp of ignoring the text altogether. Reader response critics counter that reading is always subjective *and* objective²²,

²²From this perspective, "all our perceptions are subjective and objective at the same time, inseparably. The two terms

and that in order to explore someone's aesthetic experience we must ask them, and not pore over the text. The question, of course, as to whether the text itself is able to expand the reader's 'understanding', is something that can be missed by solely legitimating the emotive response of the reader in our aesthetic inquiries. Somewhere in between the text-oriented and reader-response camp, the 'Uniformists' assume a bi-active model whereby the literary work *and* the reader control the response: a typically post-modern solution to a very ancient problem, but one that can be accused of being internally contradictory. These controversies as to the location of aesthetic experience - in the reader, the text, or some place in between - touches upon the perennial debate within aesthetics as to whether the form or the content of the work contains the 'art' or 'beauty' and transmits 'aesthetic experience'.

The psychoanalytic approach to content is based on the principle that "a drive or drive derivative has two psychic representations, one ideational, and one affective" (Bush, 1967, p.5); content, is both fantasied *and* felt. Contents are typically defined by their "functional relation to drive discharge" (ibid, p.6) and related to the "evocation of fantasies and memory traces at varying levels of consciousness" (ibid.). Fantasy gratifications contained in the 'content' of a work of art include both manifest (direct) representations of drive objects and latent (indirect) symbolic representations which "ultimately relate back to some object of drive relevance in reality or fantasy as stored in memory traces" (ibid, p.6). Thus, content evokes wish fulfilment fantasies, which are gratified in different levels of consciousness: the most important being unconscious. These unconscious pleasures, derived from the content of the work, constitute but one source of aesthetic pleasure: one not recognized by all aesthetic theories.

'Pure' formalists maintain that, "the representation and associational value of a work of art is irrelevant to, if not distracting from, the true nature of artistic production and appreciation" (ibid, p.5). Content, is therefore, irrelevant:

cease to refer to the perception of the object and refer instead to the processes by which we try to perceive them". (Holland, 1998, p.1208).

“if a representative form has value, it is as form, not as representation. The representative element in a work of art may or may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant... to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions. Art transports us from the world of man’s activity to a world of esthetic exaltation” (Bell, 1935, p.252).

Traditional formalist accounts try to separate and diminish content in surrender to the sovereignty of ‘Form’. Contemporary aestheticians, however, consider form and content to be inseparable and believe that content is an integral component of the formal resolution of the work²³. Such a fusion of form and content has critical significance for aesthetic theory. The question becomes not ‘what’ transmits the aesthetic experience (either the content or the form of the literary work) but ‘how’ the form/content symbiosis transmits that experience of beauty *to a reader*? The question of ‘how the content is related to the formal resolution of the work of art’ is an equally controversial issue. This relationship changes depending on the art form and, is exquisitely elusive to the ‘understanding’.

Between the extremes of formalist and contemporary uniformist (bi-active models), or Individualist (reader response) aesthetics, we find Freud, who says as early as 1908 that the pleasure of artistic form is merely a bribe for the release of “still greater pleasure arising from deeper psychical sources” (Freud, 1908, p.153). Whereas philosophical aesthetics highlights the formal, poetic qualities of the work, which constitute aesthetic pleasure and transformation, Freud brings the psychoanalytic discovery of the phantasies contained in the unconscious, into his aesthetic. For Freud, the formal qualities of the work of art help liberate tensions in our unconscious minds and bring us into closer proximity with our own internal reality, and the contents of our unconscious. Form is inseparable from content, since without the fore pleasure and bribe offered by formal elements, deeper unconscious contents, which have transformational potential for the ego, could not be harnessed.

Kris understood the formal qualities of verse as being the imposition of psychic distance from

²³Ames, (1956); Bell, (1935); Carpenter, (1935); Stern, (1911/1958); Weitz, (1964).

“the immediacy of passions evoked... [and] the necessity for more, or more complete, neutralization of psychic energy” [1952, p.63], and this differs from the traditional psychoanalytic view of form as filter, fore-pleasure, or disguise for significant unconscious content.²⁴ Form allows for the sublimation (i.e., renunciation) of the unacceptable instinctual contents, into the acceptable conscious enjoyment of ‘beauty’, which Freud tells us, is merely a derivative of unconscious sexual drive activity.

Trans-form-ational Space

Andre Green claims that psychoanalytic criticism must search for the ‘emotional springs’ that make the ‘spectacle’ (such as the performance of tragedy) an “affective matrix in which the spectator sees himself involved and feels himself not only solicited but welcomed, as if the spectacle were intended for him” (Green, 1979, p.18). For Green, the unconscious facilitates communication between “a sentient, corporeal space and the textual space of the work” (ibid, p.23). Mediating these two ‘spaces’, Green places “prohibition and its censor” (ibid.). Symbolic activity in this ‘third’ space disguises, excludes and substitutes the unacceptable contents arising from the mutually interpenetrating unconscious/work matrix. Here, Green finds an analogue to what Freud described in his “first intuitions about the functioning of the psychical apparatus” (ibid, p.26). The primary process of the unconscious exists in both the creator of the work and the recipient. These primary unconscious contents are the ‘signifieds’ of psychoanalytic grammar. The secondary elaborations of these contents, which become known to consciousness, are the ‘signifiers’, they *re-present* the primary contents in a fashion acceptable to the ego structures:

“Signifier and signified are *relata* that necessarily refer back to one another, since segmentation of the one cannot but affect the other by the same division. What is at issue is not so much, which has precedence over the other as the nature of the relation between them” (ibid, p.29).

²⁴Kris (1952) on the relativist end of the epistemological scale, says that “only that self-expression is aesthetic which is communicated (or communicable) to others. This is not taken as implying the existence of a content separable from aesthetic form...What is made common to artist and audience is the aesthetic experience itself, not a pre-existent content...communication lies not so much in the prior intent of the artist as in the consequent re-creation by the audience of his work of art. And re-creation is distinguished from sheer reaction to the work precisely by the fact that the person responding himself contributes to the stimuli for his response” (Kris, 1952, p.254).

Green talks of the 'literalness of the unsaid' and the 'unreadability' of the 'signified', which links to *ephexis* [Nietzsche] and *undecidability* [Derrida], which is considered to be the sceptical "navel cord" (ibid, p.31) from which tragic and psychoanalytic interpretations draw their strength: their pessimism of strength. The 'originality' of the contents signified in literature, according to Green, "can only reside, therefore at our [psychoanalytic] level of explanation, in the literalness of the unsaid of the signified... all writing is reading and vice versa" (ibid.). This can be established by a study of the relation between the manifest signified, and the disparity between the literary and 'ordinary' signifiers:

"This difference has the function of introducing the effect of deception by which the web of the latent signified is attracted, caught and held in its network. But this attempt never manages to make the two planes coincide and, at each reading-writing, the project fails and the difference is unveiled in the substitution in which something else is revealed" (ibid, p.31).

Weber is critical of psychoanalysis, precisely because in the enterprise of constructing a theory of the unconscious, it "inevitably entails the struggle to wrest meaning from a process that entails the deliberate dislocation of meaning" (Weber, 1982, p.xiv). Green's transformational space, where the literalness of the unsaid draws strength to our interpretations of aesthetic experience, has similarities with both Winnicott's transitional, and Bollas' transformational space, where cultural experience occurs in a third space between the self and the world. All of these models (and more) struggle with the problem Weber describes, of wrestling meaning from a process which deliberately dislocates meaning: it is a global problem within psychoanalysis. The problem centres on the issue of whether meaning is located in the aesthetic object itself, i.e., the text, or in the psyche of the reader, or, indeed, somewhere in between, which of course, entails the dislocation of meaning from a traditionally conceived space. Only a sceptical perspectivism can give due weight to the potential of finding some 'truths', either in the text, the reader, or the space in between, which is why sceptical perspectivism has been woven into the foundations of this research. This wrestling with the dislocation of meaning demands we at least attempt to make the least harmful interpretations, since any interpretation is possible, and our interpretation dictates to some extent our experience. Seeking some kind of reparative dialectic within our

aesthetic appreciation of Greek tragedy would seem to strengthen our interpretive grip upon the possible meaning therein.

II) *Toward a Genealogy of 'Aesthetic Reparation'*

“The uniquely distinguishing feature of [a]esthetic experience is exactly the fact that no such distinction of self and objects exist in it... the two are so integrated that each disappears” (Dewey, 1934, p.249).

In order to demonstrate the necessity of a new term ‘aesthetic reparation’, the use of parts of this concept within the psychoanalytic literature must first be a) surveyed and b) an explanation as to why this term covers something that has not specifically been articulated before, also needs to be provided. Since ‘reparation’ is the specific psychological activity being described, and the ‘aesthetic’ dimension refers more to the ‘kind’ of activity or the ‘level’ at which the activity takes place, we should begin by grasping the roots of the term ‘reparation’, and how it has been employed in psychoanalytic thinking. The International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis contains a useful and sophisticated definition. It states that:

“Reparation is a form of sublimation connected, in the depressive position, with putting right damage done to good objects” (Hinshelwood, 2005).

In these two short lines, Hinshelwood reveals the multi-faceted meaning space in which the term ‘reparation’ resides. It is a form of (I) ‘sublimation’, which is already a complex psychoanalytic concept, and requires a definition of (II) ‘object-relations’, i.e., what makes an ‘object’, an object to a knowing ‘subject’. This is connected to (III) the ‘depressive position’, a uniquely Kleinian concept that requires extensive knowledge of the Kleinian oeuvre in order to be elucidated. Finally it is (IV) concerned with ‘making good’ the damage done to our internalised good objects, which has a bearing on the psychoanalytic notion of ‘undoing’ – the characteristic ‘magical’ ego-defence of the obsessional neurotic (Freud, 1909d, ‘Rat Man’). As such, we have a brief excursus into the labyrinth of psychoanalytic theory ahead of us, following Ariadne’s thread to the place where ‘reparation’ can finally be located.

- I) 'Sublimation' is a "drive toward the use of libido in acceptable ways" (Hinshelwood, 2005), although 'sublimation' is conceived quantitatively, as the re-distribution of desexualised libido, whereas 'reparation' is conceived in terms of object-relations. Though we may include 'reparation' within the term sublimation, their mechanisms differ: sublimation neutralises and re-distributes libido, and reparation mobilises libidinal impulses "in the context of a relationship with an object (especially an internal one)" (ibid.), specifically to contest and oppose the aggressive impulses, which threaten to destroy the relationship with an object, or to destroy the object itself.
- II) An 'object' according to the International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis is "neither a thing or a person, nor the fantasmatic content or a bodily zone of that person, although it relates to these through the analytic work" (ibid.). There is a philosophical impossibility according to Andre Green, of defining an object "other than for a subject that constitutes it as an object and is constituted by it" (ibid.). This paradox is "insurmountable" (ibid.) since 'subject', and 'object' are reciprocal, and the elimination of the object, means the elimination of the "libidinal subject and sexuality" (ibid.). The term *object* becomes meaningful "only from the moment when analytic work is possible, however early this may be" (Diatkine, 1989). There are part and total objects, internal and external objects, narcissistic objects, self-objects, transitional-objects, transformational objects, the 'object-relationship', and object choice, which reflect the semantic richness and "complexity of the connections to other people in the psyche" (Hinshelwood, 2005). The object satisfies needs stemming from the instincts and their vicissitudes (Freud, 1915c) within the organism, and can be anything with which a cathexis of libidinal investment can be constructed (including the subject's own body). Winnicott describes the destructive threats to the subject's capacity to re-establish through 'hallucination', the psychic continuity of the object required for a sense of

‘continuity of being’, when the object is absent: articulating the “objects pre-symbolising function” (Hinshelwood, 2005). Bollas claims that the object is “identified based on what the child feels is modifying his experience of the self” (ibid.) meaning that the mother is experienced as “a process of transformation” (ibid.) rather than as an object. The ‘total object’ “necessarily includes a component of otherness” (ibid.) and thus remains outside of the subject’s control, which takes centre stage in Klein’s reflections on the depressive position. By far the most ground-breaking contribution are Klein’s ‘internal objects’, which refer to “phantasies about the contents of the self, especially to the concrete contents of the body” (ibid.), including “phantasies of incorporation or expulsion of physical objects from the body... these objects are animate, and are motivated with good or bad intentions towards the ego” (ibid.).

- III) The ‘depressive position’ is an “attempt to repair the effects of aggressiveness” (ibid.) felt to subsist in the internal object, lest this object is destroyed. Fears about the internal object are “always aroused by the loss of, or harm to, loved external objects” (ibid.). Love of damaged or dead internal objects leads to the extreme pain and anxiety of the depressive position, known as severe ‘guilt’, and felt to be “the retaliation of the damaged object inside phantasy” (ibid.). This is not the same as the ‘guilt’ Freud saw as “deriving from the strict superego” (ibid.). The infant’s anxious reluctance to enter the stage of depressive grief is matched by fears of annihilation based on the badness and aggression of its own object-relations, presupposing the eternal *agon* between love and hate that is inherent in the ‘moral’ position of the superego. Recognising the loved person as the hated and attacked person of the internal phantasy, lends recourse back to the paranoid-schizoid splitting defence where love and hate are manically forced to remain separate and “the importance of the loved object (and therefore its condition) is denied... [and] no guilt or dependence on the object is felt” (ibid.). Only when the ego can tolerate

guilt, is the ego compelled to repair the “damage done in phantasy or reality” (ibid.) to the loved object: only then can gratitude and forgiveness develop. Our achievement and mastery of the depressive position, i.e., dealing with aggressiveness toward our loved and needed objects is a “slowly evolving thread through life” (ibid.) and as such is not confined to infantile life.

- IV) ‘Reparation’ is also connected to ‘undoing’. ‘Undoing’, according to Schmid-Kitsikis (2005), is a characteristic mechanism of obsessional neurosis, involving “a process of ‘negative magic’ that, according to Freud, tends to undo what has been done” (ibid.). In phantasy, i.e., in the unconscious, it is as if neither the damage, nor the reparative act had occurred, whereas in reality “there is an opposition between love and hate” (ibid.). Undoing has “no longer any resemblance to the process of repression” (Freud, 1926d, p.164), not only preventing the appearance of an event (as in repression), but an ‘undoing’ of an event, “which is irrational and magical and most likely arises from an animist attitude toward the environment” (Schmid-Kitsikis, 2005). It is to be distinguished from non-magical defence mechanisms such as foreclosure, negation, and disavowal, which do the work of negativisation.

As will have become clear, ‘reparation’ is a particularly complex concept within the psychoanalytic body of knowledge. The fulcrum of the thesis at hand rests upon our ‘resolution’ of this terminology, which itself depends on a specifically Kleinian definition of the term reparation. Without a notion that inside our minds creative impulses seek to repair, undo or make good, the phantastical damage done to our internal objects, the notion that some degree of ‘reparation’ could be achieved through our aesthetic engagements could not be put forward.

The International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis, has more to say on reparation:

“The pain of depressive anxiety (or guilt) starts as a deeply persecuting demand for a punishment—the talion law of an eye-for-an-eye and a tooth-for-a-tooth. As this position is worked through, new feelings (*pinning*, Melanie Klein called it) appear towards the object, and are associated with specific impulses to repair the damage done by aggressive phantasies or acts. Development in the depressive position along this axis depends on the capacity to sustain a feeling of love towards the object despite the

impulses of hating and, in phantasy, wanting to attack the good object. Love takes the form of a kind of penance or atonement to a loved one, creating a mixture of sadness, regret, and activity. This is reparation” (Hinshelwood, 2005).

Hinshelwood describes the characteristic ‘manic defences’ of the ego, where reparation is based on “demonstration of a strength and energy superior to that of the object” (ibid.), and in which “the object is degraded, so that damage to it becomes a matter of indifference” (ibid.). At first, Hinshelwood says: “reparation may be strongly coloured by these defences (manic reparation)” (ibid.). Real regret, however, for the damage done to the object is required to work through the aggressive phantasies, and the reparation of an internal good object is required for the successful achievement of the depressive position (as conceived by Klein). There is definitely an ontological equivalence between ‘internal’ and ‘external’ objects, since “the latter represent the internal object to which the ego is dedicated” (ibid.). It is not that there are objects ‘out there’ and objects ‘in here’, when it comes to the human mind. The objects we relate to in the outside world become counterpart to their internal versions, and our relations are coloured by both actions in the outside world, and phantasies emanating from within. There is, in a strict sense, no way to tease these impressions apart: no way to distinguish those arising from physical actions in the ‘outside’ world from those arising from internal reactions and phantasies to those external influences. They are inextricably woven together in what we call subjectivity.

We must also remember that these sadistic and reparative phantasies all go on in the unconscious and thus elude our desire to grasp them or have them articulated by an experiencing subject.

The theories about this disastrous internal world were developed from Klein’s original interpretations of children’s play, many of whom could not express these phantasies, as Klein did. There is certainly always a question regarding the legitimacy of these, or any, interpretations. However, one need only look to the therapeutic effect of Klein’s exquisite interpretations of young autistic children’s play and phantasy life, to recognise that a) psychoanalysis was the first discipline to actually recover a child from nonverbal ‘fixation in infantile psychosis’ (which is what psychoanalysts understand as being the essential aetiology of ‘autism’), b) the profoundly sadomasochistic phantasies of infantile psychosis must also be something we all experience in

‘normal’ development, only worked through to the depressive position, and c) such psychotic phantasies remain ‘on call’ even in adult life, as we oscillate between the paranoid-schizoid position and the depressive position which overcomes the psychotic, destructive phantasies toward our internal objects, through guilt and reparation.

‘Reparation’ then, can be described as Klein did in 1935, as “a powerful impetus to creativity” (ibid.). This insinuates an aesthetic dimension to the process of reparation. Hanna Segal is attributed with explaining that aesthetic achievements (creativity, art) exemplify “the most touching and loving devotions to recreating the beauty of the loved object (Segal, 1991)” (ibid.), providing a key clue to the puzzle of aesthetic reparation *qua* process. However as Hinshelwood continues, unless the reparative urge contains sadness and regret, it “betrays itself in a technical perfection of prettiness, distinct from beauty” (ibid.). Segal, Hinshelwood rightly states, elaborates the Kleinian view “on the aesthetic process based in reparation” (ibid.), and comes close to Winnicott’s theory of the aesthetic object *qua* transitional object. Meltzer’s approach to psychoanalytic aesthetics points to the “place of the infant’s primary “worship” of the breast, and of the parental couple, conflicted though that is” (ibid.) according to Hinshelwood, and this is supported by the work of Bollas, (1978) who speaks of the primary ‘idiom’ of the mother’s care, being the first aesthetic ‘moment’ we experience, and which somewhat dictates all future aesthetic ‘moment’.

In the development of the concept ‘reparation’, Hinshelwood points to Klein’s (1935) paper, which mentions the manic-position and obsessional mechanism as two fundamental methods employed in the “normal process of overcoming the infantile depressive position” (ibid, p.173), in which ‘reparation-tendencies’ “play an all-important part” (ibid.). Klein and Riviere’s (1937) *Love, hate and reparation*, contains lectures delivered by the authors in 1935. Here, the infant’s reconciliation of the conflicting emotions regarding the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ maternal imagoes is explained in its impact on the essential ambivalence between the instinctual forces of love and hate which persist into adult life. When good and bad imagoes coalesce in the infant’s mind, the

full weight of his hatred is felt to imperil the good object, leading to guilt and reparation for the harm done. The rage-guilt-reparation cycle is central for the emergence of gratitude and compassion. Reparation becomes central for Klein, representing a fundamental component of love, and human relationship. The attachment to the nurturing breast and milk is considered the bedrock of all love relations in Klein's view.

Paula Heimann, also deserves a place in this, albeit selective, genealogy. Her (1942) paper extends Freud's original conception of sublimation, to include a finer appreciation of the unconscious phantasies related to internalized objects involved in sublimatory processes. She provides an excellent definition of the ego²⁵ and goes on to describe the internal drama of projection and internalization that constitute the subject's defensive relation to the impulses of love and hate emanating from within and endangering the subject's internalized 'good' objects. Heimann teaches us that we personify the 'badness', which we cannot bear to acknowledge as our own. If we realise this, and become able to "tolerate feelings of guilt and pain... then [we] no longer feel inhabited by persecuting devils" (Heimann, 1942, p.12). Included in this, according to Heimann is "a greater tolerance towards aggressiveness... and... less anxiety" (ibid.). The atonement of guilt involves the internalization and restoration of the attacked external object, making the impulse to restore, for Heimann where it was not for Freud, "a most fundamental factor in sublimation and creative production" (ibid, p.15). To wit:

"I do not mean that the assimilation of the internal objects leads to a static condition in which the conflicts cease to exist. As I have said, the inner world is a never-ending drama of life and action. Life is bound up with the dynamic processes set up by aggression, guilt, anxiety and grief about the internal objects, and by the impulses of love and restoration; Love and Hate are urging the subject to strive for sublimation. The internal freedom to which I refer is a relative, not an absolute fact; it does not abolish conflicts, but it enables the subject to enlarge and unfold his ego in his sublimations" (ibid. p.17).

²⁵When I use the term 'ego', I am not thinking so much of an organization which is firmly established and demarcated in contrast to other parts of the personality—indeed, Freud has warned us against being dogmatic in this matter—but of the sum-total of an individual's feelings, emotions, impulses, wishes, capacities, talents, thoughts and phantasies, in short, all those psychic forces and formations which a person (assuming that his consciousness reached so far as to embrace so much) would identify as his own and which would make him feel: 'That is I.' (Heimann, 1942, p.9).

Heimann's (1942) paper on "Sublimation and its relation to processes of internalisation", deals with "certain aspects of the sublimatory processes" (ibid, p.8) in the artistic productivity of a painter and involves a "consideration of unconscious phantasies related to internalized objects" (ibid.). Heimann elucidates the specifically pleasurable side effects of successful sublimations, such as "expansion and development of the ego" (ibid.), saying that:

"since the ego does not have recourse to repression, it is not restricted and impoverished but enriched by the sublimatory activity" (ibid.).

For Heimann, "the memory-traces of psychical experience, past and present" (ibid. p.11) are composed of the subject and the subject's instinctual impulses toward their original objects "who are seen as they had been felt and are felt to be under the impact of her impulses" (ibid.). These objects also display the subjects' own impulses. Heimann is keen to draw the inner and outer worlds into a closer resolution, when she states that:

"Features of the world in which and towards which... instinctual impulses were originally directed, dating from the period of time and the actual occasions in which they were originally felt (and were more or less expressed or denied) become woven into the inner drama played out by... impulses and their objects" (ibid.).

All experience, on this reading, is modelled after the original pattern of our earliest experience. The internal drama distorts the subject's perception of the external world and "lends features of internal phantasy and memory to experiences with present-day external objects" (ibid.). This admixture of reality and phantasy is seen as a defence-mechanism "against the subject's own evil impulses—a variety of the mechanism of projection and turning outward of aggressiveness (death instinct) discussed by Freud (1920)." (ibid.). The object, Heimann says:

"which has been internalized in hate and greed becomes the internal carrier of these very impulses. This comes about by way of many phantasies, which can be summed up as methods of divesting the subject of his own evil and aggressiveness and transferring them elsewhere, thus relieving the subject of anxiety and also of the guilt resulting from his aggressiveness towards his objects" (ibid.).

The impulse to restore according to Heimann "is a most fundamental factor in sublimation and creative production" (ibid. p.15). However, guilt and anxiety, if they are 'overstrong', "interfere with the successful functioning of the impulse to restore, because they lead to the employment of various mechanisms for *magical control* of the internal persecutors" (ibid.). This in turn "keeps

the ego under control and interferes with the independent ego-expanding activities which are implied in successful sublimation” (ibid.). Such ‘magical control’ extends to the frantic efforts made by the ego to separate the coital union, felt in phantasy to be the disastrous “persecutorily combined parents” (ibid, p.16), however, their separation results in the feeling that they are now “in a hopeless state of aphanisis” (ibid.)²⁶. Only the assimilation of “those qualities of his internal parents which are suitable and adequate to him” (ibid, p.16), can lead to independence, successful sublimation and “the setting free of forces which... result in an increase of productive capacities directed towards actual reality and aiming at a truer expression of the self” (ibid, pp.15-16). The never-ending drama of the inner-world continuously urges Heimann’s ‘subject’ to strive toward the enlargement and unfolding of their ego through the work of sublimation. This lends an ego-syntonic quality to the work of reparation, in the internal milieu.

In her introduction to Meltzer’s (2004) *Psychoanalysis and Art: Kleinian Perspectives*, Sandra Gosso offers a history of the concept ‘reparation’, which brings the aesthetic dimension closer to the foreground. She details Klein’s work from 1927 to 1940 as the development of ‘art *qua* reparation’. In her 1927 paper on ‘Criminal Tendencies in Normal Children’, Klein observed that, “the manifestation of these ‘destructive’ tendencies is invariably followed by anxiety, and by performances in which the child now tries to make good and to atone for what he has done. Sometimes he tries to mend the very same dolls, trains and so on he has just broken” (Klein, 1927, p.190). This is an aesthetic, if also reactive kind of reparation: not quite the “nuclear process in psychic life” (Gosso, 2004, p.3) epitomizing Klein’s 1935-1940 conception of reparation. Klein’s (1929) paper on ‘Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in a Work of Art and in the Creative Impulse’ constitutes the “prologue to the reflection on the creative process within British Psychoanalysis” (Gosso, 2004, p.1). This was the first time aesthetic creativity was connected to the concept of ‘reparation’. From 1935 to 1946 the concept ‘reparation’ “found a special place” (ibid, p.3) in Klein’s theories about mental life. Reparation was now understood as,

²⁶Aphanisis, introduced by Jones (1937), is read by Heimann as a development in our understanding of castration fears that goes beyond the loss of an organ for gratification. It includes “a threat of the loss of all capacities for ever experiencing gratification of the libido and thus ...for establishing a ‘good’ relation to an object” (Heimann, 1942, FN 7).

“the outcome of a primary relational view, in which the baby experiments with aggression towards the mother and the contents of her body, which, finally, lead to concern and remorse—feelings from which arise the concern and love that are at the origin of the urge to create” (ibid.).

In 1935, Klein had recognized the ego’s “greater use of introjection of the good object as a mechanism of defence” (Klein, 1935, p.148) and this was connected to reparation to the object, another defence mechanism with a “structural valence, in so far as it is employed... in the formation of the ego” (Gosso, 2004, p.4). In 1940, Klein describes the outcome of the process of mourning in terms of reparation. This moves away from the account of reparation as reaction-formation, or as defence mechanism. When in 1958 Klein says: “Though the rejected aspects of the self and of the internalized objects contribute to instability, they are also at the source of inspiration in artistic production and in various intellectual activities” (Klein, 1958, p.245), she anticipates a new line of thinking. This new line is declared in her paper ‘Some Reflections on the Oresteia’ (1963) as a concern to connect the processes of adult creativity with infantile psychic life. Implicit in this new path toward a psychoanalytic aesthetics is “an interest in the restorative element of which the form is composed” (Gosso, 2004, p.6), which allows for:

“an interest in the disintegrated, split, fragmented, attacked, and devoured object, to the experiences of persecution, revenge, and the sequence of defences of idealization, omnipotence, and magic into which descend the perverse universe of Bosch and the deformed fragmentation of the suckling with his part object (the breast) and his whole object (the mother), with his phantasied inside, which includes the paternal-penis/source-of-milk and the internal siblings, felt as treasure to attack or steal from the mother” (ibid, pp.6-7).

There is, according to Klein in the latest days of her thinking, a necessary integration of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions in the creative process itself, whence Gosso sees “the breaking up of a passionate and conflictual (*P_s*) tangle, which can only find representation in a form operated by *D*” (ibid, p.7). The concept of art “as a representation of the passage of internal objects from a state of fragmentation to integration and vice-versa” (ibid, p.9), implies “a large reduction of anxiety with a lesser use of defence mechanisms” (ibid.). This, however, speaks nothing of pleasure, the triumph of the reparative urges, and the joy of successfully internalizing the good, nurturing object.

Segal (1952) runs with Klein's concept of art as reparation, and shows that the sublimation involved in artistic creativity presupposes renunciation of an instinctual aim or object through the process of mourning. This processing of loss and abandonment "is a repetition and at the same time a re-living of the giving up of the breast" (Segal, 1952, p.53). If the lost object can be assimilated by a process of internal restoration, Segal suggests that "the object becomes a symbol within the ego" (ibid.). Without pain, loss, or the work of mourning then, there is no symbol-formation for Segal. Since art is essentially "the creation of symbols, [and] the symbolic elaboration of a theme" (ibid, p.54), art therefore depends on pain, loss and mourning. Segal not only tackles the question of successful art, she accounts for the artists' and audiences' aesthetic pleasure, derived from an identification with the work of art, "as a whole and with the whole internal world of the artist as represented by his work" (ibid, p.55).

All aesthetic pleasure includes for Segal "an unconscious re-living of the artist's experience of creation" (ibid.) which is similar to Freud's (1914b) comment about how the artist arouses in his audience "the same mental constellation as that which in him produced the impetus to create" (1914, p.212). Segal, however, prefers Dilthey's term '*nacherleben*', which is the "equivalent to unconscious identification" (Segal, 1952, p.56). This kind of "unconscious re-living of the creator's state of mind is the foundation of all aesthetic pleasure" (ibid.) for Segal. This approach to psychoanalytic aesthetics "confronts the nature of the aesthetic experience and art as the bringing together of the "ugly"—destructiveness, aggression, death instinct—and of the 'beautiful'—union, life instinct—expressed through form" (Gosso, 2004, p.11).

Since the work of mourning demands the restoration and reparation of lost internal loved objects, and symbol-formation demands the successful work of mourning, we can begin with Segal's work, to speak of aesthetic reparation as the work of reparation to our internal objects which takes place in the creation and enjoyment of aesthetic achievements such as art. Aesthetic pleasure itself, guarantees for Segal, an unconscious identification with, or re-living of, the pain

and loss of abandonment, which had to be successfully mourned by the creator of the work, in order for the work of art to be considered 'authentic' and lead to aesthetic pleasure in the viewer.

Gosso states that Meltzer sees a "complete congruence between the concepts of 'aesthetic object' and 'aesthetic conflict'" (ibid, p.13). Since the primary aesthetic experience, for Meltzer in 1984, is to be located "in the uterus as a claustrum" (ibid, p.15), an aesthetic conflict arises "in connection with the relationship between external beauty and the internal contents of the mother" (ibid.). Aesthetic conflict:

"entails seeing mental growth as an aesthetic function founded on reciprocity between the internal infant mind and its internal objects, beginning with the actual infant's response to mother-as-the-world, which serves as prototype for all subsequent mental explorations. It is the complex experience of the beauty of the world together with the desire to know it that sets in motion the peculiarly human activity of symbol-making, a function of 'the aesthetic level' of mentality" (Meltzer, 1986, p.200).

Here, Meltzer provides the tools required to evidence an aesthetic level of human mentality, where symbol-making functions to help restore our lost and ruined internal world of objects and self. The function of dreams, for Meltzer, is to deal with our aesthetic experience of the world, where 'beauty is truth, truth is beauty' (Meltzer, 1983, p.29). 'Beauty', therefore, plays a vital role in mental life for Meltzer, who in 1986 places Bion's mysterious 'alpha function' at the beginning of symbolic life. Through successive interpretations of autism, Meltzer posited the "aesthetic roots of mental processes, of pathology as much as creativity" (ibid.). The flight from a 'Ps tangle', as Gosso calls it, is a defence against the destructivity of the aesthetic object for Meltzer, and also serves to defend against the "disturbing question about the aesthetic congruence between the inside and outside of the object" (Gosso, 2004, p.15). According to Meltzer, 'mother's beauty', is questioned by the infant: 'is her inside as beautiful?' constitutes the essential and terrifying question of the depressive position. The enigma and emotional evocativeness of the inside and outside of the first (maternal) aesthetic object, including anxiety, doubt and mistrust, is something Meltzer fails to grasp in 1973, and something he claims Segal also missed in her paper on aesthetics. One statement of particular clarity in Meltzer's 1973 paper states that:

“What the fragile ego of the child cannot sustain and is riven by, the lifetime of development strives to restore, so that the beauty of the object may be looked upon directly, without doing “damage to the soul”, as Socrates feared.” (Meltzer, 1973, p.130).

So, the apprehension of beauty includes the apprehension of destruction, or in Bion's terms, “the present object is seen to contain the shadow of the absent-object-as-a-persecutor” (ibid, p.129). Meltzer's main source of reference is the work of Wilfred Bion, who models “an innate predisposition or unconscious phantasy (Susan Isaacs) in the baby” (ibid.), alongside “a very important maternal function—the function of reverie—which allows the baby in its turn to develop alpha function” (ibid.). Bion's new contribution runs along the lines that “in the beginning was the aesthetic object, and the aesthetic object was the breast and the breast was the world” (ibid.). As a part object, first the breast, and then a total mother figure provide the necessary container for the infants' undigested and uncontrollable beta-elements (psychotic thinking and phantasies). Bion calls this containing, processing aspect of maternal reverie, the ‘alpha function’; something the infant lacks until it is learnt and established through successive projective and introjective processes.

“aesthetic sensibility is understood as a primary event in life, and the aesthetic conflict fashions the beginnings of our imagination and phantasy, just as does the disturbances of mental life” (Gosso, 2004, pp.xx-xxi).

Although Meltzer and Bion move away from the concept of reparation, their work solidifies the aesthetic roots of both intrapsychic conflict and creativity in relation to our internal objects. In the unconscious, every reparation is an aesthetic reparation in Bion's theory, for it is a restoration of an aesthetic object, learnt through an aesthetic process of maternal reverie, which contains destructive urges, and helps preserve the infant's internal objects and self.

“The riches of the value of subjectivity and the evocative quality of poetic communication appropriate to these directions of thought, which foster a close rapport between the work of art and its interpreter and between interpreter and reader, can fairly be compared to the model of the intimacy of mother-baby, to their reciprocal giving to and questioning of one another, so that we can imagine a mother who tells of the beauty of her baby and a baby who wonders at the beauty of the mother as the prototype of the never-ending interpretation” (ibid.).

Harris Williams, a collaborator of Meltzer's, actively questions the ‘therapeutic capacity of the aesthetic (beautiful) object’ (Williams, 2010, p.34). She concludes that destructive, painful and

dangerous qualities are retained in the therapeutic-aesthetic object: so analysts should always inspire fear, if they are to offer containing and transformative qualities. Harris Williams goes back to eighteenth century aesthetics where “pleasant beauty is counterpoised to the Longinian sublime type of beauty (*hypsos*), which has associations with fear and defamiliarisation,” (ibid, p.35), to help bend our conception of beauty and harmony to include the ugly and disharmonious, as Segal had earlier attempted. As Bion said, ‘beauty is truth’ and the truth can appear “ugly and frightening” (Bion, 1977, p.32).

The “heroic humanistic achievement” (Williams, 2010, p.48) of symbolic processes and their aesthetic-therapeutic potential in works of art, such as Greek tragedy, is held by Harris Williams, to be “responsible for the play’s continuing stature at the heart of western civilisation” (ibid, p.49). She concludes that “all imaginative works that achieve transformation *via* an Aristotelian *peripeteia*” (ibid, p.50), do so by metaphorically thinking through “the turbulence of the aesthetic conflict and illustrate the process of weaning, which Meltzer called ‘catastrophic change’. These concepts are said to originate in “the organic structure of the works” (ibid.), although that seems to be a biased point of view. Notwithstanding, this is by far the closest statement, by any of the authors thus far reviewed, to the proposition of ‘aesthetic reparation’ being a process that can define and explain our aesthetic enjoyment and pleasure in the reading of Greek tragedy.

Carl Rotenberg, in his preface to Hagman’s (2005) contemporary psychoanalytic investigation of *Aesthetic Experience: Beauty, Creativity, and the Search for the Ideal*, claims that human life is made meaningful “in large degree to the extent that it is coextensive and commingling with aesthetic experience” (Rotenberg, 2005, p.ix). He goes on to explain that, “It is this unique intermingling of self-experience, self-structure, and aesthetic feeling, which has led one social observer to call our species *Homo Aestheticus*” (ibid.). The pursuit of artistic expression in the face of trauma and death, such as in “concentration camps and the Soviet Gulag of Siberia” (ibid), is evidence that aesthetic experience can and does “persist like a spiritual oxygen for the survival of meaning” (ibid.). This highlights an even more powerful function to art than reparation, and echoes a

deeper, more fundamental value for life, and the very continuation of psychological existence, which honours the archaic substratum of creativity. Hagman too, seeks the root of aesthetic experience in the primary maternal aesthetic. Following Hagman I want to take “the concrete experience of artwork, creative processes, and specific aspects of aesthetic experience” (ibid, p.x) and explore these issues “on a higher psychological, philosophical, and conceptual plane” (ibid.). Hagman bolsters the contemporary psychoanalytic interest in the primary function of aesthetic experience as opposed to the symbolic/interpretive approach to psychoanalytic aesthetics that has dominated the literature.

Aesthetic experience can be traced to our earliest development, and has a progressive function in assisting in “the resolution of internal psychological distress arising from the feared consequence of aggression felt toward good objects” (Hagman, 2005, p.20). In containing both the bad object (aggressive phantasy), and the good object (libidinal phantasy), aesthetic experience works to ‘undo’ the primal splitting of the aesthetic object in phantasy, and is involved with mending, an essentially reparative act: perhaps, therefore, all aesthetic experience contains the potential for aesthetic reparation. When “beauty and ugliness are expressed with simultaneous vividness, with neither cancelling the other out” (ibid.), or “there is a balanced but separate depiction of evil and goodness within a single aesthetic field” (ibid.), Hagman says that “the aesthetic experience allows for the safe, even reparative, recognition that aggression and libido can exist within the same psychological realm without annihilation of the good” (ibid.). Object-relations theory hereby became the first psychoanalytic theory to describe a ‘developmental aesthetic’ and specifically “the idea that aesthetic experience is an aspect of the depressive position” (ibid, pp.19-20).

The developmental aesthetic implies a biological function to aesthetic experience and Rose (1992) wrote that aesthetic experience is rooted in phylogenetic adaptations to internal and external reality, organising affects and perceptions and transforming anxiety into transcendent pleasure and insight:

“Art performs a valuable biological function: at least it provides a normative mode or opportunity for stimulating and assimilating potentially dangerous degrees of affect—in short, extending the limits of the bearable. Instead of traumatic reexperiencing of affective storms, or a repression of affective signals with regressive resomatisations and fragmentation, a greater degree of integration and differentiation of affects can take place within the safe holding presence of the aesthetic structure” (Rose, 1992, p.277).

Aesthetic experience triangulates between a present self, the evoked memory of archaic states, and the art object, and this resonated with Rose, as matching the basic structure of the mind itself. “Aesthetic experience recapitulates the mind’s fusion with the emergence from the maternal bond” (Hagman, 2005, p.21), and it is the “idealization of the formal aspects of experience that underlie aesthetic processes” (ibid.), which distinguishes them from other kinds of experience. Hagman’s developmental-relational model of aesthetic form, differs from that of the philosophers. It is an:

“emergent mental phenomenon in which psychobiological-neuronal propensities are stimulated and sculpted through relational experience, and are gradually internalized as structured expectations and organising principle that reflect the form and particularly the quality of interpersonal experience” (ibid, p.26).

Reparation, according to this model, involves the establishment of formal structure, where beauty represents “the most perfect accomplishment of love over the inner forces of the death drive” (ibid, p.82). It seems that no matter where we look, the term ‘reparation’ is being connected with aesthetic experience, ‘beauty’, and the primary maternal bond. It would seem as though, giving form to trauma, be it physical or psychical, makes it accessible to conscious thought and opens up opportunities for the restructuring and resolving of those traumatic memories. Creativity has a value for the survival of the individual and for psychological growth. It has long been known that the infant’s sensory-motor creative explorations of the world also have importance for the development of thought, so these ascendant re-valuations of the creative impulse and art, should not really come as a surprise. That said, a refined articulation of *how* creativity and aesthetic experience can spur human mentality toward newer and greater depths, is something that is lacking across all the human sciences. This is where British psychoanalytic theory and the concept ‘aesthetic reparation’ has something unique to contribute. One way to put it would be to say that any experience of ‘beauty’, according to almost any

definition of that word, demands the aesthetic reparation of deep psychological conflict and tension. 'Beauty', then, can be read as the expression and experience of what I am describing as 'aesthetic reparation'.

III) *Aesthetic Reparation Theory apropos Contemporary Psychoanalysis*

The Kleinian approach to the form/content problem in aesthetics provides a model that seems to work toward a more therapeutic end than the traditional psychoanalytic aesthetic models, which focus on where pleasure is located in our aesthetic encounters: id, ego, superego or in a transitional/transformative space in between the psyche and the aesthetic object. The Kleinian aesthetic, although derivative of Freud, is less concerned with the location of aesthetic experience and much more concerned with articulating the details of how the form/content symbiosis opens intrapsychic pathways to what I conceive in Dilthey's terms, as '*nacherleben*' [re-living].

In his introduction to *Culture and the Unconscious* (2007), Michael Rustin argues that despite a strong clinical focus on "understanding and relieving the psychic pain of patients" (Rustin, 2007, p.1), British psychoanalysis only "cautiously tried to follow the unconscious in its manifestations in the wider culture" (ibid, p.2). Calling it a limited mode of understanding cultural forms such as art, art history and literary criticism, Rustin's stance stands in contradistinction to the view laid out by Nicky Glover in *Psychoanalytic Aesthetics: An Introduction to the British School* (2009), which goes a long way toward demonstrating a very British, very 'object-relations' oriented approach to psychoanalytic aesthetics. Maizel says that "the junction of psychoanalysis and aesthetics—with their combined mutual preoccupation with the child and its vision of Beauty in the inner and outer worlds" places British psychoanalytic thinkers "in a class of their own" (ibid, p.x). Can British psychoanalysis, more specifically the Kleinian object-relations theory, contribute to a distinctly reparative aesthetic in relation to the text of Greek tragedy? I will argue in the affirmative and refer mainly to the work of the Kleinian group, to demonstrate my thesis.

Rustin recognizes that the artist or writer applies effort in approaching their unconscious in order to “register the disruptive and disturbing aspects of unconscious mental life [with]in their experience and creative practice” (Rustin, 2007, p.2), and even goes on to say that the “Great tragedians... in many ways preceded and anticipated the insights of psychoanalysis about unconscious desires... fantasies and their consequences” (ibid.). In asking the question “What is the curative potential of art and how does creativity facilitate the working through of unconscious fantasy and affect” (ibid, p.105), the authors of *Culture and the Unconscious* provide another prototype for the questions of this research. Their approach can be described as one of ‘psychical realism’, “where texts are evaluated for their capacity to reflect those often unpalatable realities that constitute unconscious life” (Radstone, 2007 p.246), enmeshing the clinical and academic interpretations.

This thesis is also an attempt at, or exercise in ‘psychical realism’: trying to evaluate several of Euripides’ tragedies for their capacity to reflect, and lead us to, the unpalatable constituents of unconscious life. Beyond merely mirroring our suffering, however, I am also examining these tragedies’ reparative potential. This too finds support in *Culture and the Unconscious* where the Kleinian concept of reparation is conceived as providing a “potential bridge between academic and clinical psychoanalytic criticism” (ibid, p.251). Academic criticism focuses on the “violence inherent within particular regimes of representation, as exemplified by specific texts and practices” (ibid, p.252), and clinical criticism is concerned with our “capacity to make reparation... and... a ‘realistic’ and healthy view of people and the world ‘as they are’” (ibid.). This is an important distinction and one that highlights the clinical relevance of the thesis being defended here.

The Kleinian concept of ‘reparation’ refers to “the urge to repair the damage done by sadistic attacks upon inner objects – particularly the mother and the breast” (ibid, p.251). David Bell in *Psychoanalysis and Culture* (1999), describes the very “clinical understanding of creativity and

culture” (Bell, 1999, p.10) as itself deriving from “reparative impulses which seek to repair the damage felt to have been done to objects internal and external” (ibid.). So, clinical criticism is far-reaching in its concern for the “violence meted out upon inner objects” (Radstone, 2007, p.251). True reparation depends on the recognition that “good and bad can exist in the same object” (ibid, p.252), which Klein describes as being the hard-won achievement of the depressive position. The extent to which the internal experience of objects is both symbolic and physical forms an important aspect of Klein’s picture of the internal world and helps give a sense of how internal objects can be felt to be destroyed: as such this tenet of British psychoanalysis will now be discussed.

Symbolic Corporeality: Klein versus Freud

Klein’s work with children supports a corporeal account of symbolic experience. She infers a great amount of symbolic activity in the child’s play. Freud saw phantasy as an alternative method of physical discharge, whereas Klein saw phantasy as being the mainspring of physical discharge, and as Glover says: “the actual physical business involved in much artistic work – can be itself symbolic. Unconscious phantasy has its roots in bodily processes and is inextricable from our corporeality—our physical sensations, bodily processes out of which the ego is formed” (Glover, 2009, p.37). This is reminiscent of Freud’s (1923b) ‘first and foremost a body-ego’. So there is an important sense, highlighted by Klein, in which everything symbolic is also corporeal.

Klein’s ‘corporeal’ account of symbolization has three important precedents. The first is, Ferenczi’s idea that: “identification is the precursor of symbolism” (ibid, p.38), arising out of the baby’s endeavour to “rediscover the sexual in all objects, on the basis of the most remote similarity” (Ferenczi, 1912, p.429). The second precedent is Jones’ (1916) description of the symbolic equation of two “very different things” (Glover, 2009, p.37) based on the pleasure principle. The final precedent is Klein’s own conclusion (in 1923) that “symbolism is the

foundation of all sublimation and of every talent since it is by way of symbolic equation that things, activities, and interest become the subject of 'libidinal phantasies'" (Klein, 1988a, p.220). For Klein, symbolic equations and identifications are the earliest phantasy formations of the infantile mind. They are spurred by libidinal interest and the anxiety arising in the early stages of oral sadism, where the child wishes for the destruction of, primarily, organs equated with objects which, in the child's imagination, are contained inside the mother's body, and which later cause him dread. Whereas Klein had earlier believed anxiety to be an inhibitor of development, her work from the 1920s shows a gradual appreciation of the necessity of anxiety and its resolution for development:

"Both ego development and perception of reality depend upon the ego's capacity to withstand the pressure of the earliest anxiety situations; and a certain amount of anxiety is needed for an abundance of symbolic activity and phantasy life" (Klein, 1988a, pp.220-21).

More than just the foundation of phantasy and sublimation, symbolism in the Kleinian oeuvre, comes to be understood as the very "basis of the subject's relation to the outside world and to reality" (ibid.). In 1930, Klein articulates an embryonic theory of symbol formation, which assumes that there is an early stage of mental development at which sadism becomes active at all the various sources of libidinal pleasure. These oral sadistic phantasies, to devour the mother's breast, reach their zenith when "the subject's dominant aim is to possess himself of the contents of the mother's body and to destroy her by means of every weapon which sadism can command" (Klein, 1930, p.24.). These destructive phantasies subside with "the earlier anal stage" (ibid.), placing the introduction of Klein's Oedipus 'conflict' at an earlier psycho-sexual stage than Freud's Oedipus complex. Klein's thoughts on symbol formation lay the foundation for her 1946 introduction of the 'paranoid-schizoid position, and the concept of 'projective identification'. Clarifying her thoughts on the depressive position, Klein explains that the defence mechanism of splitting internal and external objects, emotions and the ego, underlie "identification by projection" (Klein, 1946, p.110), and represent the even younger infant's paranoid-schizoid response to the anxieties of the first few months of life, experienced as fear of persecution. She explains that the onset of the depressive position is also "the juncture at

which by regression schizoid mechanisms may be reinforced” (ibid.).

Hanna Segal (1952; 1957) refines Klein’s theory of symbolization, drawing a distinction between the symbolic equation and the symbolic representation, which she maps onto the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions respectively. Where Freud and Jones had made a distinction between symbol formation proper, and sublimation (which needed to be absent in order for symbols to be formed), no such distinction can be found in Klein. The classical account portrays a regressive, wish-fulfilling phenomenon (pleasure-pain principle), whereas for Klein “symbolization was regarded as essential to the development of a reality sense” (Glover, 2009, p.42). These differences seep into the respective approaches to art: Freud remaining obscure on the mystery of the source of creativity, Klein placing it “firmly within the context of fundamental development processes that establish a rich communicative phantasy life and realistic relationship to the external world” (ibid.). At this point, a fuller articulation of the critical contributions to the Kleinian aesthetic becomes paramount. The following section shifts focus from the psychological dimension of the vicissitudes of internal strife, in which art features as a way of approaching these issues, to a more aesthetic dimension, incorporating the knowledge accumulated in the psychological discussion. In this way, the relationship between aesthetic reparation and ‘beauty’ becomes key.

IV) *Unconscious Phantasy & Beauty: A Psycho-Genealogy of Aesthetic Value*

“When projective identification is in ascendance and the ego is identified and confused with the object, then the symbol, a creation of the ego, becomes identified and confused with the thing symbolized... giving rise to concrete [paranoid-schizoid] thinking. Only when separation and separateness are accepted [in the working-through of the depressive position] does the symbol become a representation of the object rather than being equated with the object” (Segal, 1986, p.90).

This invaluable statement of Segal’s requires attention if we are to appreciate the truly Kleinian contribution to understanding our aesthetic responses and aesthetic value judgments. ‘Good’ art, ‘authentic’ art, says Segal requires ‘adequate mourning’ of the artist’s ruined internal world of

objects: it is not, as Jones would say the product of 'only what is repressed' (Jones, 1916, p.116).

This is a crucial difference to bear in mind before attempting to connect a philosophical concept such as 'beauty' with the psychoanalytic tenet of reparative unconscious phantasy.

Symbolisation, for Segal, is an important achievement of the ego, underlying all forms of creative endeavour (phantasy, dream, play, and art); it involves the working-through of the depressive position whereby "the thing symbolized [the signified] and the object representing the thing symbolized [the signifier]" (Glover, 2009, p.43) are acknowledged and respected for their independent existence. The achievement of the depressive position is therefore indicated in the aesthetic experience of 'beauty', and the 'aesthetic dimension' of 'beauty' becomes crucial in allowing the depressive position to be figured and thought through by the individual. Internal objects acquire aesthetic form in the reparative mourning of the depressive position and in this way aesthetics contribute to the sense of something coherent/whole, as also real and tangible.

Since aesthetic experience requires the involvement of unconscious phantasy, infantile preoccupations, the uncanny (familiar-unfamiliar) presence of infantile rage, and beauty (as containing its opposite, 'ugliness'), these will now be discussed, in their relation to the psychoanalytic understanding of aesthetic value. If we are able to connect aesthetic value with aesthetic pleasure, or aesthetic emotion proper, then we can approach the problem in terms of equating aesthetic pleasure to the operation of unconscious phantasies, which we know must be reparative in order to generate relief, rhythm and harmony, all of which constitute our experience of beauty.

Unconscious Phantasy and Aesthetic Value:

Segal notes that "Freud's discovery of unconscious thoughts underlying hysterical symptoms can be seen as equivalent to the discovery of unconscious phantasy. He showed how conflicts, instincts, and defences are expressed and contained in an unconscious phantasy" (Segal, 1991, p.12). As early as 1905 in his analysis of 'Dora',

Freud makes clear that the libidinal “motive forces leading to the formation of hysterical symptoms draw their strength not only from repressed normal sexuality but also from unconscious perverse activities” (Freud, 1905e, p.51). Repression is key to the strength of unconscious phantasy for Freud; without repression, all our libidinal desires could be fulfilled in reality and there would be no utility for unconscious phantasy. We all set up unconscious phantasies for desires that cannot be tolerated consciously and we all face fear and anxiety when we approach or manifest our phantasies in reality but Freud places 'neurotic individuals' in the position of being dominated by their fictitious and neurotic fixation on the imagined and unrelenting “opposition between reality and phantasy” (Freud, 1905e, p.110). In his most elaborate and important analysis of the 'Wolf Man', Freud rebukes the primarily Jungian trend of erasing the unconscious phantasies associated with the infantile neurosis from analytical interpretations. The study of children's neuroses, he tells us “exposes the complete inadequacy of these shallow or high-handed attempts at re-interpretation. It shows the predominant part that is played in the formation of neuroses by those libidinal motive forces which are so eagerly disavowed” (Freud, 1918b, p.9). Here we detect the aetiological relevance of 'libidinal motive force' for neurosis, which can be read in terms of unconscious phantasy: “Unless these phantasies are made conscious to the patient to their fullest extent, he cannot obtain command of the interest which is attached to them” (ibid, p.50). Furthermore, Freud claims that:

“There can be no doubt of the real existence of all the processes which have been brought forward in order to explain these doubtful structures as phantasies, and their importance must be recognized. The diversion of interest [libido] from the tasks of real life, the existence of phantasies in the capacity of substitutes for unperformed actions, the regressive tendency which is expressed in these productions—regressive in more than one sense, in so far as there is involved simultaneously a shrinking-back from life and a harking-back to the past—all these things hold good, and are regularly confirmed by analysis” (ibid.).

As a substitute for 'unperformed action', phantasy, for Freud, is intimately tied up with libidinal interest and he interprets the Wolf Man's dream of wolves on trees as symbolic representations of oedipal and castrating unconscious phantasies, which contribute to the his obsessional anal-neuroticism. Freud goes so far as to show that until we know the full history of a patient's unconscious sexual phantasy orientations, treatment or analysis is not fully possible, but he does not explicitly connect unconscious phantasy to beauty. The analyses of Dora and the Wolf Man certify Freud's agreement in the matter of "fantasy and its role in structuring past experience" (Glover, 2009, p.43). The place to which he assigns phantasy within the mental apparatus in 1911b, is the very starting point for:

"the older, primary processes, the residues of a phase of development in which they were the only kind of mental process. The governing purpose obeyed by these primary processes is easy to recognize; it is described as the pleasure-unpleasure (Lust-Unlust) principle or more shortly, the pleasure principle" (Freud, 1911b, p.219).

The secondary processes are split off and operate under the dominion of the reality principle, to control and reduce the unpleasure of instinctual tension via adaptive behaviours (cf. Rycroft, 1995, p.138). Klein's unconscious phantasy cuts across the boundaries between these two modes: it is a "primary, central activity... constantly working with perception, modifying as well as being modified by it" (Glover, 2009, p.47). This, of course, implies a notion of temporality and mental activity in the infant, which is not supported by classical Freudian theory. Without this notion of a complex and sophisticated internal existence, however, Klein or Segal cannot connect creativity or beauty, with the deep and terrifying infantile anxieties, or the "impulse to restore and repair the injured object after a destructive attack" (ibid, p.52).

Klein's paper on *Infantile Anxiety Situations* (1929) describes visual creativity as related to depression and the desire for reparation. Anxiety is thought to spur creative achievement where the fear of persecution gives way to fear of loss. Klein grants an ontological status to the infant's double orientation and ambivalence to objects, stressing the continuity between the internal and external world through the projective and introjective unconscious phantasies emanating from the infant's psyche-soma. This gave new impetus to the investigation of the role of unconscious phantasy in our aesthetic valuations. If 'good' art, demands an interplay with 'good', i.e., 'reparative' unconscious phantasies, in the artist and the audience, then psychoanalysis may be able to contribute definitively to a problem hitherto unsolved in philosophical aesthetics: 'how to attribute aesthetic value to a work'. Of course the problem still remains: 'how to measure' unconscious phantasies of a reparative nature?

To wit: if we are able to connect aesthetic value with aesthetic pleasure, or aesthetic emotion proper, then we can approach the problem in psychoanalytic terms equating aesthetic pleasure to the operation of unconscious phantasies, which we know must be reparative in order to generate relief, rhythm and harmony, all of which constitute our experience of beauty. The test should be whether the artwork leaves you feeling uplifted or not. The uplift, here would come from the triumph over aggression demanded by the depressive position, whereas the work of art that leaves you in the depression, with no tools to get out, would not be considered valuable under this reading. The Kleinian aesthetic finds support in the work of Sharpe, Rickman and Heimann, each of whom, contribute early to the British school aesthetic and uniquely deploy "both Freudian and Kleinian insights" (Glover, 2009, p.66) in discussing the role of unconscious reparative phantasies in our appreciation of beauty.

The Riddle of Aesthetic Appreciation: Sharpe 1925-1935

Sharpe was writing on the “riddle of aesthetic appreciation” and “the elucidation of the drama in the poet’s soul” (Sharpe, 1925, p.79) as early as 1925. For her, the conclusion was inevitable that “one ‘key to the riddle’ is that the stimuli for aesthetic feeling (contemplation of beauty) lie in rebellion against the repellent aspects of... strong infantile preoccupations” (ibid. p.80). In her 1930 paper on ‘Certain Aspects of Sublimation and Delusion’, Sharpe connects the artistic impulse of modern man with the inner necessity of the ‘Hunter Artists’ of the Reindeer Age, finding the common root of sublimation, civilisation, *and* the ‘delusion of persecution’ in this connection. The ego, she says, secures “release from the anxiety of the incorporated hostile parents by a power of externalizing it into an art form” (Sharpe, 1930, p.17) and this art form is “an omnipotent life-giving, a restoration, milk, semen, a child” (ibid.) in the unconscious equation. Through art, according to Sharpe, the hostility of the incorporated object “no longer menaces the ego, for the omnipotence has become an adjunct to the ego” (ibid.). Every stroke of the brush represents “power over the parents” (ibid.) and yet “a restitution too” (ibid.). The blank space is filled and “All those things which the child would wrest from the mother are restored” (ibid.). Persecutory delusions, serving the superego and felt as “emanating from another” (ibid, p.18), subside as sublimation proceeds: bringing life back, repairing, atoning for guilt and nullifying anxiety. It is, however, only an “omnipotent phantasy of control, of security from evil, in a world of reality because it finds expression in ego functioning” (ibid.).

Art, as ‘a doing’, is for Sharpe, a sublimation “rooted in the primal identification with the parents... a magical incorporation of the parents... parallel to what has been for long ages repressed, i.e., actual cannibalism” (ibid, p.21): where the same magical thing results, “viz. an omnipotent control over the incorporated objects and a magical endowment with the powers of the incorporated” (ibid.). The safety of the ego depends, as we know, “upon its ability to deal with the incorporated imagos” (ibid, p.22) and Sharpe is quick to remind us, from the mechanism of melancholia, that “when the ego itself becomes identified with the reproached

love object, super-ego sadism, reinforced by id sadism, may destroy the ego” (ibid.). This means, of course that at the oral level, with the inadequate knowledge of reality incumbent upon the young ego at this stage, the ego must in order to survive, magically incorporate and omnipotently control the hostile parental imagoes and then project them away from itself. The artist, Sharpe tells us, actually externalizes this very hostility in the artwork: “making, controlling, having power over—in an external form—an introjected image or images... re-creating symbolically the very image that hostility has destroyed” (ibid.).

In 1935, Sharpe once again equates sublimations, which represent “an infinite range of subtle combinations and transformations of psychical energies... compatible with a well-developed reality-sense and adaptation to adult life” (Sharpe, 1935, p.187), with ‘civilisation’. Art and civilization are coterminous in Sharpe's mind and she quotes Dame Laura Knight in an interview, where she says: “The artist is in the vanguard of civilization” (ibid, p.189). Taking from this that “Applied arts and ordered civilization are only possible upon an initial achievement of the artist” (ibid. p.197), Sharpe supposes that art and civilisation represent “the first massive successful achievement of controlling aggression from within the immature psyche” (ibid.). Art is defined as the submission of emotional experience to “a rhythmic order” (ibid. p.189), resulting in “a unity of which the parts are fused in a harmonious sequence” (ibid.). She reminds us that the major mechanisms involved in ‘pure art’ are “the projection of the artist's introjection in some form to be perceived by the senses” (ibid.). This sensuous projection, to qualify as art, must exhibit certain characteristics such as “harmonious order, design and unity” (ibid.). Again, the corporeality of phantasy becomes clear: “The means by which the artist achieves this projection of his introjections are bodily ones, just as the appeal of his art to his audience is through ear and eye. It is a bodily knowledge, a manipulation of bodily muscles to a point of finest and rarest accuracy” (ibid.)²⁷.

²⁷ Sharpe eloquently weaves together so many strands of my own investigation that it bears repeating at length here: “Seeing, hearing, bodily sensation are the sense-organs by which we first learn to know external reality and first introject what we see and hear and feel. By bodily sensation we first experience internal reality, pleasurable and painful sensation. By the same sensory organs that first apprehend external and internal reality, by means of which the first introjections are made, the artist's projections are accomplished later. The first actual bodily introjection and incorporation in body-substance is milk; the first bodily projections are urine and soft faeces. Both the introjection of a good imago and the

According to Sharpe, the sensory organs of the artist “retain a great degree of their original method of apprehending the external world, and associated with them to a maximum degree are the original psychical feelings and phantasies concerning what is good and bad... associated with sight, sound, intake and output, during infancy” (ibid, p.190). Thus, the sublimation of art arises, in the pre-verbal stages of infancy: “In the case of poetry, the words themselves have an objective sensuous significance such as they had when first they became a medium of communication” (ibid.). Sharpe is primarily interested in the psychical mechanisms employed to deal with “the anxiety arising from the unconscious phantasies” (ibid, p.198) of the artist/infant. Creative art represents the triumph over aggression: finding a way in reality of “phantastically saving, preserving, restoring the loved objects threatened by hostility with whom he too is bound” (ibid, p.193). The melancholic and the suicide, Sharpe tells us, attempt this restoration through death, which in the last analysis is a symbolic phantasy of re-union with the breast or womb. The artist, according to Sharpe, uses a knowledge “that is diffused in his body, a body intelligence and bodily experience in dealing with emotional states” (ibid, p.197), in order to make reparations. The artist knows *how* to do things, not through conscious thought but by “perfecting powers inherent in the body based upon physical rhythms” (ibid.). This is tantamount to a method of ‘knowing’ “the macrocosm *via* the microcosm, in terms of ordering emotion” (ibid.). The unconscious phantasy of omnipotent “good control of the parental imagos” (ibid, p.194), results in the projection of what Sharpe calls a “harmonious rhythmic representation in a symbolical way” (ibid.) – into the external reality – periods of infancy when “primal identification and object-love were united” (ibid.), and “when self-preservation and libidinal gratification were inseparable” (ibid.).

The prototype of this harmonious physical rhythm and co-ordination is the suckling infant at the

projection of a good valuable product from the body will be allied with these experiences when they synchronize with pleasurable sucking at the breast and pleasurable relief through evacuation. Similarly, the introjection of a bad imago, the production from within of bad and dangerous things, identified with this internalized bad object, will first synchronize with experiences of frustration and the arousal of anxiety due to aggression. These frustrations may be caused by external agencies or by internal tensions due to bodily hunger, pain or libidinal deprivation” (ibid, pp.189-190).

breast, and this paradigm of object-relations provides the “nucleus from which reality-sense evolves” (ibid.).²⁸ The artist and the aesthetic value of art depend on the artist’s power to make this primary experience of symbiosis dominate in a form acceptable in reality, “over the severity of infantile frustration which brings aggression and disruption” (ibid.). Successful art, and the measure of aesthetic value, for Sharpe then, lies in the achievement of this symbiosis, by those very instincts “which when rhythmic have inherent in them self-preservation and all libidinal unfoldment” (ibid.). Sharpe provides an exquisite early attempt to integrate psychoanalytic thinking about the artist, and his process of producing ‘successful’ art, although little mention is made of our response to these creative achievements of the artist.

Mental Pain, Anxiety and Guilt: the Pre-requisites for Beauty

Rickman understood that “Human psychology made greater progress when it gave recognition to the factors of mental pain, anxiety and guilt” (Rickman, 1940, p.69), according these “disturbing but powerful forces” (ibid.) still greater significance in the psychoanalytic aesthetic. He aimed at the discovery of the “underlying impulses of destructiveness, which give rise to these painful feelings” (ibid.) in art, as in life. Rickman believed that:

“by representing in a neutral medium the interplay of creative and destructive instincts the artists can help us to comprehend a better solution to the conflicts that press within us than we could do for ourselves unaided, with nothing interposed between us and our passions but the medium of our unstable flesh” (ibid.).

Art is therefore, much more than a “momentary consolation for our miseries” (ibid.). For Rickman, the artist goes behind the veil “which screens the source of our dejection” (ibid.); faces his pain “with a determination to master it” (ibid.), and returns, creatively triumphant over the destructive forces within himself:

²⁸ Sharpe may well be drawing on Percy Bysshe Shelley’s (1821) *Defence of Poetry* which places poetry at the origins of civilisation precisely because of its attention to harmonic rhythm (dance, metre) as well as metaphor. Shelley also makes the link across to the pleasures of infancy at the same time.

“It seems to be stronger than a mild narcotic and provides more than a ‘temporary refuge for us from the hardships of life’ (Freud, 1930). Though its influence may ‘not [be] strong enough to make us forget real misery’-the same may be said of love- yet it has the power to penetrate beneath the surface of our minds and both assist us in our struggle with despair and help us to grasp those things which seem to triumph over death” (Rickman, 1940, p.76).

If we are to learn anything about aesthetics, or the artist, Rickman claimed: “we must be ready to follow the path he takes” (ibid.). Psychoanalytic aesthetics, up until Rickman’s time, had neglected “the meaning to the artist and his audience of the underlying forces of love and hate, of creativeness and destruction, which possess us in the depths of our being” (ibid.) and these deep strata of conflict needed to be made more explicit. Rickman was interested in explicating the role of ‘ugliness’ in our aesthetic responses. He defines ‘ugly’ as that which is frightful, hateful and terrifying:

“from the root connected with *ugg-* (Icelandic) meaning fear and with *ligr* meaning – like. The main root is traced in the Gothic... *ogjan* meaning to terrify. The Scandinavian *oga* (dread) is connected with the... Gothic *agis* = fear, anguish... These words are derived from the same root as the Greek *axos* meaning anguish and affliction” (ibid, p.70).

He makes a novel claim that the subjective response to ugliness “may vary with the age of the subject” (ibid, p.71), by which he goes on to elaborate in a classical Freudian mien, that:

“in view of the light which psychoanalysts have thrown on the latency period and also on the building up of the super-ego, with accompanying changes in the mental outlook, at least among civilized peoples, the main alteration in æsthetic response in this instance may be ascribed to changes in the *vita sexualis* and to the consequent altered out-look of the mind” (ibid, p.71).

The aesthetic response to ‘ugliness’ in all its guises, reawakens unconscious mutilation phantasies, which, Rickman believes are “more disturbing than the defects in the object itself” (ibid, p.72). Since the mutilation phantasies remain unconscious:

“the affect of fear or horror becomes attached to the external object so that the person does not realise his secret wish; the phantasy is kept from consciousness at the expense of the richness of the subjects emotional relation to an external object” (ibid.).

It is these unconsciously elaborated mutilation phantasies, evoked by the ‘ugly’ elements in a tragedy, that give rise to “exertions of an opposite character—restorative and creative” (ibid, p.73). Rickman also detects an unconscious identification with the aggressor, or the agent of ‘ugliness’ or distortion in a work of art, i.e., the artist. This suggests that we too secretly harboured such mutilation phantasies, and the pleasure “as is harboured in the unconscious on this account” (ibid.) is manifest as discomfort due to guilt and “the direct perception of guilt feelings as such being suppressed” (ibid.). Furthermore, Rickman conceives of both artistic production and enjoyment as being dependent on the capacity of the artist and audience to, “cope simultaneously with ambivalence to two intimately related but yet separate objects” (ibid, pp.73-74). By this he means that in the contemplation of a work of art, “we are faced in our phantasy with two objects at the same time, the producer and the object produced, which in the unconscious is always regarded as a person” (ibid, p.73). It is primarily the “whole composition and the details of his work” (ibid, p.75) which evoke and control the aesthetic emotions and which “reinforce one another and penetrate deeper and deeper into the mind of the onlooker” (ibid.) in a process analogous to the process of the dream-work. Rickman’s thesis is as outstanding as it is robust yet Glover (2009) fails to recognize the finesse to his formulations.²⁹

²⁹ “But if we take into consideration the intensity of infantile pain, the enormous courage and endurance of the child in the face of what it feels to be great dangers to itself and to loved ones, its passionate belief that in spite of the fact that its world is reduced to chaos nevertheless it will and can put things right, its good humour due to its belief that in spite of its own evil impulses it has the power to restore and recreate a good world again and that its good objects will remain, if we reckon with the fact that the child goes through periods when the face of familiar things is changed and

'Beauty', to Rickman, conveys the feeling that "struggle is over" (ibid, p.85). We may descend into pain and depression repeatedly in art, as in life, but hopefully we carry with us "the assurance that through all violence and evil there has remained this marvellous witness [beauty] to the endurance of life over death" (ibid.). Certainly, this touches upon the aspect of beauty, which reduces anxiety or pain associated with the destruction of one's inner world, but there is another aspect to beauty, for Rickman, which "leads directly to the heightening of pleasure and desire" (ibid.). Our minds are shaped by pain due to destructive impulses and our great need to create "lasting goodness and wholeness from what had been in phantasy injured and rendered bad" (ibid.).

The urge to reparation is an integral part of creative activity for Rickman, and he connects it to "the horror of the ugly and the wish to change it" (ibid.). If the 'ugly' in a work of art, arouses horror, Rickman says that we can safely say that early phobias and phantasies "in which the raging elements are surrogates for persons whom he himself has lashed to fury" (ibid, p.86) have been activated. We feel horror because we dread to witness the external fulfilment of our secret wishes, or to see spread out before ourselves "the awful chaos which lies within" (ibid.). Yet these horrors are actually necessary for our reparative aesthetic response. This capacity to love and agonise when faced with the danger of our own phantasied aggression, is a mark of our humanity for Rickman, and our need for beauty "springs from the gloom and pain which we experience from our destructive impulses to our good and loved objects" (ibid, p.88). Two things we take from Rickman's work which are important for the British aesthetic are that in art, life can triumph over death, and that "we recognize the power of death when we say a thing is ugly" (ibid.).

all that it loves and trusts is crushed by its own violence and befouled by its hate, and if with all this we reckon with the influence and power of infantile phantasy and experience upon our adult perception and emotion: then we may see how the artist can lead us into and out of the world of suffering. His creative activity is the Beginning of a New World built on the ruins of the old; those strokes of the brush in his phantasy build up bit by bit the good objects which he has destroyed and make them come to life. (I do not mean to imply that all great art is done in a paroxysm of nervous breakdown, but that unless the artist can reach down to the experience of deep anxiety and find the way out his work will not give us a deeper understanding of ourselves or a fuller enjoyment of life)" (Rickman, 1940, pp. 82-33).

Unheimlichkeit

Freud's paper on *The Uncanny* (1919) deals with the ugly and paradoxical aspect of aesthetics. The operative element of Freud's 'uncanny' is that it contains its opposite and has contradictory meanings, much like the Freudian 'unconscious' itself. He says that the 'uncanny', or 'unheimlich', "is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (Freud, 1919, p.220). It is so frightening:

"precisely because it is not known and familiar. Naturally not everything that is new and unfamiliar is frightening, however; the relation is not capable of inversion. We can only say that what is novel can easily become frightening and uncanny; some new things are frightening but not by any means all. Something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar in order to make it uncanny" (ibid.).

Freud's argument about the uncanny is that the experience of something archaic, i.e., previously surmounted thinking, emerges inside of apparently later, more material thinking. So it is not just about the experience of opposites, but the eruption of archaic mentation inside later thinking. The 'ugly' in a work of art, is not just the expression of this archaic, surmounted thinking, but also the expression of something destroyed. This makes Freud's writing on the 'uncanny' especially relevant to the building of a psychoanalytic aesthetic, for we must be able to consider how the ugly and beautiful elements operate unconsciously to generate the aesthetic emotion proper. Freud wants to go beyond the equation "uncanny = unfamiliar" (ibid, p.221). To do so, he offers a brief etymology of the word 'uncanny'³⁰. Freud returns to his preferred German language, reproducing Daniel Sanders's *Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache* (1860, 1, 729) entry for 'heimlich':

"belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, friendly... comfortable; the enjoyment of quiet content, etc., arousing a sense of agreeable restfulness and security as in one within the four walls of his house." (Freud, 1919, p.222).

³⁰ which includes the following: "GREEK: (Rost's and Schenk's Lexikons). ζένοϛ (i.e. strange, foreign). ENGLISH: (from the dictionaries of Lucas, Bellows, Flügel and Muret-Sanders). Uncomfortable, uneasy, gloomy, dismal, uncanny, ghastly; (of a house) haunted; (of a man) a repulsive fellow. FRENCH: (Sachs-Villatte). Inquietant, sinistre, lugubre, mal à son aise. SPANISH: (Tollhausen, 1889). Sospechoso, de mal agüero, lúgubre, siniestro. The Italian and Portuguese languages seem to content themselves with words which we should describe as circumlocutions. In Arabic and Hebrew 'uncanny' means the same as 'daemonic', 'gruesome'" (Freud, 1919, p.221).

Noting especially: “the negative ‘un-’: eerie, weird, arousing gruesome fear” (ibid, p.224)³¹. Freud, at pains to explain his interest in these long passages, says that:

“among its different shades of meaning the word ‘heimlich’ exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, ‘unheimlich’. What is heimlich thus comes to be unheimlich... In general we are reminded that the word ‘heimlich’ is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which, without being contradictory, are yet very different: on the one hand it means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight... Schelling says something which throws quite a new light on the concept of the Unheimlich, for which we were certainly not prepared. According to him, everything is unheimlich that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light” (ibid, pp.224-225).

In terms of Freud's need for a concept to help explain how the unconscious operates, the 'uncanny' very much came to his service: “heimlich is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, unheimlich. Unheimlich is in some way or other a sub-species of heimlich” (ibid, p.225).

As an example Freud discusses “‘The Sand-Man’ in Hoffmann's *Nachtstücken*... who tears out children's eyes” (ibid, p.227), referring “the uncanny effect of the Sand-Man to the anxiety belonging to the castration complex of childhood” (ibid, p.233). By this formula, the uncanny always corresponds to archaic infantile anxieties: “having reached the idea that we can make an infantile factor such as this responsible for feelings of uncanniness, we are encouraged to see whether we can apply it to other instances of the uncanny” (ibid.). In praising Hoffmann's mastery of the uncanny in literature, Freud hits upon a second important condition of the uncanny: “These themes are all concerned with the phenomenon of the ‘double’, which appears in every shape and in every degree of development” (ibid, p.234).³² Thus, characters are considered identical because they look alike, and:

³¹ ‘Seeming quite unheimlich and ghostly to him.’ ‘The unheimlich, fearful hours of night.’ ‘I had already long since felt an unheimlich, even gruesome feeling.’ ‘Now I am beginning to have an unheimlich feeling.’... ‘Feels an unheimlich horror.’ ‘Unheimlich and motionless like a stone image.’ ‘The unheimlich mist called hill-fog.’ ‘These pale youths are unheimlich and are brewing heaven knows what mischief.’ ‘“Unheimlich” is the name for everything that ought to have remained ... secret and hidden but has come to light’ (Schelling).—‘To veil the divine, to surround it with a certain Unheimlichkeit’ (ibid, p224).

³² Freud praises Otto Rank (1914) for his treatment of the uncanny theme of the 'double' and its connections: “with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, with guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and with the fear of death... For the ‘double’ was originally an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an ‘energetic denial of the power of death’, as Rank says; and probably the ‘immortal’ soul was the first ‘double’ of the body. This invention of doubling as a preservation against extinction has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling or multiplication of a genital symbol” (ibid. p.235).

“This relation is accentuated by mental processes leaping from one of these characters to another—by what we should call telepathy—, so that the one possesses knowledge, feelings and experience in common with the other. Or it is marked by the fact that the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing—the repetition of the same features or character-traits or vicissitudes, of the same crimes, or even the same names through several consecutive generations” (ibid.).

Doubling has the uncanny quality of initially acting as a denial of the power of death in the unconscious, until such a quality is surpassed and it becomes the harbinger of death. Freud locates this need for doubling in the unbridled primary narcissism of the archaic mind, which yearns for immortality but cannot in the end avoid the reality of physical death. Primary narcissism gives way only to further doubling within the psyche, as when the super-ego is formed, and “There are also all the unfulfilled but possible futures to which we still like to cling in phantasy, all the strivings of the ego which adverse external circumstances have crushed, and all our suppressed acts of volition which nourish in us the illusion of Free Will” (ibid, p.236). Thus the uncanny process of doubling plays no small part in Freud's model of the psyche. When all is said and done, Freud concludes that “the quality of uncanniness can only come from the fact of the ‘double’ being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted—a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect. The ‘double’ has become a thing of terror” (ibid.). Here we begin to gain a sense of how Freud's uncanniness of the double serves as a prelude to the later Kleinian developments in the theoretical articulation of splitting processes and the phantasied (and doubled) imagoes of the parental figures in the mind.

A final example of uncanniness in superstition is given by Freud, as the dread of the

evil-eye: “Whoever possesses something that is at once valuable and fragile is afraid of other people's envy, in so far as he projects on to them the envy he would have felt in their place. A feeling like this betrays itself by a look” (ibid, p.240). This instance of the uncanny refers to the principle of 'omnipotence of thoughts' which corresponds to an animistic phase of individual development: “none of us has passed through... without preserving certain residues and traces of it which are still capable of manifesting themselves, and that everything which now strikes us as ‘uncanny’ fulfils the condition of touching those residues of animistic mental activity within us and bringing them to expression” (ibid, p.240-241).³³

It is in relation to death that Freud finds the most widespread and the highest degree of the feeling of the uncanny, and this warrants our attention since so much of the following textual analyses deal with the operations of the death instinct in the tragedies of Euripides. The uncanny potential of symbols of death speaks to the rigidity of our feelings about death, which change so little from our earliest feelings about it. Even “discarded forms” (ibid, p.242) of our feelings about death, Freud says, are “completely preserved under a thin disguise” (ibid.). Euripides is like other imaginative writers, all of whom, for Freud have, “this licence among many others, that he can select his world of representation so that it either coincides with the realities we are familiar with or departs from them in what particulars he pleases” (ibid, p.249). In a typical gesture of modesty, Freud admits that “We have clearly not exhausted the possibilities of poetic licence and the privileges enjoyed by story-writers in evoking or in excluding an uncanny feeling” (ibid, p.251) and goes on to say something quite remarkable about how “the storyteller has a peculiarly directive power over us; by

³³ Not an easy subject to summarise, Freud nevertheless attempts the impossible: “In the first place, if psycho-analytic theory is correct in maintaining that every affect belonging to an emotional impulse, whatever its kind, is transformed, if it is repressed, into anxiety, then among instances of frightening things there must be one class in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which recurs. This class of frightening things would then constitute the uncanny; and it must be a matter of indifference whether what is uncanny was itself originally frightening or whether it carried some other affect. In the second place, if this is indeed the secret nature of the uncanny, we can understand why linguistic usage has extended das Heimliche [‘homely’] into its opposite, das Unheimliche (p. 226); for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression. This reference to the factor of repression enables us, furthermore, to understand Schelling's definition [p.224] of the uncanny as something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light.” (ibid. p.241).

means of the moods he can put us into, he is able to guide the current of our emotions, to dam it up in one direction and make it flow in another, and he often obtains a great variety of effects from the same material” (ibid.). Claiming that “All this is nothing new, and has doubtless long since been fully taken into account by students of aesthetics” (ibid.), Freud underestimates the explanatory power of his formulations. His final statement begs consideration, for in it, he deals with the factors of “silence, solitude and darkness” (ibid, p.252), which he says, are “actually elements in the production of the infantile anxiety from which the majority of human beings have never become quite free”, and with that, we would be amiss to ignore Freud's albeit complex thoughts on aesthetics and the role of the uncanny in our aesthetic appreciations.

On Rapture and Melancholy apropos Segal

Hanna Segal actively incorporates Freudian and Kleinian thinking about the sublime interaction of beautiful and ugly elements in an aesthetic work. Freud, Sharpe, Rickman and Heimann all take their place in building the Kleinian aesthetic and provide the necessary bedrock for the Kleinian analysis of psychotic adults and the creative impulse more generally. However, it was left to Hanna Segal to pioneer the psychoanalysis of adults with schizophrenia upon this Kleinian foundation. She found that the failure of symbol formation is central in schizophrenic disturbances in adults, just as it was for infants in Klein. Thus, with Klein and her camp, symbol formation takes a far more central place in the development of the mind than Freud permitted. This concentration on symbol formation connects the Kleinian developmental scheme with creativity more generally and contributes a great deal to our understanding of the aesthetic struggle and aesthetic reciprocity.

What Segal brings to the British school aesthetic, is a more explicit statement about aesthetic value, answering the central problem of aesthetics regarding the nature of ‘good’ art “and what distinguishes it from other human activities, and especially ‘bad’ art” (Glover, 2009, p.67). Segal

firmly believes that Klein's concept of the depressive position enables us to "isolate in the psyche of the artist specific factors which enable him to produce a satisfactory work of art... further[ing] our understanding of the aesthetic value of the work... and... the aesthetic experience of the audience" (Segal, 1986, p.186). Only lost, or dead, objects can be rendered into a work of art, implying that creation is really only a "recreation of a once loved and once whole, but now lost and ruined object, a ruined internal world and self" (ibid, p.190). The pleasure we derive from a work of art is a unique pleasure and according to Segal constitutes the 'aesthetic emotion proper'. This pleasure is obtained through identification "with the work of art as a whole and with the internal world of the artist as represented by his work" (ibid, p.198). Thus, Segal demands that all aesthetic pleasure involves an unconscious reliving (*nacherleben*) of "the artist's experience of creation" (ibid.), where creation demands the overcoming of guilt, facing the inner turmoil of the depressive position and rebuilding one's internal world of objects and self, which have previously and frequently been destroyed during paranoid-schizoid states since infancy.

Segal, like so many others, turns to classical tragedy to demonstrate how the forces of identification, ruin, devastation and chaos are contained by the formal qualities of the piece "unity of time, place, action" (ibid.): making whole again the fragmented reality of the author's inner world. This stress on wholeness gives the Kleinian oeuvre greater sensitivity to the formal elements of beauty than Freud's remarks on aesthetics ever could have provided. An artwork, such as tragedy, "stands apart as an intact world of its own, while it might bear witness to terrifying fragmented, and hostile elements" (Glover, 2009, p.74). According to Segal, its value depends on the specific "constellation of anxieties, defences, and phantasies" (ibid.) involved in the shaping of the work itself. These mechanisms "are directly implicated in the formal elements of the artwork" (ibid.), for Segal, and it is these mechanisms, originating in the psyche of the author, which we respond to as spectators in the aesthetic encounter we have with the work. Although tragedy bears witness to utter ruin and destruction, it speaks to the author's "capacity to acknowledge his aggression and fragmentation—to restore the chaotic experience to

us in a bearable form” (ibid.).

Rickman (1940) connects the beautiful with lasting wholeness and life, whereas the ‘ugly’ represents the arousal of primitive, destructive and persecutory phobias and phantasies, i.e., the death instinct. Sharpe (1935) offers a more detailed corporeal account of the suckling pleasure of rhythmical, harmonious symbiosis, which is recaptured by the artist and the viewer when art becomes ‘pure’ beauty, connected again with the life instinct, and Klein’s corporeal account of symbolisation. Segal agrees with her colleagues in the mapping of beauty and ugliness onto the life and death instincts respectively; furthermore beauty is “but one of the categories of the aesthetically satisfying... both beauty and ugliness must be present for a full aesthetic experience” (Glover, 2009, pp.74-75). This is why, for Segal, successful or authentic art can be deeply moving and capable of stirring “both rapture and melancholy” (Glover, 2009, p.75): it must “embody the deep experience of the artist—that is, his depression, the working through of which lies at the heart of all artistic creation” (ibid.).

What is left to discuss in the next chapter involves the unique synthesis of Nietzsche and Klein's thoughts on tragic suffering and aesthetic redemption, the importance of identification for aesthetic reparation, and the hitherto undocumented isomorphism between Nietzsche's Dionysian-Apolline dialectic and Klein's paranoid-schizoid/depressive positions. Nietzsche's call for '*amor fati*' and the 'aesthetic justification of life' further secure his philosophy in a position of authority, within this thesis. Aristotle, Nietzsche and Freud are hailed as a necessary triad of thinkers in determining the vehicle for aesthetic emotion, be it pity, decadence or death-wish, and Aristotle comes to Euripides' defence against Nietzsche's harsh critiques, which would have us relegate his work to the scrapheap. Thereupon, the textual analyses will ensue and the conclusion of this work will follow.

**CHAPTER V: CRITICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN KLEINIAN
METAPSYCHOLOGY & NIETZSCHE'S DIONYSIAN METAPHYSICS OF
TRAGEDY**

**I) *No Roses without Thorns: Tragic Suffering & Aesthetic Redemption
in Nietzsche & Klein***

The extent to which the immanent suffering of individuation, that both psychoanalysts and Nietzsche take for granted, can be healed through our engagement with Greek tragedy, is the central problem of this thesis. In this section, Kleinian metapsychology (as expressed in the work of Hanna Segal) is shown to add exquisite detail to Nietzsche's otherwise complex and at times contradictory explanations of Dionysian metaphysics and their aesthetic import for spectators of Greek tragedy. Klein's interest in Greek tragedy is certified by at least one classic paper on the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus, where she insinuates the symbolic equivalence of the action of the characters on the stage and intra-psychic happenings from early infancy. David Bell, continuing this tradition of Klein's, explains that "Through literature and story man gives form to his... inner life, creating before him versions of it that acquire a reality in the world... [and that] this was understood by the author and by his audience" (Bell, 2007, p.228). Bell explains that for Kleinians, it is the tragedy of our own inner shattered world that the tragedian faces "with truthfulness... and struggles with" (ibid, p.229). The Kleinian reading of tragedy and our response to it as psychological creatures has, therefore, very little to do with pity (as is primary in Aristotle's *Poetics*) and everything to do with the guilt and reparation consequent upon our projective and introjective identifications with the objects of primitive anxiety, which are given symbolic expression through the characters of the play. The importance of these projective and introjective identifications for the theory of 'aesthetic reparation'³⁴ will be discussed in more detail in this chapter.

³⁴ Aesthetic Reparation Theory (ART)

To wit: it is not that we pity the characters in the tragedy, but that we are unconsciously enticed into accepting a number of instinctual struggles as they are symbolised in the play, which due to our acceptance, brings their proximity to our own psychohistories into finer resolution. Freud makes clear that it does not matter whether the deed is done, or not done, but whether it was at some point desired or wished. Such identifications engender the feelings of guilt and shame associated with the incommensurability of those wishes with the dictates of the super-ego, and the culture at large. These affective components of the depressive-position spur acts of reparation as well as the manic defence. Rather than being left in the depression, Segal argues that the aesthetic form of the tragedy beautifies and allows for some tragic joy in the suffering individual's execution of conscience-offending id-impulses, which harmonise the difficult content and offer a more balanced aesthetic experience. Without the abhorrent trends of the characters' self-chosen fate, we would have very little to react to in tragedy. As Freud said, we must consider ourselves as being guilty like the hero, in order for the story to resonate with us as readers or spectators.

My treatment thus far raises the problem of embeddedness: the problem of objectifying something only subjectively experienced, as in reading the internal text of our own psychohistories and our response to aesthetic objects, such as tragedies, or literature in general. One way to look at my approach is to see that the text 'calls forth' certain complexes from our personal history of internal object relationships, which are conditioned in their richness by the perspectives one is able to bring to bear on such evocations. The question is about the potential of the text to call forth unconscious recollections whereby psychic forces, apt to be repressed, receive adequate 'working-through' in order to become therapeutic in their effect.

Hanna Segal provides a further context for the 'Kleinian' involvement in tragedy, supporting the principles that I) we identify with the characters, II) we also identify with the author in "facing and expressing...depression" (Segal, 1952, p.204) and III) by identifying the whole tragedy with the author's internal world, we react as follows:

“The author has, in his hatred, destroyed all his loved objects just as I have done, and like me he felt death and desolation inside him. Yet he can face it and he can make me face it, and despite the ruin and devastation we, and the world around us survive. What is more, his objects, which have become evil and were destroyed, have been made alive again and have become immortal by his art. Out of all the chaos and destruction he has created a world which is whole, complete and unified” (ibid.).

So for Segal and Bell, the poet’s capacity to face the torments of his inner world, brings with it a deep reassurance since it gives this struggle “form in the work of art” (Bell, 2007, p.230). Segal runs with Klein’s hard-won metapsychology (of the infantile paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions) and generates a new psychology of the artist along with a new understanding of what enables the artist to produce as she says “a satisfactory work of art?” (Segal, 1952, p.197). By this I think she is clear in meaning a work of aesthetic value; providing an aesthetic *and reparative* experience, including the complete ‘ruin and destruction’ of the object such as we find portrayed in tragedy. This ruin and destruction is itself the reason for the depressive position: the reason to mourn, to lament, to identify with guilt, and so on. It also provides psychic reality to the aesthetic object, which survives the depressive position.

Segal posits an awareness in the unconscious of all artists that, “all creation is really a re-creation of a once loved and once whole, but now lost and ruined object... internal world and self” (ibid.). She claims that it is only when our inner world is destroyed, “dead and loveless” (ibid.), and our loved ones have been torn to pieces, that we experience ‘helpless despair’, at which point “we must re-create our world anew, re-assemble the pieces, infuse life into dead fragments, re-create life” (ibid.). Thus for Segal and Klein, the very wish to create, and even the success of symbol formation itself, depends on the successful working through of the depressive position. *Stricto sensu*, the corollary of this is that any creation spurred by anything less than the utter ruin of the internal world of the artist, is considered unsuccessful, and will not evoke reparative impulses in the spectator.³⁵

³⁵This causes some problems when we consider Freud’s case material. For example, Schreber, who although psychotic, was able to produce an autobiography, i.e., he achieved symbol formation despite not working through the depressive position. It is, however, not possible to construe the narration of Schreber’s experiences, identity and, emotions, in terms of normal notions of self and objects, nor in terms of conventional narratives of their interrelationships, and therefore we cannot extract a “person” from his account of his inner life, and this perhaps curtails the extent to which

The Importance of 'Identification' for Aesthetic Reparation

“In states of frustration and anxiety the oral sadistic and cannibalistic desires are reinforced, and then the infant feels that he has taken in the nipple and the breast, in bits... the frustrating breast—attacked in oral-sadistic phantasies—is felt to be in bits; while the gratifying breast, taken in under the dominance of the sucking libido, is felt to be complete... The infant's feeling of having inside a good and complete breast may, however, be shaken by frustration and anxiety. As a result, the division between the good and bad breast may be difficult to maintain, and the infant may feel that the good breast too is in bits” (Klein, 1929, pp.204-05).

The picture Klein gives us of early psychic life, is one fraught with primitive emotion and anxiety of a sadistic and masochistic nature and this makes her thoughts on development pertinent to our discussion about the potential of tragedy to invoke a *nacherleben* around our own instinctual longings, which psychoanalysis sees as being necessary for psychological growth. Normal development, for Klein equates to an, ‘optimal balance’ between introjection and projection in these early stages of ego development and object relationships. Critically, for Klein, “there is some interaction between introjection and projection” (Klein, 1946/1975, p.11) so the excessive projection of a hostile internal world “which is ruled by persecutory fears” (ibid.) guarantees the (re)introjection of a hostile external world, which itself perpetuates persecutory fears about - and the (re)projection of - the self-same hostile internal world. Abnormal ego-development results, for Klein “from excessive splitting processes... inextricably linked with instinctual development, and with the anxieties to which instinctual desires give rise” (ibid, p.24).³⁶

The splitting of primal identifications, which constitute the first super-ego introjections, along with the mechanisms of projection and introjection, furnish the infant with the tools for personification in play, which is a central symbolic activity for both the infant and the adult. In play, the infant and child explore their world, and developmental psychologists³⁷ demonstrate

we can say he successfully achieved symbol formation. Furthermore, the aesthetic reparative value of his work as compared to a Euripidean tragedy could simply be deemed to be inferior.

³⁶According to Freud's metapsychology, abnormal ego-development presupposes the defusion of destructive and libidinal impulses, or in Klein's words: “The mechanism of one part of the ego annihilating other parts... implies a preponderance of the destructive impulse over the libido” (Klein, 1946, p.24). In this way, psychopathology held the keys to understanding the complex interaction between the life and death drives for psychoanalysis, demonstrating that when abnormal development ensues, a preponderance of the aggressive-destructive instinct – still in the service of the instinct for life – must be an aetiological factor.

³⁷ Bishop, M. (1997). *Interpersonal relatedness, social understanding and symbolic play in congenitally blind children*. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of London; Darbyshire, J. O. (1977). Play patterns in young children with impaired hearing. *Volta Review*, 79, 19-26; Baren-Cohen, S. (1985). *Social cognition and pretend play in Autism*. Unpublished PhD thesis.

that first the infant explores the world through the sensori-motor system: feeling things, putting things in the mouth etc., which then leads to more symbolic play, where objects come to represent things in the mind and language becomes possible. Kleinian psychoanalysts, however, are more astute to the earliest sensori-motor explorations in the infant's play, as being already symbolic. For adults, play becomes possible in our aesthetic encounters, and the symbolic, imaginative possibilities of the child's play can be seen to exist in the adult's aesthetic experience with objects of art.

Personification is itself an operation of phantasy, so it is not theoretically untenable that these mechanisms are also at play in our aesthetic and phantasy response to tragedy. We must make this leap from personification in play to projective identification in the enjoyment of literature, in order to appreciate how Klein's description of early mental processes express something of the reparative nature of our response to aesthetic objects such as texts, as adults. Through play, as through art and literature, split super-ego identifications are synthesized, and as Klein says:

“The intrapsychic conflict thus becomes less violent and can be displaced into the external world. The pleasure gained thereby is increased when the ego discovers that this displacement into the external world affords it various real proofs that the psychic processes, with their cathexis of anxiety and guilt, may have a favourable issue and anxiety be greatly reduced” (Klein, 1929/1998, pp.204-205).

‘Favourable issue’ and the ‘reduction of anxiety’ may be the most Klein attributes to our instinctual and aesthetic response to tragedy. According to this Kleinian reading, the symbolic roles of the characters in a tragedy, correspond to the ego's need to cope with the diverse and conflicting unconscious impulses and phantasies which derive from the changing states of fusion between the life and death instincts. These are as much a part of the playwright's internal world, as they are of the audiences'. This reading has been critical to the development of Kleinian interest in aesthetics and literature, as demonstrated in the works of Segal, Bell, Bion, Rustin, and Meg Harris Williams.

Briefly, for Kleinians, the characters in a tragedy are understood as symbolic manifestations of primitive psychic forces existing within the individual as well as the culture at large. These aggressive and libidinal impulses are much in need of symbolic expression if they are to undergo sublimation/integration, or become of any value to the individual or culture at large. We must confront our object-relationships, and ourselves as fully as possible and only then is there the potential for the aesthetic reparation of primitive psychic wounds, *via* the text of Greek tragedy. With the Kleinian interpretation of our internal shattered world, and our willingness to project ruin onto and introject it back from aesthetic objects like the characters in a play, we find a path to exploring the dynamics between the symbolic forces of the play and the forces they represent from our own psychic lives.

Although Klein certainly convinces us of the existence and interdependency of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, available to the mind in its dealings with the world, the emphasis is put on destructive tendencies, both desired and dreaded, which generate intolerable anxiety – with little sense that these processes produce affirmation of self-annihilation. For this sense, we must turn to Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's Dionysiac-Apolline Dialectic in light of Klein's Paranoid-Schizoid and Depressive Positions:

“Aesculapius, a beloved son of Apollo, and physician of old, who was considered by the ancients to be so intimately acquainted with the medicinal properties of every plant that he was called the inventor and god of medicine, having by his extraordinary skill, restored many dead persons to life” (Edwards, 1824, p.7).

Let us not forget this extraordinary healing association to the image of Apollo, without whom, no play could ever be written, since it is only within the Apollinian embrace of order and structure of form, that the dismemberment of the Dionysian hero can be portrayed to any therapeutic effect.

Nietzsche's conception of the Apollinian and Dionysian 'impulses' *qua* masks, suggests that they are worn by both the actors and spectators of tragedy; they can even be read as masks worn by the characters, born from the masks worn by the poet. As aesthetic phenomenon, representing the appearance of things, they are imagined potencies rather than objects of definition.

However as constructs of appearances, they do take on a deeper significance once elaborated into more precise psychological terms. Here I make an original and hitherto unpublished attempt to critique Nietzsche's Dionysian metaphysics through the psychological lens of Kleinian metapsychology.

The early Nietzsche's analysis of Greek tragic poetry is built around the duality of two aesthetic forces, mediating between idealisation, and destruction, or plasticity and disorganisation or tumult. This provides a context for his metaphysical affirmation of life and death that one sees as being given developmental significance in psychoanalysis, especially Kleinian metapsychology. In his *The Birth of the Tragedy*, Nietzsche focuses on the ancient Greek's psychology. For him, tragedy actually originates from the Greek's 'Apollinian' sensibility to privation, melancholy and pain: the "ugly... evil, enigmatical, destructive, fatal at the basis of existence", and the "ever-increasing longing for beauty" (Nietzsche, *BT*, §4) this sensibility springs from. This Apollinian-melancholic longing for the 'beautiful' is according to Nietzsche, still connected to the order of "joy... strength... exuberant health... over-fullness... of... Dionysian madness" (*ibid.*), which although productive of the Apollinian impulse, is opposed to it in its aesthetic effect.

'Undueness', is the term Nietzsche uses to refer to the "truth, contradiction, [and] the bliss born of pain" (*ibid.*, p.41), associated with 'Dionysian wisdom'. We must turn to Nietzsche's expert retrieval of an ancient story about the king Midas, to characterise his understanding of this Dionysian 'wisdom' at this early stage of his career:

"King Midas hunted in the forest a long time for the wise *Silenus*, the companion to Dionysus, without capturing him. When at last he fell into his hands, the king asked what was best of all and most desirable for man. Fixed and immovable, the demon remained silent; till at last, forced by the king, he broke out with shrill laughter into these words: "Oh, wretched race of a day, children of chance and misery, why do ye

compel me to say to you what it were most expedient for you not to hear? What is best of all is for ever beyond your reach: not to be born, not to *be*, to be *nothing*. The second best for you, however, is soon to die” (Nietzsche, *BT*, p.34).

Nietzsche’s Apollinian aesthetic impulse or mask refers to the “cheerful acquiescence in the dream-experience... the soothsaying god... the ‘shining one’... [who] rules over the fair appearance of the inner world of fantasies” (Nietzsche, *BT*, §1). There is an uncanny equivalence here in that for Klein, the achievement of a ‘fair appearance of the inner world of phantasies’ is designated by the realistic appearance achieved by the depressive position, wherein the infant realises the unreality of their phantasied schizoid internal and external world of (actually whole) objects. Nietzsche’s ‘higher truth’ and ‘perfection’ of the Apollinian states and “the deep consciousness of nature, healing and helping in sleep and dream” (ibid.) provide “the symbolical analogue of the faculty of the soothsaying and, in general, of the arts, *through which life is made possible and worth living*” (ibid, my italics). It is possible to trace a similar sense in Klein that the painful realizations of the depressive position represent ‘higher truths’ than the unrealistic splitting mechanisms of the paranoid-schizoid position. ‘Perfection’ in this context could translate to what analysts refer to as the ‘mastering’ of primitive anxieties associated with the growing sense of self and the reality in which the self exists and perceives. The ‘deep consciousness of nature’ could also refer to the essential ‘oneness’ of reality for Klein, which is constituted by both good and bad objects and emotions. However, the strongest confirmation of this proposed dialogue between Nietzsche’s Apollinian mask and Klein’s depressive position is found in Nietzsche’s comments about ‘healing’ the only ‘partially intelligible’ Dionysian world, which for him, is also still the ‘everyday world’.

The hard-won and painful realization about the oneness of psychic phantasies and the fusion of the previously separated imagoes of the earlier position, represent the healing of a split, or splits in the psyche (ego, emotions and objects). It is possible that healing of split objects brings relief and amelioration from the sufferings associated with the earlier position, yet this is not the same as saying that for Klein the depressive position represented anything like Nietzsche’s

Dionysian 'joy', unless we conceive of a kind of pleasure being achieved through the integration of previously separated, persecutory and imperilled objects. This is not the same as an affirmation of joyous vigour in self-annihilation, as Nietzsche's psychology and insistence on the will-to-power suggests.³⁸ Affirmation, however, is not as difficult to extract from Klein's model, since without the paranoid-schizoid and depressive sufferings, psychological growth would be inhibited. Therefore, to some extent, with Klein, we can affirm at least the necessity of fragmentation and suffering, as well as its overcoming.

Amor Fati – Dionysian Joy

"My formula for greatness in a human being is *amor fati*: that one wants nothing to be different, not forward, not backward, not in all eternity" (Nietzsche, *EH*, II: X)

Klein's prioritization of the 'phantastical' nature of the paranoid-schizoid splitting (tearing apart) of objects and self/ego into 'bits', comes uncannily close to Nietzsche's conception of the Dionysian, which requires further attention if we are to fully appreciate this transaction between Kleinian and Nietzschean thought. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian is connected with individuation rather than with a pre-individuated state, and this is useful in the dialogue being attempted here. The myth of Dionysus-Zagreus is most explanatory in this respect. Nietzsche describes the myth:

"Dionysus of the mysteries, a god experiencing in himself the sufferings of individuation, of whom wonderful myths tell that as a boy he was dismembered by the Titans and has been worshipped in this state as Zagreus: whereby is intimated that this dismemberment, the properly Dionysian suffering, is... the state of individuation... and primal cause of all suffering" (Nietzsche, *BT*, p.82).

If we conceive of Klein's paranoid-schizoid dismemberment as the equivalent to Nietzsche's

³⁸This is not 'joy' *per se*, but one could argue that it brings a kind of joy with it. Is it not in fact a joy to be able to give life to dead objects, by successfully mourning them and putting them back together in one's mind? Is it not a kind of joy to be able to make new libidinal cathexes to new objects, once the depression of mourning is overcome? Does not even mania, represent an obviously excessive-pathological euphoria and joy? I think these questions are legitimate and would require refutation in order to abolish the link I am forging here between Klein and Nietzsche.

Zagreus-Dionysus, which for him represents the state of individuation, rather than the implication in Klein that this dismemberment reveals a pre-individuated state, we begin to see an inconsistency between the two. The movement from a more disintegrated state to a more integrated state in Klein represents individuation, but the movement from wholeness to dismemberment for Nietzsche is the pre-requisite for individuation in his early metaphysics. This inconsistency however, is not so severe since neither Klein nor Nietzsche were attempting to match the other's theory. It does go to show a similar fascination between the two thinkers, with themes that still perplex the imagination today. Klein, of course, argued that the constant movement between the positions was critical for continued growth, so it is not as if her directionality opposed Nietzsche's, only that Nietzsche, at this early point in his thinking, was rather fixed on the dismemberment stage of individuation, as being primary: Klein does not contradict this at all.

Symbolically, Nietzsche's Dionysian aesthetic impulse correlates with Klein's descriptions of paranoid-schizoid splitting mechanisms and phantasies. They both involve things falling apart or being torn to pieces and are connected to an opposite tendency to preserve things intact, which in Nietzsche equates to the Apollinian impulse and in Klein is associated with depression, reality and of course the constant threat of annihilation. In the dialogue between Nietzschean and Kleinian theory, it is not only the depression aroused in the audience that is harmonised by the beauty of the form (the Apollinian impulse or mask). The paranoid-schizoid splitting defences (Dionysian dismemberment) are also aroused by the interplay and defusion of the life and death drives at work in the play.

Dismemberment inevitably leads to 'multiplicity', like the Dionysian proliferation of perspectives incumbent upon a subjectivity/Dionysus-Zagreus/suffering individual, being torn to pieces and transcending singularity. Apollo and the Apollinian 'glance' into the secret and terrible nature of existence, is an essentially depressive impulse, which, like Klein's depressive position, heals the sufferings of the paranoid-schizoid position (and the Dionysian splitting it contains). So, for

Nietzsche too, suffering is necessary for growth.

Nietzsche's Apollinian Greek, in all his 'beauty and moderation', glancing depressingly at the titanic barbarity of Dionysus' schizoid dismemberment is "inwardly related to these overthrown Titans and heroes" (ibid, pp.39-41). I believe this 'inward relation' also exists between Klein's depressive and paranoid schizoid positions, as when, in adulthood, one imagines or experiences the essence of paranoid-schizoid mentation and things feel fragmented; sinking despair ensues. The reparation of those splits during more depressive thinking, which is more in tune with reality and the togetherness of things that feel distant during schizoid moments, brings so much relief that one does feel something like 'beauty and moderation', even when surveying the damage done by the titanic paranoia of the earlier position. As the dying and resurgent god, the myth of Dionysus supports a Kleinian view on development, which demands the ever-present possibility of disintegration and the resultant healing and depression this hopefully, entails. As Nietzsche says, "Apollo could not live without Dionysus!" (ibid, pp. 39-41).

Attic Tragedy, although devoted to Dionysus, represents for the early Nietzsche a mysterious union of the Dionysian and Apollinian aesthetic impulses.³⁹ The 'tragic', is an individual experience, with an "inscape... which must be felt, [and] lived through, to be known." (Silk & Stern, 1981, pp. 251-52). Early tragedy involved, for Nietzsche, a 'pessimism of strength' that sought the insoluble riddles of life with "action and acceptance... of the darkest and hardest truths about life" (ibid.). Nietzsche calls this *amor fati*, (simply 'love of fate'). He thinks we should exalt in the destruction of individuals because it demonstrates the "underlying deeper power of life... in which we have a share, but which is only glimpsed when individuality is transcended" (ibid.). Nietzsche's position finds a closer psychological expression when Segal says that the excellence in tragedy is its "unshrinking expression of the full horror of the depressive position and the achieving of an impression of wholeness or harmony" (Segal, 1952,

³⁹"all the celebrated figures of the Greek stage... are but masks of this original hero, Dionysus... As the visibly appearing god now talks and acts, he resembles an erring, striving, suffering individual: and that, in general, he appears with such epic precision and clearness, is due to the dream-reading Apollo, who reads to the chorus its Dionysian state through this symbolic appearance. In reality, however, this hero is the suffering Dionysus (Nietzsche, *BT*, §10).

p.204). It is possible to read Nietzsche's '*amor fati*' as a manic attempt at reparation rather than as true reparation engendering the tenderness and compassion Klein describes, and that is why we fundamentally need Kleinian thinking in order to push this analysis into the realm of the possibility of true aesthetic reparation *via* the text of Greek tragedy. Of course, to measure aesthetic reparation is a difficult task, but the extent to which it is possible, theoretically, is not as difficult to discuss.

The coincidence of such opposed feelings as Apollinian will-less contemplation with Dionysian self-annihilation, make up the parameters of our aesthetic response to tragedy. Nietzsche's pessimism of strength is contained in his total affirmation of life, where the absurdity of existence is acknowledged but life can go on, and have meaning too. It is only because the myth of the dismemberment of Dionysus-Zagreus is the foundation of individuation that individuation itself becomes tragic for Nietzsche at this early stage in his thinking, and this conception fits with Kleinian (and Freudian) metapsychology. In his *The Birth of the Tragedy*, Nietzsche, with the eloquence of a great poet, describes:

"how suddenly this gloomily depicted wilderness... changes when the Dionysian magic touches it! A hurricane seizes everything decrepit, decaying, collapsed, and stunted; wraps it whirlingly into a red cloud of dust; and carries it like a vulture into the air. Confused thereby, our glances seek for what has vanished: for what they see is something risen to the golden light as from a depression, so full and green, so luxuriantly alive, so ardently infinite. Tragedy sits in the midst of this exuberance of life, sorrow and joy, in sublime ecstasy; she listens to a distant doleful song—it tells of the Mothers of being...Dare now to be tragic men, for ye are to be redeemed! Ye are to accompany the Dionysian festive procession from India to Greece. Equip yourselves for severe conflict, but believe in the wonders of your god!" (Nietzsche, *BT*, §20).

Here, the gloomy wilderness of depression can be seized 'whirlingly' back into the confusion of the paranoid-schizoid state, which can also feel like giving life back to the lost objects, necessarily mourned during the depressive position. Nietzsche's depression is a valley, geographically and metaphorically abased and gloomy. We also find indications of Klein's manic position in Nietzsche's choice of the word hurricane, which fits symbolically with the process of mania, more than it does with paranoia. The phrase 'something risen to the golden light as from a depression', gives weight to the inclusion here of mania, rather than paranoid-schizoid

mechanisms – since we know, according to Klein, the paranoid-schizoid phantasies are primary, and the motif of rising, like the ascendant frenzy of the manic-defence, subtly pushes the interpretation in that direction. Nietzsche's affirmation of the exuberance in 'life, sorrow and joy', is at least partially supported by Klein, who could probably agree that tragedy "listens to a distant doleful song" (ibid.). However, such doleful songs would have only had meaning for Klein, because of their ability to provide hooks for our own projective defence mechanisms, which provide opportunities for re-dramatising our own instinctual past, with the renewed hope of healing its wounds and finding meaning in them.

Nietzsche boldly dares us to be tragic, for he believes that in doing so we can be redeemed from the destructive cruelty of the will to power, and the toxic pull of decadence and optimism, which become palliatives to man's shame about himself. Klein doesn't go so far as that: when Nietzsche says "Equip yourself for severe conflict" (ibid.), Klein actually offers a more sensitive appraisal of that conflict, necessary for psychological and emotional growth, and her approach to tragedy was one of recognizing those conflicts and making interpretations from their basis. So, in many ways, the dialogue between Klein's metapsychology and Nietzsche's metaphysics of tragedy is one of complementarity, though not without heterogeneity.

The Aesthetic Justification of Life:

If Nietzsche is correct in saying that art justifies life, and tragedy no less than any other form, we are forced to consider the possibility that the art of tragedy justifies life by affirming life in all its manifestations, both good and bad.⁴⁰ In *BT*, Nietzsche argues that the existence of the world is "justified only as an aesthetic phenomenon" (Nietzsche, Pr, §5), and in *Human All-Too Human*,

⁴⁰For Nietzsche also, we as readers or spectators "have been merely images and artistic projections all along, and... we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art – for only as an aesthetic phenomenon can existence and the world be eternally justified." [nur als ästhetisches Phänomen ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig gerechtfertigt], by which Nietzsche comments in a notebook for 1878, he meant that "the world was intended as a spectacle from the aesthetic standpoint by its poet-author, but that as a moral phenomenon it was a deception." (Silk & Stern, 1981, p.138). This of course, would be prerequisite to Nietzsche's position that tragedy was the justification of human evil, and that "life as it stands is not defensible by moral criteria" (Silk & Stern, 1981, p.295).

that “Art renders the sight of life bearable by laying over it the gauze of impure thinking” (Nietzsche, *HAH*, §151). Nietzsche takes this dictum to explain man’s ‘enormous need’ to generate artistically the “illustrious group of Olympian beings... exuberant, even triumphant... whether good or bad” (Nietzsche, *BT*, §3). The Olympian theogony is, for Nietzsche, the ‘Hellenic Will’, holding a transfiguring, beautifying mirror up to itself, through which existence *in toto*, is justified, and suffering thereby ameliorated. To be able to live at all, Nietzsche says, the Greeks “had, from direst necessity, to create these gods... out of the original Titan thearchy of terror the Olympian thearchy of joy was evolved... *as roses break forth from thorny bushes*” (ibid, §3, my italics). Klein would say that these symbolic adventures would be necessary and desirable since they provide an outlet for very archaic anxieties and fears, which are forever in need of expression according to the dictates of her developmental model. Nietzsche’s tragic chorus consoled the ‘deep-minded Hellene’, concerned with the destructive cruelty of nature as well as the awfulness or absurdity of existence, and in Klein, we find highly articulated metapsychology detailing just how destructive and cruel our natures can be, and necessarily so, from the earliest days.

The question remains, and can only be answered by the philosopher himself, as to how Nietzsche’s ‘healing enchantress’ – art - mysteriously transforms these thorny reflections on life, into a doctrine of “representations wherewith it is possible to live”? (ibid, p.62). In short, how can we derive pleasure from the pain portrayed in tragedy? To answer this we must appreciate Nietzsche’s essential theoretical monism⁴¹:

“how can something arise from its opposite... Until now, metaphysical philosophy has... [denied] the origin of... one from the other... by assuming for the more highly valued things some miraculous origin, directly from out of the heart and essence of the ‘thing in itself’ Historical philosophy, on the other hand... has determined in isolated cases... that they are not opposites, only exaggerated to be so by the popular metaphysical view, and that this opposition is based on an error of reason” (Nietzsche, *HAH*, §1).

⁴¹A theory or doctrine that denies the existence of a distinction or duality in some sphere.

So the Dionysian impulse is really, for Nietzsche part of the Apollinian impulse. If pain and pleasure are not antipodes, as Nietzsche's monism suggests, the enjoyment of pain is also no longer problematic and this is supported by Freud's own necessary monism regarding the ever-alloyed instincts of life and death. To use Andre Green's phraseology: each pleasure hides a pain and each pain bears the shadow of a pleasure. Nietzsche's affirmative and ascendant re-evaluation of the will to power and the joyous vigour gained from self-annihilation, gives tragedy the status of the "essence of all the prophylactic healing forces" (Nietzsche, *BT*, §21), mediating between "the strongest and most inherently fateful characteristics of a people" (*ibid.*). One could argue that it is these very strong and fateful characteristics that are given such exquisite attention in Kleinian theory. As prophylaxis, Nietzsche's tragedy excites, cleanses and disburdens, partly in the way Aristotle and Freud described, and partly according to the insatiable needs of the will to power, the primary driving force behind human action: "There is nothing to life that has value, except the degree of power—assuming that life itself is the will to power". (Nietzsche, *WP*, §55). Nietzsche has much to say on the matter of this will to power:

"perishing takes the form of self-destruction—the instinctive selection of that which must destroy. Symptoms of this self-destruction of the underprivileged: self-vivisection, poisoning, intoxication, romanticism, above all the instinctive need for actions that turn the powerful into mortal enemies (as it were one breeds one's own hangmen); the will to destruction as the will of a still deeper instinct, the instinct of self-destruction, the will for nothingness. (*ibid.*).

For Nietzsche, the very criterion for 'truth' is located in "the enhancement of the feeling of power" (Nietzsche, *WP*, §534). According to Nietzsche, one may not, therefore, ask, "who then interprets?" (*ibid.*, §556) for "the interpretation itself is a form of the will to power" (*ibid.*). The 'fellow-suffering' that we encounter in tragedy delivers us from the 'primordial suffering of the world' (*ibid.*, p.163), which for Klein amounts to our inner shattered world⁴². Tragedy's medicine leaves Nietzsche's imagined audience wanting "nothing more... than to be moved, to be able to cry their hearts out" (*HAH*, §166), which as we know from a Kleinian perspective equates to an

⁴²The Faustian 'Mothers' have long been referred to by psychoanalysts, for their descriptive power regarding the deepest layers of the unconscious and the terrors one must face, much like Faust, in order to reach so far down into oneself, that one virtually loses individuality. Klein's schizoid disintegration is a clear front-runner for comparison with Goethe's 'Mother's' – since the dismemberment associated with the paranoid schizoid position is much closer to the terrifying realm of the 'Mother's' in both Goethe's and psychoanalyst's use, than anything like the depressive position or even the manic defence.

evacuation of bad objects. Thus, if we can follow Nietzsche and Klein “the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena now appear to us as something necessary, considering the surplus of innumerable forms of existence which throng and push one another into life, considering the exuberant fertility of the universal will [to power]” (Nietzsche, *BT*, §17). Life, Nietzsche says, hurts the most and with a ‘maddening sting’, precisely when we merge with the immeasurable and indestructible, primordial joy in existence, such as when we delight in our own or the tragic hero’s Dionysian annihilation.

Klein, as we have seen lends a deeper meaning to this theme of annihilation, which can be seen to be in the service of life, firstly due to the psychoanalytic drive theory which states as much, and secondly due to its role in spurring the depressive and reparative trends of the ego toward individuation. Alford is convincing in his application of a ‘roughly’ Kleinian perspective to a cross section of Greek tragedies. He reinforces what I have stated about the Kleinian framework: as drawing out the primitive anxiety in case the good and bad objects, becoming confused, eventuate in the annihilation of exactly that which we-the-hero, or the-poet, love the most. Seeking to enlarge psychoanalysis with a Kleinian reading of tragedy, Alford shows that the tragedians not only possessed a deep psychological astuteness but that they lived in much closer proximity to “the fundamental psychological realities of human experience” (Alford, 1993, p.2) than we do as modern readers, suffering under the illusion that modernity can protect us from our deepest natures. These fundamental psychological realities receive exquisite attention from Kleinians and can be characterized as constituting the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions.

One can always criticize Nietzsche of ‘frolicking in the split’: he did after all, toward the end of his life, sign off his academic writing as Dionysus-Zagreus, the dismembered individuating one. It is clear that Klein draws a sharper focus on the achievement of wholeness and the depressive position than Nietzsche’s Apollinian metaphysics suggest. Whether Nietzsche is accused of madness or not, he certainly reflects on an interesting component of our aesthetic response to

tragedy, and helps affirm the necessity of suffering and psychic dismemberment for development, which again finds confirmation in Kleinian thinking.

In this reading, Dionysian paranoid-schizoid anxieties about the goodness of our split internal objects, emotions and ego, and the Apollinian depressive realization of their actual 'oneness' and therefore imperilled position within the self, can be demonstrated as operating not only in the poet, but between the symbolic forces personified in the play, and within the psyche of the reader and the culture at large. These anxieties are much in need of symbolic expression, and this explains their significance in such sublimations as art and literature. It also highlights how Nietzsche's thinking around tragedy, viewed psychoanalytically, is uniquely able to embrace tragedy as a legitimate source for the aesthetic reparation of primitive psychic wounds.

II) *Pity: Decadence or Death-Wish?*

In this section, the remaining inconsistencies between Aristotle, Nietzsche and Freud around tragic effect and a closer inspection of Euripidean stagecraft, will be discussed in order to highlight some differences in approach that will become expedient in the penultimate chapter of this thesis. When the textual analyses of this thesis take place, the reader should bear in mind my foregoing remarks as caveats to my particular synthesis of these three thinkers' ideas.

Throughout his career, Nietzsche takes serious issue with Aristotle's pity-and-fear formulation regarding the beneficial effects of tragedy. Challenging the Aristotelian virtue of 'pity' in the *Antichrist* (§7), he calls it a 'sickly and dangerous state of mind', as well as a 'nihilistic denial of life', for which tragedy is actually a purgative. Nietzsche wants tragedy to cure us of the need for what Aristotle says we need from tragedy. Pity is the epitome of 'decadence' for Nietzsche.⁴³

⁴³ "To choose what is harmful to oneself, to be attracted by 'disinterested' motives, almost constitutes the formula for decadence. 'Not to seek one's own advantage' – that is merely a moral fig leaf for a quite different, namely physiological fact: 'I no longer know how to find my advantage'...Disregard of the instincts!" (Nietzsche, *TI*, §35).

First he concedes that when some physiological need such as love, is gratified, there is an “alleviation and temporary abatement of the drive” (Nietzsche, *HAH*, §212). However, he argues that pity-and-fear are “not the requirements of particular organs in this sense; they do not need to be relieved. And... [anyway] a drive is actually strengthened by gratifying it, despite periodic alleviations” (ibid.). So pity, as a decadent force, is actually strengthened if gratified through tragedy as Aristotle claims it is. Thus, Nietzsche sides with Plato in thinking that “tragedy makes us on the whole more anxious and sentimental” (ibid.), not less, and this he sees as a weakness. Aristotle claims that we actually free ourselves of passions like pity-and-fear, *through experiencing them*. For Nietzsche, it is only through a Dionysian, yea-saying affirmation of life *beyond* pity-and-fear, that tragedy can release ‘*amor fati*’ in the reader; “the eternal joy of becoming – that joy which also encompasses joy in destruction” (Nietzsche, *TI*, §5).

In the *Anti-Christ* (1888) Nietzsche describes pity as a depressive and contagious instinct that is hostile to life and the will to (enhance and preserve) life: “both as multiplier of misery and as a conservator of everything miserable it is one of the chief instruments for the advancement of decadence – pity persuades to nothingness!” (Nietzsche, *A*, §7). We notice an isomorphism here, between Nietzsche’s critique of pity, and Freud’s *Thanatos*, which brings Nietzsche and Aristotle into closer proximity. To wit: *Thanatos* as Freud’s expression of the instinct that is hostile to life, but yet alloyed to life, renders Aristotle’s pity, which Nietzsche took such issue with, into the catharsis of a negative, masochistic death-wish. Understood psychoanalytically, this catharsis can be therapeutic, provided that we as the subject re-living these wishes through the medium of literature, become aware of these inner necessities, and can face the potentially devastating reality they tell about our inner world.

So we have pity, decadence, or the death wish, with which to understand the agency of tragic effect to release emotion. It is tempting to agree with Nietzsche that the release of pent-up pity is neither the requirement of any particular organ, nor a guaranteed method of abatement of such an instinct. However, when we translate ‘pity’, which everywhere strengthens *pathos*, is hostile to life and hostile to health, into the psychoanalytic death-drive, we begin to heal Nietzsche’s radical

critique that weakness can only lead to the degeneration of instinct, i.e., to choosing what is harmful to oneself, in short, to *decadence*. Far from persuading to nothingness, our masochistic identification with the suffering hero persuades us that we harbour such self-destructive tendencies within ourselves and that we enjoy identifying with the suffering hero because he actually allows such unforgiveable wish fulfilments to come to pass, and, critically, survives the consequences of the complete destruction this brings; we even grow stronger from this *katabasis* into the realm of the Mothers. In order to be strong and to affirm life as Nietzsche himself proclaims, we must integrate the eternal joy in destruction and self-destruction into our comportment to the world, which means not feeling pity for the tragic hero and his or our own sufferings, as that would be tantamount to a denial of existence. However, existence includes pain *and* pleasure, weakness *and* strength, life *and* death. For Aristotle, we rid ourselves of much pain through the pleasures of dramatic form and the passions narrated therein; whereas for Nietzsche it is not about freeing ourselves of passion through pity, but rather valuing and affirming *all of life* and *all passion*, including the destructive forces of the psyche. We must not feel sorry for the hero; we must delight in his self-destruction, for his fate dictates it.

So when we appraise Aristotle's pity-and-fear with Nietzschean eyes, a decadence critique is legitimate, but when we translate Aristotle's pity into Freud's death-wish, the decadence critique falls short: Nietzsche did not have the tools to anticipate the psychoanalytic interpretation of drives. Claiming that it is the operation of the death-drive, and not just the operation of decadence, provides a clearer path towards the analysis of the tragic action in the play, so although Nietzsche reminds us that it is not only pity, but Dionysian affirmation that plays a role in our aesthetic response to tragedy, that does not have greater explanatory power than the psychoanalytic interpretation. Returning to the issue of whether one can be free of any of these decadent death-wishes, it has to be said that freedom, for Nietzsche was just an illusion, yet his prescription was never one of hopeless resignation. Five steps from tyranny, he said:

“great danger... first teaches us to know our resources, our virtues, our shield and spear, our spirit – which compels us to be strong... First principle: one must need strength otherwise one will never have it... freedom... I understand... as something one has and does not have, something one wants, something one conquers” (Nietzsche, *TI*, §38).

Thus, the great dangers encountered on the tragic stage, reflect the great dangers we face within ourselves, and we must approach these dangers in order to know our strength. For Nietzsche, we have freedom and we do not have freedom; this is just the way it is, in life, as in tragedy.⁴⁴ By affirming life, uncertainty *and* suffering, we can at least free ourselves from the dogma of hedonism⁴⁵, and also from the primacy of the pleasure-principle, from pessimism⁴⁶, from longing for the ugly, and pitying “all that is terrible, evil, enigmatical, destructive, fatal at the basis of existence” (Nietzsche, *BT*, §4). We can at least be free to be sceptical⁴⁷:

“The vigour of a mind, its freedom through strength and superior strength, is proved by scepticism” (Nietzsche, *TI*, §54).

Therefore, we must be sceptical in our attempts to interpret these psychoanalytically rich texts, and this may perhaps be supported by a brief reminder of some of the previous scholarship and debates around Euripides himself, who is the poet responsible for the tragedies to be analysed in the next chapter.

III) *Why Euripides?: Aristotle contra Nietzsche*

Nietzsche firmly believed that the early Greek tragedy “had for its sole theme the sufferings of Dionysus and that for a long time the only stage hero was Dionysus himself” (Nietzsche, *BT*,

⁴⁴ “From the beginning, the first belief of all organic beings may be that the whole rest of the world is One and unmoved... Thus the belief in freedom of the will is an initial error of all organic beings” (Nietzsche, *HAH*, §18).

⁴⁵ Optimism.

⁴⁶ “the tragic feeling, which was misunderstood as much by Aristotle as it especially was by our pessimists. Tragedy is so far from providing evidence for pessimism among the Hellenes in Schopenhauer’s sense that it has to be considered the decisive repudiation of that idea and the counter-verdict to it. Affirmation of life even in its strangest and sternest problems, the will to life rejoicing in its own inexhaustibility through the sacrifice of its highest types – that is what I called Dionysian, that is what I recognized as the bridge to the psychology of the tragic poet.” (Nietzsche, *TI*, §5).

⁴⁷ “If ancient tragedy was driven from its course by the dialectical desire for knowledge and optimism of science, it might be inferred that there is an eternal conflict between the theoretic and the tragic view of things, and only after the spirit of science has been led to its boundaries, and its claim to universal validity has been destroyed by the evidence of those boundaries [i.e., scepticism], can we hope for a re-birth of tragedy” (Nietzsche, *BT*, §17).

§10), and he claims that Euripides abandons Dionysus as the tragic hero, digressing from the original tragic form, and therefore causing the demise of Greek tragedy: “until Euripides, Dionysus never ceased to be the tragic hero...sacrilegious Euripides...because you had abandoned Dionysus, Apollo abandoned you” (ibid.). It is not exactly clear how Nietzsche conceived of the Euripidean hero as Apollinian, nor is it expedient to try to sketch that out for the reader now. Nietzsche’s views on the Dionysian-Apollinian masks are some of the earliest and most complex subject matter that the philosopher wrestled with, and it would take a study as lengthy as the one at hand to decipher the full extent of contradiction and paradox there. What is at stake, however, is whether Nietzsche was correct to paint Euripides with such a damning brushstroke regarding his contribution to the decline of tragic art in ancient Greece. In truth, Nietzsche only criticises Euripides inasmuch as he re-interprets the criticisms of the brothers Schlegel for his own characterisation of Greek tragedy; he does not proceed beyond generalities and only gives space to one Euripidean tragedy in the BT, so it would not seem difficult to refute him on this bold point. In defence of Euripides, Walter Kaufmann, usually on the side of Nietzsche, clarifies:

“There is no evidence that Euripides was under the spell of Socrates, as Nietzsche claimed, and there is every evidence that he did not accept the three Socratic dicta of which Nietzsche says: “In these three basic forms of optimism lies the death of tragedy” (Kaufmann, 1968, p.244)⁴⁸

In setting Aristotle and Nietzsche against one another in this debate, we come across our own interpretations as to the formal differences in Euripides’ characterisations (from Aeschylean/Sophoclean standards), which help establish a *modus Vivendi* between the conflicting viewpoints.

Kitto would appear to be correct in describing the Greek tragedian, as “first and last an artist” (Kitto, 1939/97, p.v) who must be criticized accordingly. As an artist, Euripides therefore must

⁴⁸ “Nietzsche was exceedingly unfair to Euripides, falling in with an old prejudice against the poet, which Goethe already had attacked” (Kaufmann, 1968, p.246)

not be held to the stringent demands placed by science on what we may call 'knowledge.' Since Euripides has been distinguished on a number of levels, what follows is a more focused appraisal of the hypothesis that the emotional and familial conflict inherent in tragedy is alive and well in Euripides when approached from a psychoanalytic perspective. Perhaps the reason Euripides is considered 'the most tragic' by Aristotle, is because Greece, in the last three decades of the fifth century, during Euripides' great tragic period, was experiencing the throes of the Peloponnesian War. There is a definite sense (perhaps because of the number of plays he left behind in comparison) that Euripides reacted more violently to the war, than his elder, Sophocles. Another important context for Euripides' work was the contemporary 'Sophistic Movement' which, like the Enlightenment of seventeenth century Europe, pitted the "conscious analysis of experience... expressed in prose" (ibid, p.188), over and against the "intuitive intelligence, based on generalized reflection about human experience... expressing itself through art and the traditional imagery of mythology" (ibid.).

Kitto says that big-scale poetry 'of importance' "dies with Euripides and Sophocles" (ibid.). Thus we can hypothesise that Euripides was battling against the tide of his times: questioning the *status quo*, questioning tragedy even, whose innumerable faces were being rapidly redefined. At least one of the plays under consideration in this thesis (the *Alkestis*) fall into the phase of Euripides' writing that Kitto identified as his 'great tragic period'. The *Heracleidae*, "badly constructed by Aristotelian standards" (ibid.), contains a prologue, spoken by a principal character (Iolaus), and an episodic plot structure. In terms of characterization and construction, Kitto says this play is "unlike the rest of Euripides' work as the *Tyrannus* [of Sophocles] itself" (ibid.). Kitto traces what is characteristic in Euripides to "the nature of the tragic idea", i.e., Euripides' 'tragic idea' leads logically to the new features in his plays. First we must "try to catch the tragic idea, that tragic way of thinking about life" (ibid, pp.188-89), that typifies Euripidean tragedy.

For Euripides *ἁμαρτία* [*hamartia*]⁴⁹, and tragic action reflects “a disastrous element in our common human nature which leads to suffering, in which the guilty person may share or not” (ibid, p.250), and is not a characterological device used to indicate individual downfall. All Euripidean tragic figures are nonetheless conceived as being “in the grip of something greater than themselves” (ibid.). In these plays, Kitto says the tragic beings are “victims in a more literal sense, victims of cruelty and oppression... exercised... by several people... indifferently – and endured by several persons indifferently” (ibid, p.251).

We have yet to say explicitly *what* the underlying idea of Euripidean tragic action *is*. It is noteworthy that Kitto finds the tragedy in Euripides thought as lying in “the social suffering which follows social wrongdoing” (ibid, p.252), which is in contradistinction to Sophocles’ ‘individual fault’ and ‘individual suffering’. For Euripides: “the tragic point lies in the suffering rather than in the oppression, the drama concentrates on the victims. This is the reason why we have so many suppliants at altars, defenceless women, children” (ibid.). Euripides’ tragic idea demonstrates that victory can be just as pathetic, and even less glorious than the fate of being conquered, and he sought to maintain this paradox even at the cost, and in full knowledge of, the inconsistency this wrought in his plays. Since the situations portrayed in Euripidean drama are not influenced by the characters, Euripides has good reason to limit their characterisation: apart from Theseus in the *Suppliant Women* (which is not considered here), Euripides’ characters are highly typecast in order to nuance specific character traits and this serves to simplify his [melo]dramatic style to such an extent that we can detach ourselves emotionally from the fate of the tragic figures, and gain a somewhat “disconcerting aloofness from them” (ibid, p.253). There is a “sour unromantic strain” (ibid, p.254) in Euripides’ characterization, which he “shared with the rest of Athens” (ibid.): the rhetoric of irony and poking fun at legend, are therefore essential and unique elements of Euripidean characterization, and result from the aloofness and simplification of his tragic figures that sometimes ends in inconsistent portraiture.

⁴⁹ *ἁμαρτία* [*Hamartia*] = fatal flaw leading to the downfall of a *tragic* hero or heroine.

There is no reason, however, to hold Euripides so tightly to modern academic conventions such as ‘consistency of portraiture’: Euripidean tragedy is more vital than that.⁵⁰ After all, it is not “as if Euripides needed Aristotle to tell him that what befalls one person is not necessarily a unity” (ibid, p.190). Nor is it the case that Euripides was incapable of writing good plots and rendering characters in a consistent fashion, as his later non-tragic plays attest. Euripides’ tragic idea is crystallized in the unromantic treatment he gives to the actions and dispositions of his *dramatis personae*: his unique style prevents his audience “from taking too literal and exclusive an interest in the stage-action” (ibid, p.259) and he wants us to look for the underlying ideas of which the action and characters are only a part. This unromantic, ironic distancing may, at first seem to contradict the argument of this thesis: that the emotional and familial conflict inherent in tragedy is alive and well in Euripides when approached from a psychoanalytic perspective. However, if the ironic distancing in Euripidean tragedy is really there:

- (a) It must serve a purpose, and that purpose is unlikely to be a reduction of tragic effect
- (b) Whatever tragic elements we do find, will be all the more pronounced because of this juxtaposition, and
- (c) The greater the distancing, the greater the possibility that what we do find to be tragic in Euripidean drama, will be *essential* to the tradition of tragedy in ancient Greece.

All of which will form the basis of my challenge to Nietzsche, who believed that great tragedy died with Euripides’ abandonment of tragedy’s Dionysian spirit.

The tendency of Euripides’, to “express ideas of philosophical interest” (Allan, 2005, p.74), earns him the title of ‘philosopher of the stage’, although his status as a tragedian is still hotly debated. A ‘revisionist’ appreciation of Euripidean drama would concede that Euripides “developed rather than destroyed the tragic genre” (Gregory, 2005, p.252), and would see more similarity,

⁵⁰ “We may prefer consistency; we may even find it here, with enough determination; but if we are unconvinced, the play is not ruined” (Kitto, p.258).

than difference, between Euripides and the other tragedians. Gregory points the way once more from classical literary criticism to psychoanalytic interpretation, and names filicidal mothers and seduced, abandoned heroines, as features of both Sophoclean and Euripidean tragedy, which the postclassical reception highlighted. Although I do take an implicitly revisionist position with regards to Euripidean tragedy, the goal here is not to compare Euripides to Sophocles or Aeschylus, but to begin a closer analysis of a few Euripidean tragedies and decipher the meaning and reparative significance of their sadomasochistic contents, through a psychoanalytic lens.

There is yet a need to justify the choice of Euripides over and above his contemporaries, and for this we must turn once more to Aristotle. He calls Euripides “the most tragic of poets” (Aristotle, *Poetics*, XIII) whose criteria for excellence depends on the protagonist’s response to misfortune. Aristotle understood something that our modern narrow-mindedness is wont to forget: that even tragedy does not necessarily exclude happy endings. Euripides has suffered some fairly damaging reviews by Schlegel⁵¹ and Nietzsche, to whom we can ascribe the opinion that Euripides represents the ‘death of tragedy.’ For Euripides’ critics, his innovations broke with traditional treatments of myth; but in the last analysis, innovation nor tradition in treatment really have a bearing on what is tragic about the story: Euripides is therefore no less tragic for “combining innovation with tradition” (Gregory, 2005, p.256).

If Nietzsche is correct, and Euripides really did ‘kill’ tragedy, we would seem to be selecting a diluted source in which to find any remnants of tragic thought, whereas, in reality, anything we do find will be nothing, if not *essential* to tragedy. It would be difficult to try and argue that these findings had nothing to do with the tragic thought of Euripides, or that the tragic remnants in Euripides had no correspondence to Sophoclean or Aeschylean tragedy. Since we are dealing with purely what is left of Euripides’ supposed decimation of tragedy, whatever we can discover must be, on some level, *fundamentally tragic*. On an intuitive level, anyone can disagree with Nietzsche and argue that Euripides thought is both tragic and reflective of his development of

⁵¹ According to Schlegel, Euripides “not only destroyed the external order of tragedy, but missed its entire meaning.” (1808 Vienna lectures on dramatic art and literature – Behler, 1986/Gregory, 2005, p. 447).

tragedy, but only if this argument can be backed up with textual evidence. I will show with textual referents, how the tragedy in Euripides is alive and well. Then, finally, we can rest our case and suggest that Euripidean tragedy is not fundamentally different from Aeschylus' nor Sophocles' tragic poetry.

Part III: Textual Analyses

**CHAPTER VI: THE ‘SPECTACULAR ECONOMY OF PUNISHMENT’ IN
EURIPIDES’ ALCESTIS**

Introduction: *The Sadomasochistic Spirit apropos Nietzsche, Freud and Klein*

The purely positive, hedonistic account of human motivation and action, which posits the primacy of the pleasure-principle and the avoidance of pain, fails to account for the many instances where people are known to derive pleasure from their own and others’ suffering. Hedonism also contradicts the purview of psychoanalytic knowledge, which sees the life of human motivation and action as not simply being about the avoidance of pain or the primacy of the pleasure-principle, as the Epicurean theory states, but as including the seeking and enjoyment of pain, which demands an account of sadomasochistic subjectivity. Freud’s 1915 paper on ‘The Instincts and Their Vicissitudes’, anatomises the sadomasochistic tendency of man according to the following developmental formula: an original non-erotic sadism evolves into a phase of masochism which seeks an external object as the agent of torment and finally institutes the superego as the sadistic agent of pain, which is enjoyed masochistically. According to this schema, our destructive instincts originally deflected onto external objects form the basis of our self-destructive instincts, and establish a splitting within the mind between a masochistic ego, and a sadistic superego. Freud’s ‘sadism’ and ‘masochism’ correlate to Nietzsche’s ‘cruelty’ and ‘asceticism’ respectively, and I argue that we cannot truly appreciate the full extent and nature of sadomasochistic subjectivity, without appealing to psychoanalysis and Nietzsche’s ascendant re-evaluation of cruelty within his dynamic psychology of the ‘will to power’:

“the truly basic life-instinct which aims at the expansion of power and in so doing...risks and sacrifices self-preservation...the will to power...is simply the will to life” (Nietzsche, GS, §349).

Nietzsche's psychology posits the 'will to power' as the most fundamental driving force behind all human behaviour. That we are inherently cruel, to ourselves and to others is, for Nietzsche an expression of the will to power, which he teaches we would do better to harness in the service of our own self-expression and the expression of higher cultural goals;

“Such a spirit who has become free stands amid the cosmos with a joyous and trusting fatalism...he does not negate anymore” (Nietzsche, *TI*, IX: §49)

What Freud would call sublimation, Nietzsche emphasises as the 'ascetic ideal'⁵², which equates to the necessary deprivation of the individual by the individual himself; a kind of self-directed cruelty that looks like masochism through a psychological lens. As an expression of the 'will to power', the ascetic ideal presents us with a paradox: how can something be both painful and pleasurable? With his Ascetic priest, Nietzsche demonstrates that the avoidance of pain is not primary in the psychology of all his 'historical men', since for Ascetic priests pain is actively sought as a source of pleasure. The hedonistic account does not exclude these instances from the programme of the pleasure-unpleasure principle; however it cannot explain why pain is pleasurable. Nietzsche's 'will to power' recognises that the deepest motive for human action is the primary pleasure resulting from the acquisition, increase and exertion of one's power, over oneself and others. Thus, according to Nietzsche, sadomasochistic impulses are derivative of a central human drive, rooted in the most primary impulse of human nature: the will to power. Under a hedonistic theory, sadomasochism would be seen as an aberration or perversion of the pleasure-unpleasure principle (Eros) but this seems to ignore the existence of both the 'Nirvana' (psychic inertia/conservatism of instinct/death), and 'reality' (necessity/compulsion) (Ananke) principles, which Freud introduces in 1920. So even without Nietzsche's pessimism of strength, Freud's theoretical monism trumps the Epicurean claim.

⁵² Ascetic ideal: In the third essay of *GS*, Nietzsche describes how through asceticism one masters one's will to power and resentment. In order to preserve life, one must relinquish and withdraw from material existence and the ineluctable pain and suffering such materiality brings.

Nietzsche's prescription is that since, by virtue of the immanence of the will to power, we are inherently capable of bringing havoc upon ourselves in equal proportion to the suffering we cause others, and inherently incapable of doing anything about this, we must hold this very suffering to account and value ourselves and our lives because of it (cf. Owen, 2007, pp.93-96). Nietzsche's ascendant revaluation of the sadomasochistic spirit within the libidinal economy of man's psyche, is all the more powerful when combined with his typology of different types of 'historical man', which accounts for more variation than Freud's 'universalised guilt', in the ways different people manage the will to power according to their socio-historical position in the rank order of society. Historically, Nietzsche tells us that self-directed suffering was resorted to only by people who for the benefit of those with power, assumed ignoble roles in society. The ascetic priest, on a more religious mission, actually prescribes an outlet for the *ressentiment* building up within the libidinal economy of the ignoble types of historical man, which being denied an external outlet becomes internalised. This begins to explain how Nietzsche uses the will to power in his understanding of psycho-historical man. However, in order to fully appreciate the proto-psychoanalytic picture Nietzsche gives us of sadomasochistic subjectivity, we must understand how he deals with guilt, bad conscience and the ascetic ideal respectively.

In the second and third treatises of his *Genealogy of Morality*, (1887), Nietzsche explains how and for what purpose a physiological quantum of affect, i.e. pain, can be turned against oneself. To do this, however, Nietzsche must establish a sense of guilt and a bad conscience, which can later function as the agent of one's suffering. The second treatise constitutes a psychology whereby cruelty is found in an archaic substratum of the psyche, indelible to human culture, and where conscience is expressed as the instinct for cruelty turned back on itself, once it can no longer find exogenous satisfaction. As always, genealogy is Nietzsche's preferred methodology, so it is within the ancient relationship of the creditor and the debtor that Nietzsche ventures to locate the sense of guilt and the need for punishment: "In order to instil trust in his promise of repayment... the debtor pledges to the creditor in the case of non-payment something else... for

example his body... his wife... his freedom or even his life” (Nietzsche, *GM*, II §5). Critically, society endorsed the creditor’s right to hold his debtors in contempt, and to forcibly retrieve compensations through cruelty (*ibid.*), and it is the internalization of this (eye-for-an-eye) mentality that creates a feeling of guilt in man according to Nietzsche. This spectacular economy of punishment in ancient society was based on what Owen (2007) calls a logic of equivalence between damage and pain that emerges in the creditor-debtor relationships and expresses the basic human instinct for cruelty (Owen, 2007, pp.93-96). According to Nietzsche, only the noble types enjoy the compensatory function of cruelty. Priests, slaves and philosophers may only resort to asceticism: venting their aggression on themselves.

Self-enjoyment, however, is still a central problematic in Nietzsche’s thought, and establishes a truly sadomasochistic picture of the libidinal economy of man. Staten’s text is useful in understanding the evolution of Nietzsche’s thought around the notion of self-enjoyment and sadomasochistic subjectivity. Staten (1990) argues that for Nietzsche “pleasure in the deepest sense includes displeasure” (Staten, 1990, p.89), and that power is “the essence of pleasure” (*ibid.*). From Nietzsche’s ‘protomasochism’ in *BT*, where pain begets joy and ecstasy wrings sounds of agony, which represent his earlier Dionysian metaphysics of tragedy, he moves on in *Daybreak* (1881) to an unspeakable happiness at the sight of torment, which can be seen as an ironic distancing “from the type of self-enjoyment that transforms pain into pleasure” (Staten, 1990, p.101). By the time of the *Genealogy*, however, this ironic distancing had “split into a condemnation of ascetic masochism and a celebration of barbarian cruelty” (*ibid.*). Staten is correct in characterizing the Nietzschean notion of self-enjoyment, including the ascetic-masochistic enjoyment of self-directed cruelty, as a primitive form of affect within the will to power itself, which is also identical with the feeling of power. As such, I agree with Staten, that Nietzsche has thereby constructed a pre-Freudian “profound analysis of sadomasochistic subjectivity and transcendental resentment” (*ibid.*, p.92). Although Nietzsche’s ideas forever evolved, complicate matters, and do not necessarily support the full extent of the psychoanalytic interpretations being offered here, they also merge with psychoanalytic ideas in some interesting

ways.

According to Staten, Nietzsche is exploring the more Hegelian ‘quasi-historical phenomenology of sadomasochistic spirit’: trying to erect the drive to dominate and acquire power as a normative model, predating civilisation, thereby making it an ontological fact of human nature. With this affirmation of the aggressive drive, Nietzsche is accused of sliding “insensibly into a nostalgic naturalism” (Staten, 1990, p.105). However, Nietzsche’s psychology is in no way meant to vindicate or justify the existence of the aggressive modes of satisfying the will to power; rather, it explains what Ivan Soll sees as “the attraction of cruelty, and... its prevalence in human life” (Soll, 1994, p.181). Staten’s critique of nostalgic naturalism does violence to the complexity of Nietzsche’s thought: not least because Nietzsche was anything but wholly approving about the cruel sides of human nature. Just because Nietzsche recognized the will to power, and created a philosophy to help his readers find a path toward reconciliation, he did not deny the will to life: he actually wanted us to find ways to subvert the relentless and insatiable will to power toward the satisfaction of the will to life. However, as Freud said himself, the means and ends of our satisfaction can also become destructive, so the conundrum still remains as to the perplexing tension between life and death, which seem, for Nietzsche and Freud, to characterize the internal world of modern men: torn between their will to live and their death wishes.

Ernest Jones confirms that Freud referred to Nietzsche as having “more penetrating knowledge of himself than any man who ever lived or was likely to live” (Jones, 1955, p.344), but denies that Nietzsche’s writings had any significant influence on Freud’s thought, as Freud himself made clear. Due to their mutual associations with the intellectual elite of both Babel and the Vienna Circle, it is indeed likely that Nietzsche had some influence on aspects of Freud’s thinking, however, since Freud refused to acknowledge that, one would be hard pressed to evidence such a claim.

The hedonists fail to surpass either Nietzsche’s will-to-power account of human motivation and

action, or the psychoanalytic drive theory, which in addition to pleasure, tries to grant pain and death an ontological status within our instinctual make-up. That man, in so many ways, looks for and creates his pain and that he paradoxically enjoys his pain, is something psychoanalysis can account for, and Nietzsche's theory, that the will to exert power over oneself is primary, helps us to understand this uncomfortable truth behind man's deepest strivings. The meaning of the notions of pain, pleasure, cruelty, asceticism, and the will to power, along with the place these concepts take in Nietzsche's psychology, can, of course, be read in a number of ways and Nietzsche is more than aware of this, as anyone familiar with his perspectival outlook will acknowledge. Applied to literature, we can argue that the meaning of these sadomasochistic notions are contained subjectively within the therapeutic experience afforded us as readers (which varies in quality and intensity) when we encounter the vicissitudes of human emotion, and unconscious instinctual longings that the figures of tragedy, more directly than the figures of myth, compel us to engage with. As Nietzsche says:

“That which constitutes the painful delight of tragedy is cruelty; that which operates agreeably in so called tragic sympathy, and at the basis even of everything sublime, up to the highest and most delicate thrills of metaphysics, obtains its sweetness solely from the intermingling ingredient of cruelty” (Nietzsche, *BGE*, §229).

Thus, we are presented with a further requisite for the ascendant revaluation of sadomasochism in the pre-sublimated history of mankind, and the indestructible link between man's psychology and the development of his morality. Nietzsche wants us to recognize the essential nature of sadomasochistic urges and appreciate them as valuable outlets for the will to power. But, he says, man is repulsed by his harsh nature, which is why the ascetic turn has become so painfully necessary: “man has grown ashamed *of man*” (Nietzsche, *GM II*, §7). This shame or guilt stems from the repression and sublimation of much of these natural sadomasochistic impulses, although Nietzsche does not necessarily recognize the confluence of sadistic and masochistic trends, as sadomasochism *per se*. Sadomasochism, for Nietzsche, is simply an expression of the ‘will to power’. Freud's sadistic agent of human suffering *qua* the superego, which develops out of a primary sadistic-egoism, and is nonetheless enjoyed masochistically, corresponds precisely with what Nietzsche says about the transcendence of the will, beyond power and suffering, and

toward the less objectionable pleasure of asceticism. It is almost as if man would rather cause himself pain than suffer passively at the hands of another. Both Nietzsche and Freud attempt to redefine the foundations of subjectivity itself, replacing, according to Staten, “the moral problematic of selfishness with the economic problematic of what Freud would call narcissism” (Staten, 1990, p.99).

A crucial difference being, of course, that whilst Nietzsche’s ‘will to power’ account of cruelty in human psychology omits an analysis of the erotic nature of the libido, Freud focuses primarily on this psychosexual dimension (the genesis of erotic sadomasochism in childhood). In *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), Freud’s thesis is that man suffers because of the libidinal prohibitions placed on him by civilization, which suppress his ontological necessity to satisfy his aggression, i.e., the death instinct (Thanatos). Nietzsche’s ‘asceticism’ corresponds therefore, to what Freud describes as the inversion of the aggressive destructivity originally directed at objects and parental authorities in the external world, and later internalized and introjected. This is a function of the superego, and it is relative (in its severity towards the ego) to the intensity of the original levels of aggression felt, and felt to be prohibited toward external objects. Both descriptions include the masochistic enjoyment of an originally sadistic impulse that has turned back upon itself.

Freud and Nietzsche’s models are isomorphic to the extent that pleasure and pain are seen to intermingle and constitute the basis of sadomasochistic subjectivity, as both men attempted to formulate it. They both agree that there is a transcendence of the will, beyond power and suffering and toward the less objectionable pleasure of asceticism. They both appeal to the ontological aggressiveness of man as evidence of his unavoidably cruel nature, and see religion as one of the most successful methods for its renunciation. Although Freud’s inquiry offers rich intrapsychic detail in terms of the inversion of the aggressive drive and superego functioning, it cannot be read as an ascendant re-evaluation about the role of cruelty in the psychology of man, as Nietzsche’s ‘will to power’ account demands. Beyond its function as a representative of the

death instinct, Freud delineates little variation in the role of cruelty in man's psychology, whereas with Nietzsche it is possible to examine the wider variety of cruelties enjoyed not only in man *per se* (Freud's focus), but in several different types of 'historical' man as well. That said, Freud reminds us, that no-one escapes the inevitability of guilt and the bad conscience, whereas Nietzsche is more at pains to show how certain types of historical men have used this predisposition to ascetic-masochism, to their own advantage. Nietzsche reserves (and indeed tries to reverse) this 'bad conscience' for his 'ignoble' types who have their punishment meted out accordingly by their 'noble' superiors. The re-evaluation of morality conducted by Nietzsche, asks, in genealogical terms: who benefits, from these ignoble types feeling guilty? For what purpose do they reside on the passive side of the 'will to power' dynamic?

So what pre-conception must be treated with the iconoclastic vision Nietzsche had in mind? His project is one of re-evaluating guilt and the imposition of a bad conscience 'for the good of society', and he calls for the stockpiling and eventual release of *ressentiment*, to restore the natural order and balance. Freud's 'universal guilt' remains at an even more foundational historical level than this: it is the price we all must pay for civilization and the civilised sexual morality this entails. This unconscious economy of punishment, shame or guilt stems from the repression and sublimation of natural and unconscious impulses, and becomes conscious when such impulses are realised. Greek tragedy foregrounds these eruptions of guilt and suspicion and explores the psychological truth behind them.

Guilt, and its relation to mourning and melancholia, is especially informative and directive when it comes to the psychoanalytic interpretation of Greek tragedy and its sadomasochistic undercurrents. In order to offer a sceptical, psychoanalytic reading of Greek tragedy, we must read well, staying open to interpretive proliferation and remain within the bounds of a constrained perspectivism which appeals to the only criterion of interpretive truth available, (according to Nietzsche at least): 'value for life'.

Having already traversed, on the part of the artist and the audience, the complex terrain which leads to the psychoanalytic thesis that authentic art demands the authentic, aesthetic reparation of the psychic wounding of the depressive position, we can now begin to decipher the symbolic representations contained in the transvalued⁵³ text of the *Alkestis*. As will have become clear by now, my interpretive stance is as much influenced by early to late Nietzsche as it is by psychoanalytic theory, at the epistemological as well as the thematic level. We need psychoanalysis and Nietzsche if we are to fully appreciate the value for life contained within my unique interpretations proffered in regards to scenes where sadomasochistic forces are at play, and the potential of aesthetic reparation is indicated. Without Nietzsche's pre-Freudian profound analysis of sadomasochistic subjectivity, my interpretations lack both the 'quasi-historical phenomenology of the sadomasochistic spirit' Nietzsche tried to articulate, and the sensitivity to the transhistorical readings of affect that must have certainly influenced Freud (whether he acknowledged it or not). Without psychoanalysis however, Nietzsche's very criterion of 'value for life' would have found no other exegesis at the scientific, clinical, or phenomenological level: our interpretations would have to remain at the level of 'the will to power' and its life-enhancing and/or life-negating effects. So, we must stay true to the dialogue being brokered, where the textual representations' value are judged by their ability to evoke deeply reparative urges within the audience, and which demand that the artist must also have worked through these urges in order to overcome his own depressive position as expressed in the play itself.

The Early Psychoanalytic Aesthetic apropos Klein and Bell:

The genealogical survey of the critical psychoanalytic interpretations of Greek tragedy so paramount to my project of investigating the extent to which our emotional-aesthetic engagement with the text of Greek tragedy is framed within a 'psycho-therapeutic', has already

⁵³ Schrift (1990) posits a transvalued text, which is distinct from any interpretation and yet remains nothing other than interpretation. We cannot, according to Schrift obtain the 'right' text and our only access to the text is through interpretation. With no criterion of correctness or accuracy of reproduction of some originary, univocal meaning, we are left with interpretive pluralism playing between the poles of perspectivism and philology as 'reading well', which have been highlighted as the poles between which this thesis' attempts at interpretation are conducted.

been conducted. However, there are at least two such interpretations which offer a standard approach to the technical application of psychoanalytic theory to the *Oresteia* (Aeschylus) and the *Bacchae* (Euripides), written by Melanie Klein and David Bell respectively. Serving to highlight the key points of psychoanalytic theory which previous pioneering thinkers have interpreted from ancient literary works, the following synopses, will assist in distinguishing my own unique contribution to this tradition of psychoanalytic aesthetics. In ‘Some Reflections on ‘The Oresteia’ (1963), after re-articulating her metapsychological theory of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions, Klein deals with the Hellenic prohibition of ‘hubris’, using Gilbert Murray’s definition and thus providing a useful prototype for the Kleinian interpretation of Greek tragedy:

“the typical sin which all things, so far as they have life, commit... 'insolence' or 'pride'... Hubris grasps at more, bursts bounds and breaks the order; it is followed by Dike, Justice, which re-establishes them. This rhythm – Hubris-Dike, Pride and its fall, Sin and Chastisement – is the commonest burden of those philosophical lyrics which are characteristic of Greek tragedy” (Klein, 1963, p.280).

For Klein, hubris is based on the dangerous emotions of greed and envy. Greed, for Murray is connected to ‘Moira’, or “the portion allotted to each man by the gods” (ibid.). When men commit hubris and overstep their Moira, punishment from the gods is both expected and feared. Since, according to Klein, “greed and envy are first of all experienced towards the mother who is felt to be injured by these emotions and who by projection turns in the child’s mind into a greedy and resentful figure” (ibid.), it is the mother who is feared as the source of all punishment or “the prototype of God”(ibid.). Hubris, Klein says, is “closely bound up with envy of the possessions of others” (ibid.), which lead *via* projection, to the persecutory fear that “others will envy and destroy one’s own achievements or possessions” (ibid.). Going further still, Klein says that all the early emotions experienced “in connection with parents and siblings form part of hubris” (ibid.), including triumph, hate and sadistic pleasure in their destruction, “because they have been envied” (ibid.). Now, when the infant is dominated by these “hostile impulses” (ibid.) and, internally at least, “destroys the mother’s goodness and love” (ibid. p.281), not only does the mother become persecutory within the infant’s mind, but the infant begins to feel the full omnipotence of guilt and loss: “he becomes responsible for all troubles or illness

which befall his parents. This leads to a constant fear of loss which increases persecutory anxiety and underlies the fear of punishment for hubris” (ibid.). Klein’s understanding of hubris intelligently weaves the Hellenic notion into her picture of infantile emotional life.

In her interpretation of the *Oresteia*, Klein distinguishes Orestes’ guilt for the murder of his mother, as the reason why “in the end Athena is able to help him” (ibid. p.283), indicating that, “hubris and its concomitants were not excessive in him” (ibid.). He feels remorse and horror, and this bad conscience Klein finds symbolized and personified by the Furies who persecute him, making “no allowance for the fact that he was commanded to commit the murder” (ibid. p.287). This further reiterates the “unforgiving nature of the super-ego, and the persecutory anxieties it arouses” (ibid.). No one but Orestes however, sees the Furies and this, again for Klein, proves that “this persecutory situation is an internal one” (ibid. p.283). Apollo’s command at Delphi, that Orestes must kill his mother is interpreted by Klein as one representation of Orestes’ “own cruelty and vengeful... destructiveness” (ibid.), yet “envy and the need to triumph, appear not to be dominant in him” (ibid.). This leads Klein to the conclusion that Orestes’ suffering, following his act of matricide, represents persecutory anxiety and the feelings of guilt, which she takes to be: “characteristic of the transition between the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive position, a stage when guilt is essentially experienced as persecution” (ibid. p.286). Orestes is then thought, by Klein, to reach the depressive position and work through it, during his ‘changed demeanour’ at the Areopagus, when his “guilt becomes predominant and persecution diminishes” (ibid.). It is his drive to reparation, “to cleanse himself of his crime and to return to his people... to govern in a benevolent way” (ibid.), which characterise Orestes’ “overcoming of the depressive position” (ibid.). Orestes’ emotional relationship to his sister Electra together with his “hopefulness in spite of suffering” (ibid.), his attitude and his gratitude toward the Gods, all suggest to Klein that, “his internalization of a good object was relatively stable and a basis for normal development had been laid” (ibid.). The internalization of objects simultaneously felt to be, “dead and active within the self in good... or bad ways” (ibid. p.288), links with the Hellenic belief that the dead do not disappear but “continue a kind of shadowy

existence in Hades and exert an influence on those who are left alive” (ibid.). They are ghosts “driven to persecute the living because they can find no peace until they are avenged” (ibid.). This link provides a useful context for the punishing superego aspect of ‘The Oresteia’ that Klein finds so predominant and which has a conceptual affinity with the psychoanalytic theory of mourning.

Klein appreciated Aeschylus’ proto-psychoanalytic presentation of human development, “from its roots to its most advanced levels” (ibid. p.298). She also found that the way in which he attributed the variety of symbolic roles to the gods expressed: “the diverse and often conflicting, impulses and phantasies which exist in the unconscious and which ultimately derive from the polarity of the life and death instincts in their changing states of fusion” (ibid.). In conclusion Klein praises Aeschylus as a great poet, capable of making full use of his symbols by virtue of his “intuitive understanding of the inexhaustible depth of the unconscious and the ways in which this understanding influences the characters and situations he creates” (ibid, p.299). Klein prized these symbols for serving to express the fundamental conflicts “between love and hate... destructiveness and reparation... life and death instincts” (ibid.), and for approaching what she called ‘universal form’. Now we come close to Klein’s most authoritative statement regarding true art, when she explains how Aeschylus condenses the “variety of infantile symbols, while drawing on the full force of emotions and fantasies which are expressed in them” (ibid.). His ability to transfer even just some of these ‘universal symbols’ into “the creation of his characters, and at the same time to make them into real people” (ibid.), is one of the aspects of Aeschylus’ greatness, which Klein admired the most because of the richness of meaning it contributed to his plays.

Although this is one of the only original Kleinian interpretations of Greek tragedy, and it deals with the earliest tragedian’s works, what Klein interprets from Aeschylus’ Oresteia trilogy provides a necessary starting point for any contemporary Kleinian interpretation of one of Aeschylus’ successor’s works. We take from Klein’s notes on ‘The Oresteia’, a sensitivity to the

intrapsychic parallels between the Hellenic notions of 'hubris' and 'moira', and the psychoanalytic notions of 'greed', 'envy', 'guilt', 'loss' and the 'projective and introjective persecutory fears', thought to dominate the infantile situation, and lay the foundation for all future object relationships. Klein also draws on the punishing super-ego motif, to demonstrate the full extent of Orestes' sadomasochistic subjectivity, mirroring the discoveries from her work with psychotic and non-psychotic infants and adults. This brief excursus into the Kleinian interpretation of Aeschylean drama stands in dialogue with the psychoanalytic interpretation of Euripidean drama being forged in this thesis. The relevance of such a commentary, for my own project, is strengthened by both its explanatory power and the sheer dearth of such published source materials.

David Bell, in his paper 'Psychoanalytic Perspectives on the Dionysiac and Apollonian in Euripides' *Bacchae*' (2007), offers a broader and more comprehensive brush stroke to the 'standard' Kleinian interpretation of Greek tragedy, and deals in the most palpable way with: the return of the repressed, splitting and the projection of aspects of the self. Bell claims that psychoanalysis has a Janus-like, dual quality that is central to its purpose of looking both "inwards to the workings of the mind and outwards to culture and society" (Bell, 2007, p.226). This is what makes the application of psychoanalytic thinking to the cultural productions of the mind, such as tragedy, and our aesthetic response to it, so boundless and fascinating: it gives us an insight into ourselves and where we come from. For Bell, the paradox and irresolution of the Dionysiac and Apollinian 'lure' is present in both the practice of psychoanalysis and in Euripides' *Bacchae*: however, Freud's understanding of aesthetics did not stretch to the point of including the Dionysian and Apollinian as aesthetic impulses, *per se*. According to Bell, in expressing either certain "core features... heavily laden with emotion and... conflict" (ibid, p.229), or "universal elements of our infantile lives" (ibid.), Freud's account rests solely on the content of the work of art. As a result, it has very "little to say about aesthetic depth, and... cannot distinguish between great art and lesser works" (ibid.). Clearly, for Bell, and the Kleinian camp in general: "Great literature does more than purely give expression

to man's conflicts" (ibid.).

According to Bell's colleague, Hanna Segal, the artistic work represents both an expression and sublimation of the artist's confrontation with the truthfulness of his own inner shattered world: the audience are gripped by an identification with the characters, as well as the author's crusade "to give this struggle form in the work of art" (ibid.). Accordingly, the work of art "offers the possibility of accepting deep truths which, even if unpleasant in themselves, still provide that profound form of reassurance that derives from the feelings of integration it brings"

(ibid.). These truths are offered in a form that Bell says is often "only just bearable... especially... in Greek tragedy which is characterized by its directness and nakedness" (ibid.). Euripides' *The Bacchae* gives form, according to Bell's Kleinian reading, to the return of the repressed:

"desire/passion, represented by Dionysus at the gate demanding entry to the city. Pentheus... gives form to a rigid ego that cannot admit desire" (ibid.). Bell adds complexity to his reading into the projection of forbidden desires, by considering the play at the level of "splitting and the projection of aspects of the self" (ibid, p.231). Each part of the self, under this reading, "is presented in stark un-attenuated form... cannot join together... but against each other. Each demands dominion of the world" (ibid, p.232).

We take note from Bell's Kleinian interpretation of the *Bacchae* that we are dealing primarily with projected imagoes which represent aspects of one self, rather than treating individual characters as representations of autonomous psychologies. All the characters on the stage of Greek tragedy, even including the Chorus and mute participants, represent, according to Kleinians, parts of one self, set against each other part and playing out the perennial and irresolvable agon between the forces of love and destruction which psychoanalysis has been unique in identifying at the psycho-biological level. Klein, Bell (and Segal) provide a brilliant starting point for the following interpretation of the *Alcestis*, although my approach differs to the extent that I actively seek to integrate Nietzsche's psychology into my formulations and actively question the possibility of authentic aesthetic reparation. There is also a rhythmic oscillation in my

observations between Klein, Freud and Nietzsche which illuminate and supplement each other in the process of interpretation rather than theoretically assimilating one of these to the other(s).

Towards a Sceptical-Psychoanalytic Reading of the Alcestis

The *Alcestis* is the oldest surviving (though not the earliest written) work of Euripides; produced at the Athenian City Dionysia festival in 438 BC and winning second prize. As the final part of a tetralogy normally reserved for a satyr-play, it is an exceptional play and remains open to criticism regarding its status within the genre. The other plays in the tetralogy were *Telephus*, *Creten Women* and *Alcmaeon in Psophis*. Parker says that, “There was no satyr-play” (Parker, 2007, p.xix), but regardless of its status I am interested in this drama because of the spectacular economy of punishment Euripides portrays in his engagement with the mythic themes of loss, pain, guilt and ‘death in life’. The *Alcestis* is not just about destruction but destructive urges twinned with life, and is therefore a very relevant source for the consideration of sadomasochism, in psychoanalytic terms. Nietzsche’s characterization of the ‘spectacular economy of punishment’ has descriptive value for this reading: that punishment in ancient societies was based on a ‘logic of equivalence’, between damage and pain (an eye-for-an-eye) emerging in the basic ‘creditor-debtor’ relationships and expressing the basic human instinct for cruelty. No deeds go unpunished in the human realm of the *Alcestis*, and that we are the agents of our own destruction and punishment is one of the strongest motifs in the drama.

Death and dying are mentioned in at least eight of the latter lines of Apollo’s prologue, and as the play begins, we are told that Death himself is approaching to take Alcestis to Hades. Death and Apollo begin an exchange and Apollo warns Death that a ‘man’ on an errand for Eurystheus (King of Tiryns) is on his way to wrestle Alcestis from him and prevent her entry into Hades. We later discover that this is no ordinary man at all, but the divine hero and demi-god, Heracles: Zeus and Alcmena’s son. Apollo’s prologue sets the context of his involvement with the action of the play, by explaining why he is such a true friend to Alcestis’ husband Admetus,

whose hospitality was legendary. The background to the tragedy is the myth that Apollo speaks of, where (his father) Zeus kills his own grandson Asclepius, and banishes his son Apollo from the night sky because he killed the Cyclopes (his brother from Coronis' side), for forging Zeus' fatal thunderbolts which killed his son Asclepius. The familial conflict and filicide contained in just this small portion of the prologue would indicate that the sadomasochistic is a strong theme in this play.

Admetus' fate is that he must die, but because of a 'shabby wrestler's trick', Apollo manages to get the Fates to agree to a surrogate. Alcestis volunteers to die for her husband Admetus because his parents refuse to. Admetus then experiences a painfully tragic realization that his own death would have been preferable, and appears transfixed in a state of pathological mourning. Alcestis is delivered to Admetus, at the conclusion of the play, by a devoted Heracles who is guided remotely by Apollo [*deus ex machina*]. However, she is returned mute and statuesque: mirroring both the physical statue Admetus erected in her absence, as well as the intrapsychic phenomenology of mourning, where hard, dead objects remain inside the mourner's ego until all cathexes and memories have been worked through, withdrawn, and re-directed. According to Lattimore's reading, "Admetus is merely the subject about whom these operations, of dying or refusing to die, revolve; his own character does not come into question" (ibid, p.2-1). Such a reading would be understandable, especially since Euripides gives Alcestis full honours at the beginning of the play, and she is, after all, "the centre of all memories throughout the play" (ibid, p.3). However, Admetus is a principle character, and he lets his wife die for him, making the theme of the drama (at least partially) about what manner of a man he must be, rather than only what manner of a woman his brave wife is. Hence, Admetus' character can and does come into question.

In order to demonstrate the sadomasochistic expressions in the *Alcestis*, I will limit my discussion to a selection of four scenes: (I) Alcestis' departure from the Living into Hades; (and several scenes from after the complication of the play) (II) (Alcestis' son) Eumelus' 'complaint' scene;

(III) (Admetus' father) Pheres' argument scene; (IV) Interior of the 'House' scene. The first scene involves Admetus and the maid, and comments on a theme that runs throughout the play: that is, Admetus' acceptance of 'emotional death in life' (197-198; 204). Such a compromise can be considered 'somasochistic', because it ultimately involves the death of Admetus' love object, as well as his own emotional death in life and the suffering obtained through his painful process of mourning. No matter how we look at it, the obligation of death must be obtained and none of Admetus' options (to die himself, and leave his family in ruin, or allow his wife to die, leaving his family in ruin) could lead to anything other than a somasochistic compromise. We are not led to question Admetus' decision: it had been made before the action begins. We are left to decipher the meaning of his reaction to the tragic situation he finds himself in. The translation being used corresponds to Murray's Oxford Text except line 50, 124, 223, 943, 1140, 115.

I) Alcestis' departure from the Living into Hades

The silence of the Thessalian palace becomes a matter of concern to the Chorus of Phraen citizens as they wonder whether the queen Alcestis "is dead/and therefore to be mourned?" (80-81). One citizen notices that there are no mourners tearing or hanging "locks of hair at the forecourts" (101) and says that "I can hear no beating of the hands of young women" (103-04), which reminds us of the first traditional and symbolic throes of grief that we read about in so many of the tragedies, and not just Euripides'. The 'beating of the hands of young women', in this connection, can only be assumed to be a reference to the beating of their own heads and breasts that was customary funerary practice in ancient Greece. The general consensus then, amongst the Chorus is that the palace would not be silent if Alcestis was dead, but her death is foreshadowed in Apollo's prologue, so we anticipate it nonetheless. This serves to add tragic effect, for we are perhaps already sympathetic to Admetus and his family, including his wife, thanks to Apollo's prologue. We find ourselves siding with Apollo and hoping for Heracleian success in his fight with Thanatos to save the Queen.

In unison, the Chorus reiterate the tragic fate of their queen, “her fate shows/steep and near. There is no god’s hearth/...could reach and by sacrifice/avail to save” (118-121); only Apollo’s son Asclepius “could have come/and left the dark chambers, /the gates of Hades. /He upraised those who were stricken/down” (124-128), but alas, Asclepius is dead. The Choral lament is broken by the entrance of a maid from the palace telling everyone that the Queen has been “felled... and the life is breaking from her now” (143), resulting in renewed hopelessness and affirmation of the strength of the queen’s “day of destiny” (148). At this point we read the first statement of Alcestis’ grace as she is hailed “the noblest woman underneath the sun, by far” (151), for her self-sacrifice. The paradox of this suicide being considered noble epitomizes the sadomasochistic compromise entailed in such an existential dilemma. This theme will be explored in more detail later, in relation to psychoanalytic theory.

The maid heightens the sense of tragic paradox in a monologue that demonstrates Euripides use of rhetoric, when she asks if any woman could “show that she loves her husband more/than herself better than by consent to die for him?” (154-155). Here, we are faced with the apparently socially endorsed notion that love is worth dying for, and that death is the highest expression of love. Eros and Thanatos are here intertwined, in a way that nods toward the Freudian understanding of their interrelationship as metapsychological concepts. Alcestis’ *charis* is also described in her reaction to her fateful realization: “she bathed her white body with water drawn/from running streams, then opened the cedar chest and took/her clothes out, and dressed in all her finery/and stood before the Spirit in the Hearth, and prayed” (159-162) for the health and prosperity of her family. Even as she approaches death, Alcestis is the very image of beauty. Euripides choice of so many natural elements in his treatment of Alcestis, surely speak to his conviction, and perhaps the expression of the collective conviction (of 5th century Athens at least), that such an end is beautiful, noble, natural, virtuous and worth celebrating? The ‘water’ from ‘running streams’, the ‘cedar chest’, her ‘finery’ and the ‘Hearth’, as well as the “fresh sprays torn from living myrtle” (172), all colour Alcestis as a truly chthonic

feminine symbol in the play, and in her voluntary and graceful sacrifice she takes on the burden of her husband Admetus: dies for him, so that he may live.

Alcestis' death, therefore is not in vain and the tragedy is not so much contained in her death, but in her husband's allowing of it. This tragedy, of course, we were told by Apollo in the Prologue, is to be averted by Heracles, but one almost forgets this in following Euripides' rhetoric, and as readers we perform our elected function to identify with the characters and feel invested [cathected] in their progress and demise. "[...]she wept/not at all, made no outcry" (172-173), the maid tells us, and "The advancing doom/made no change in the colour and beauty of her face" (173-174). To avoid a completely idealized vision, Euripides has the maid include a description of Alcestis' private pain, which she reveals whilst throwing herself numerous times upon her marriage bed and clinging to her children in tears. By this time in the play, the whole house was crying "in sorrow for their mistress" (194). The maid says that the King, "in this escape/he will keep the pain. It will not ever go away" (197-198), and so the choice, to allow his wife to die for him, becomes the tragic focus of attention. Admetus' self-inflicted grief can be understood as the sadomasochistic bargain he makes with himself for allowing Alcestis to go through with her sacrifice: if she must die, he will live no real life. Clearly, it is not an easy choice for Admetus but he cannot himself stop Death from taking her, and she is already "just an inert weight on the arm" (204). He chooses to live with the pain of letting her die, rather than face his own fate and death with nobility as, ironically, Alcestis appears willing to do in this play, further glorifying her image.

Twice, the Chorus (of Phraen men) reiterate what a loss it must be and what grief it must cause Admetus, "when such a wife goes" (228, cf. 200), reminding us again of the double grief Admetus must feel: both for his loss, and for being responsible for this loss. After graphically describing the suicidal lengths men would go to, to avoid such a threatened double-loss, the Chorus conclude that Admetus "must live a life/that will be no life for the rest of time" (241-242), for forsaking his "dearest of all" (231). Finally, Alcestis speaks in dialogue with her

husband: "Death is close to me. /The darkness creeps over my eyes. O Children, /my children, you have no mother now, /not any longer. /Daylight is yours, /my children. Look on it and be happy" (268-272). Even in her resignation, Alcestis is anything but bitter: she wishes only happiness for her family, which, although seeming paradoxical (for what happiness comes from loss?), could be counted (at least consciously) as her main motivation for her self-sacrifice: she wishes the family to live on with a father, her husband, whom she could not bear to live without. Admetus now laments: "Ah, a bitter word for me to hear, /heavier than any death of my own. /" (273-274); "There would be nothing left of me if you died. /All rests in you, our life, our not/having life. Your love is our worship" (278-280). It becomes clear that Alcestis' death is equivalent to a psychological death in Admetus, and this is so only because of the love he feels for her.

Life and Death also revolve around the figure of Alcestis, who now surmises her fate: "I put you first, and at the price of my own life/I made certain you would live and see the daylight. So/I die, who did not have to die, because of you" (282-284); "since I did not wish to live bereft of you/and with our children fatherless" (287-88); "For I must die.../...the horrible thing will come,/but now, at once. I shall be counted among the dead" (320-322). To which, Admetus promises his brave wife that he will "go into mourning.../...all my life while it lasts" (336-337), and "make an end/of revelry and entertainment... flowers and the music that were found here once. /... never touch the lutestrings ever again/nor have the heart to play... the flute/...for you took my joy in life with you" (342-347). All Alcestis can do to comfort her husband is to tell him that, "Time will soften it. The dead count for nothing at all" (381). Her eyes darken, and she tells him that "the heaviness comes" (385), but Admetus clings to her, fearing that he will be lost if she leaves. There is no use, however; she is not there anymore. Admetus cries out "No, lift your head up, do not leave your children thus" (387), and Alcestis departs from the living, saying goodbye to her children and to her husband: "There is nothing more" (390).

Psychoanalysis is apt to describe the process of mourning (as hard and heavy): Freud mentions

that the loss of the loved object can result in a dead, hard, and heavy object being carried in the psyche of the mourner. These dead, hard and heavy objects demand a great effort on the part of the host's ego personality. Besides the several references to heavy objects, and heaviness in relation to death and their obvious connection to the psychoanalytic theory of mourning, we are driven to compassion in this scene of the *Alcestis*. But what have we learnt? That the will to survive does not succeed without losses? Admetus' narcissism certainly triumphs, but not without a penalty: he must lose the one he loves dearest, and the one for whom his own life seems liveable. The lesson: temper narcissism lest it robs one of the things one cares most deeply about? There is an analogy here with the infamous narcissism of Orpheus, who also bereaves himself of his lover Eurydice, when he fails to temper his own greedy desire to look upon her face, and thereby imprisons her in Hades for breaking the magical pact of not looking back during his departure. More to the extreme is Narcissus himself, who by all accounts sacrifices his very existence to the narcissistic vanity he could not refuse to indulge, and to which we owe the contemporary meaning of the word. Freud's conception of narcissism is itself not completely removed from the myth of Narcissus, but it would be a misconception to say the modern usage of the term matches anywhere near Freud's depth of psychological meaning and significance in his usage of the term.

Whereas Alcestis' is considered a suicide of nobility, Admetus' is a suicide of vitality, best characterized by a kind of pathological mourning, bordering on melancholia as Freud describes it in 1917. If we use Nietzsche's terminology, Alcestis exacts her will to power over herself and her family, culminating in her physical death, whereas Admetus, having satisfied his unconscious will to power over his wife, now turns upon himself culminating in his own psychological death. Going back to Freudian metapsychology, we can also interpret this battle between life and death revolving around the figures of Alcestis and Admetus, as a representation of the fundamental interplay of Eros and Thanatos in the instinctual life of man.

II) Eumelus' 'complaint'

If Euripides' *Alkestis*, was meant to be about the tragedy of self-sacrifice and the power of Death over love and life, Alcestis' departure from the world of the living would surely represent the climax of the play, whether we take a psychoanalytic stance or not. Yet we see that the 'tragedy' is anything but over by this point in the play. Immediately after Alcestis dies, her son Eumelus reproaches her in the way only an abandoned child would:

"She was cruel and went away/and left me to live all alone" (396-397).

It is no coincidence that the word 'cruel' is used; Eumelus' complaint suggests that Alcestis' assertion of her own death (self-overcoming, self-destruction), is a component of what Nietzsche would call the most fundamental driving force behind human motivation: the 'will to power'. Kleinian metapsychology, which pays its dues to the more persecutory aspects of infantile psychosis, does a very good job in characterizing the dynamics between the mother-infant dyad, which are understood to be universally experienced. Klein explains that when mother is absent, the infant feels this as an attack, in the sense that it is a withdrawal of vital affection and love. Going deeper still, she also tries to show that originally the infant splits the mother imagoes into good and bad part-objects (breasts), projecting all the good aspects of the relationship (instinctual gratification, closeness etc.) into the good breast and all the bad aspects (withdrawal, frustration, etc.) into the bad breast. Such cyclical projections and introjections lead to an entirely persecutory internal world for the infant, whose introjected imagoes are feared to be in peril from all the sadism it has projected into them. As such, mere absence can be felt as a cruel attack, since during the paranoid- schizoid periods, the infant actually sadistically wills the annihilation of their part objects, which during the depressive phase, generates guilt and the need for reparation. It is almost as if Klein adds a dimension of phantasied reciprocity to Nietzsche's claims about the will to power: for Nietzsche, we hate, destroy and exert power ontologically and

this is to be affirmed not feared, but for Klein, we fear our self-destruction because of our ontological destructivity.

As pieces of unconscious phantasy, it doesn't matter whether Eumelus is speaking for himself, for Euripides or even for the reader: what matters is that in the Kleinian reading, we treat the material as a set of gestures in phantasy. Freud's approach to mourning is instructive to a point, but grounds only the larger scale assumptions about the way in which the ego is altered by incorporating a lost and dead object, and he tends to treat characters in literature as psychologically autonomous people, which of course, they are not according to Klein. Eumelus' grieving father, Admetus, has only to tell his son that:

“You and I/both have a hard and heavy load to carry now” (404-405),

This brings to the forefront of our minds what it is to mourn the loss of a loved one. The themes of abandonment, loss, cruelty and mourning come through strongly in this scene. Added to the pledge of emotional death in life made by Admetus in the earlier scene, it already becomes obvious that the *Alkestis* is rife with material which begs for psychological speculation. Eumelus, the child, reminds us that the mourning of loss is also a mourning of abandonment, which for the child, and adult, is always a mourning of one's own destructive wishes. At the paranoid-schizoid level, according to Kleinians, we all wish for the annihilation of our primary love objects, and fear our own annihilation lest those sadistic impulses succeed. This is because we carry these objects inside ourselves and whatever happens to them in reality happens to them on the inside too.

III) Pheres' argument

The next scene warranting our attention is the Pheres scene when Admetus meets his father, and what looks like the 'superego complex' begins. It is preceded by an interchange between a

reproachful Chorus: “Admetus, are you crazy? What are you thinking of/to entertain guests in a situation like this” (551-552), when Heracles visits him, and a defensible Admetus: “And if I had driven from my city and my house the guest and friend who came to me, would you have approved/of me more? Wrong. My misery would still have been/as great, and I should be inhospitable too, /and there would be one more misfortune added to those/I have” (553-558). Besides avoiding further hubris, Admetus quite naturally wants his friend inside the house with him, now vacant of Alcestis and void of all the love and life attached to her. The Chorus finally accept Admetus’ way of thinking, and their *peripeteia* is echoed in what they say about Admetus just before his father enters the scene. They find wisdom in his noble strain of “respect for others” (601) [*xenia*], and foretell a *peripeteia* in Admetus’ fortune, from his current state of despair to “good hope.../that for this godly man the end will be good” (604-605). The Chorus are saying: Admetus’ piety and hospitality, is suggested as the reason for this future reversal of bad fortune. However, the prophecy has yet to unfold, and it is unclear whether Admetus can be mended.

First, Admetus is seen to launch a vicious attack on his father, who like himself, was not willing to die: “you outpass the cowardice of all the world” (643); “And that she died, you foul wretch, proves your cowardice” (717); “That is an abject spirit, not a man’s” (722); “You will die in evil memory, when you die” (725). We can read these remarks made by Admetus as equally applicable to himself and they represent the persecutory projections of reproach and hatred initially vented sadistically onto the parental imagoes, which become internalized and redirected masochistically by the superego onto the ego itself. Admetus even mentions shame when he says: “How old age loses all the sense of shame” (727), but now Phereas retaliates more fiercely, and tells his son: “You murdered her and you can bury her. /...You’ll pay,” (730-31). It isn’t the case that Admetus is totally unaware of his own guilt, but in this scene, he either seems to be in denial about it, or simply raging against his father because he cannot cope with how much rage he feels toward himself. It is a critical moment in the play, in terms of Admetus’ tragic process of learning throughout the action, that only he is to blame for the downfall of his house. Admetus’ vicious

attacks on his father reflect the persecutory attacks of the paranoid-schizoid position, where guilt is primarily experienced as fear of persecution, and it is in the next scene, when Admetus truly gives way to his guilt. Perhaps because of the shame of his cowardice, he tries to disguise the true nature of his grief from his friend Heracles, who is himself one of the most courageous figures of Greek myth.

The debate, or *agon*, between Pheres and Admetus brings the latent issue, and central problematic at the heart of the play (i.e., Admetus' heavy guilt) to the surface. It is also interesting to note that until Admetus meets his father, he appears to be relatively guilt-less, although it is clearly dawning on him exactly what he has lost in refusing to die. The Father, for Freud, is the symbolic representation of the superego; the harsh and criticizing agency of the ego that reprimands it for failing to live up the impossible ideal. It is only in his confrontation with his father, after his attempts to project his guilt onto him have also failed, that Admetus is forced to admit his mistake and this is when his pathological suffering really begins. In the Freudian model, an ego, prior to the emergence of the superego may remain guiltless in its infantile object relations. Once the critical agency has been internalized *qua* the voice of the father, guilt and the need for reparation as Freud and Klein describe, really come to fore, and this is when neurotic suffering becomes possible as a conflict between the ego and its super!

IV) Interior of the 'House'

The final scene begging our attention is the 'Interior of the House Scene' after Alcestis has departed the living. Admetus' relationship with the interior of the house offers some insights into the Kleinian schema of projective identification and introjection. The inside of the house, becomes dangerous to Admetus after Alcestis dies. It is almost as if all the vengeance he felt and repressed towards Alcestis, being gratified in her death, left the inside of the house, which was typically the wife's domain, a threatening and persecuting place for Admetus. The analogy between the gates of Hades and the gates of the house, and Admetus' reluctance to enter

through these gates, also symbolize his fear of death: of entering Hades and of receiving his punishment:

Admetus:

“O builded house, how shall I enter you?
How live, with this turn
of my fortune? How different now and then.
Then it was with Pelian pine torches,
with marriage songs, that I entered my house,
with the hand of a sweet bride on my arm,
with loud rout of revelers following
to bless her who now is dead, and me,
for our high birth, for nobilities
from either side which were joined in us.
Now the bridal chorus has changed for a dirge,
and for white robes the costumed black
goes with me inside
to where her room stands deserted” (911-925).

The sweet reminiscence of their nuptial bliss only goes to enhance the starkness of Admetus’ loss. He cannot bear to be inside, where the memories of the one he destroyed only torture him further. Yet, he cannot bear to be outside where the joys of others also torture him: suggesting ultimately that it is inside Admetus’ own head, that his biggest trouble lies. Whether he goes inside, or outside, he cannot escape his own foolishly self-destructive choice. By this point in the play, he believes that he deserves this punishment and actively invokes it upon himself. Admetus:

“Friends, I believe my wife is happier than I
although I know she does not seem to be. For her,
there will be no more pain to touch her ever again.
She has her glory and is free from much distress.
But I, who should not be alive, who have passed by
my moment, shall lead a sorry life. I see it now.
How can I bear to go inside this house again?
Whom shall I speak to, who will speak to me, to give
me any pleasure in coming home? Where shall I turn?
The desolation in my house will drive me out
when I see my wife’s bed empty, when I see the chairs
she used to sit in, and all about the house the floor
unwashed and dirty, while the children at my knees
huddle and cry for their mother and the servants mourn
their mistress and remember what the house has lost.
So it will be at home, but if I go outside
meeting my married friends in Thessaly, the sight
of their wives will drive me back, for I cannot endure
to look at my wife’s agemates and the friends of her youth.
And anyone who hates me will say this of me:

“Look at the man, disgracefully alive, who dared not die, but like a coward gave his wife instead and so escaped death. Do you call him a man at all? He turns on his own parents, but he would not die himself.” Besides my troubles, they will speak about me thus. What have I gained by living, friends, when reputation, life, and action all are bad?”(935-961).

Here we find Admetus beginning to display the paranoid persecutory self-reproaches of the typical melancholic, which I think, given the reality of his culpability, establishes a preponderance of pathological mourning, over the process of normal mourning. Klein might see in this, the beginnings of the transition between the paranoid-schizoid and the depressive position.

However, the preponderance of persecutory anxiety over guilt very much keeps these expressions within the paranoid-schizoid spectrum. His guilt and urge toward reparation are still barely mentioned. The powerful ‘I, who should not be alive’, gives it all away, however, and it is difficult not to recognize the beginnings of a guilt complex forming in these remarks. His projections of disgrace, cowardice and reproach toward himself are tell-tale signs that Admetus lives now in dire conflict with his decision to allow his wife to die in his stead. There is nothing he can do but further punish himself for his mistake. One can only assume that in his economy of punishment, Admetus gleams at least some hope of redemption. Why else do we punish ourselves, if not to make good, for the damage we have done? Klein would say ‘first guilt, then reparation’.

Mourning for Always

The struggle between life and death, or love and hate also surrounds Admetus’ mourning and his painful learning within the tragedy. When we read Freud, in 1917, describing the clinical presentation of melancholia and distinguishing both normal and pathological mourning from it, we find that psychoanalytic understanding matches up very closely to Euripides’, who has Admetus express many of the elements psychoanalysis has identified as being central to both mourning and melancholia. Whereas mourning is typically a normal reaction to loss, Admetus is actually complicit in his loss: he, on some level, allows Alcestis to die and on that account suffers

intensely from his guilt. Admetus' suffering can therefore be seen as a neurotic, self-inflicted suffering, which becomes pathological. Admetus' reaction to his wife's death is also characterized by "a profoundly painful depression... loss of interest in the outside world, loss of the ability to love... inhibition of any kind of performance and a reduction in the sense of self, expressed in the self-recrimination and self-directed insults, intensifying into the delusory expectation of punishment" (Freud, 1917, p.204). Within the logic of the play, Admetus' *hamartia* (in allowing his wife to die in his stead), was bound to result in some form of punishment, which can be seen in the tragic process of his painful learning.

Freud says that in normal mourning, the disorder of self-esteem is absent, yet we certainly see elements of this disorder in Admetus' character, when he contemplates what others will say about him: he essentially reproaches himself, and it is the sadistic agent of conscience that launches this attack, which is nonetheless enjoyed masochistically. In 'serious mourning', Freud identifies "the loss of ability to choose any new love-object... replacing the mourned one [and the] turning away from any task that is not related to the memory of the deceased... inhibition and restriction of the ego is a manifestation of exclusive devotion to mourning, leaving nothing over for other interests and intentions" (ibid.). In his refusal to accept the 'anonymous' bride from his friend Heracles, despite the irony of it actually being his mute wife, along with his ordaining a yearlong funeral, Admetus certainly demonstrates Freud's picture of a devotion to mourning, but with his self-reproaches Admetus' clinical profile seems to approach the more pathological melancholia: "The patient describes his ego to us as being worthless, incapable of functioning and morally reprehensible, he is filled with self-reproach, he levels insults against himself and expects ostracism and punishment. He abases himself before everyone else, he feels sorry for those close to him for being connected to such an unworthy person" (ibid, p.206). Much like in the logic of the tragedy, Freud also recognizes that it would be useless to contradict such a patient: "In all likelihood he must in some way be right, and... describing a state of affairs as it appears to him... He really is apathetic, as incapable of love and achievement as he says he is. But... it is the consequence of the internal work, unknown to us and comparable to

mourning, that is devouring his ego” (ibid.).

The contradiction in this is that mourning involves a loss of an object, whereas melancholia suggests a loss of the ego: yet if the internal work of melancholia is ‘comparable to mourning’, the ego must necessarily become an object or take the place of the object that has been lost. Freud solves this with the superego: “how one part of the ego presents itself to the other, critically assesses it and, so to speak, takes it as its object... commonly called conscience... [which] can become ill on its own account” (ibid, p.207). Melancholia, for Freud, stresses the moral aspect of the super-ego’s disapproval of the ego, however, with slight modifications the self-reproaches of the melancholic can be “adapted to another person whom the patient loves, has loved or is supposed to love” (ibid, p.208). Here lies the key to the clinical picture of melancholia, which, if attributable in any way to the character of Admetus, has significance for our psychoanalysis of his actions. Freud sees self-reproaches as: “accusations against a love-object which have... transferred themselves to the patient’s own ego... laments [Klagen] are accusations [Anklagen], in the old sense of the German word; they are not ashamed, they do not conceal themselves, because everything disparaging that they express about themselves is basically being said about someone else” (ibid, p.208).

Interpreting both a strong fixation to Alcestis, and a conflict of ambivalence in regard to his attachment to her, Admetus’ suffering characterises narcissistic illness as Freud describes it. In Freud’s view, a narcissistic object-cathexis, when encountering difficulties, as in the threat or actuality of loss, regresses to primary narcissism, and a narcissistic identification with the object replaces the ‘love-investment’. This has the curious result that, “the love relationship, despite the conflict with the loved one, must not be abandoned” (ibid.). It is this substitution of identification with the object, for object-love that Freud identifies as being “a significant mechanism for the narcissistic illnesses” (ibid.), and as corresponding to “the regression of a type of object-choice to original narcissism” (ibid.). Identification, for Freud then, is a primary step in the adventure toward object-choice, and it is essentially ambivalent in its selection of

objects: “It may assimilate this object, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libido development, may do so by eating it” (ibid, p.210).

Going back to Admetus, since he has lost Alcestis, the ambivalence of his love-relationship comes to the fore and becomes manifest in his self-reproaches, which Freud tells us, in the case of the obsessive neurotic, centre upon having been “oneself responsible for the loss of the love-object, of having wanted that loss” (ibid, pp.210-11). It is only when this predisposition to obsessive neurosis is present that mourning becomes pathological. The only clue that Admetus is expressing elements of pathological mourning and not melancholia is that we know his loss, and his culpability to be real. Alcestis did die because of him, whether she comes back or not, there is a real loss, but his narcissistic illness, allowing him to loosen his libidinal ties with Alcestis, along with what Freud describes as obsessive neurotic self-reproaches after her death, compel Admetus to suffer the way he does. As Freud puts it: “If the love of the object, which cannot be abandoned while the object itself is abandoned, has fled into narcissistic identification, hatred goes to work on the substitute object, insulting it, humiliating it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from that suffering. The indubitably pleasurable self-torment of melancholia, like the corresponding phenomenon of obsessive neurosis, signifies the satisfaction of tendencies of sadism and hatred, which are applied to an object and thus turned back against the patient’s own person.” (ibid, p.211)

This ties in Klein’s thinking around orality: however, this will be discussed in more detail in relation to the next two plays. So, Admetus avenges himself upon Alcestis *via* his own ego, now narcissistically identified with her, through a process of masochistic self-punishment and self-torment, thus satisfying his original sadistic wish against her, masochistically. As Freud says, the path to illness is taken only “in order to avoid showing... [his] hostility directly” (ibid.), so the narcissistic identification represents a regression driven by the conflict of ambivalence, toward sadism. Interestingly enough, this sadism, Freud says “solves the mystery of the inclination to suicide which makes melancholia both so interesting and so dangerous” (ibid.), offering an

additional insight into Alcestis' plight. No neurotic, Freud tells us, who harbours suicidal wishes, has not turned an originally sadistic death-wish toward another, back upon themselves, but this does not explain how such an intention could be transformed into an action. This is where Freud's analysis of melancholia reminds us that the ego can only kill itself "when it is able to treat itself as an object because of the [narcissistic] return of object-investment, if it is able to direct the hostility that applies to the [original] object back against itself" (ibid.). Thus, according to this interpretation, Alcestis also regresses from a narcissistic object-choice to narcissism, and in her case the object being her own ego, is abolished: her narcissism proved stronger than her ego.

Alcestis' suffering looks more melancholic; we can decipher a struggle between her love for Admetus, her desire to maintain her libido position toward him, and her hatred for him, which wants to liberate her cathexis to him, upon hearing his fate was to die. This conflict of ambivalence takes place unconsciously, i.e. is repressed, according to Freud "until the characteristic outcome of melancholia has been reached" (ibid, p.216). We see this movement, from the unconscious conflict of ambivalence, where her love and hate fight for possession of her love-object, when Alcestis is throwing herself upon her bed and wailing. The Maid, in her first monologue tells us of Alcestis' private pain: "But then, in their room, she threw herself upon the bed, /and there she did cry, there she spoke: "O marriage bed, /it was here that I undressed my maidenhood and gave/myself up to this husband for whose sake I die" (175-178); "She fell on the bed and kissed it. All the coverings/were drenched in the unchecked outpouring of her tears; but after much crying, when all her tears were shed,/she rolled from the couch and walked away with eyes cast down,/began to leave the room, but then turned and turned again/to fling herself once more upon the bed" (183-188). Here, the threatened libido-cathexis returns to, "the place in the ego from which it had emerged" (ibid.): preserving her love for Admetus by killing herself, her ego. Admetus tries to preserve his love for the lost Alcestis, which we see when he tells his friend that she both is and is not dead: almost as if he is fighting, internally to keep her alive. His regression to narcissism culminates in such intense self-punishment that must

be relative in its strength to his original sadistic death-wish, and which blinds him ultimately to the potentially blissful denouement of the play: the presentation of his wife, back to him, by his friend Heracles, who has wrestled her from death. As so often in Euripidean drama, what appears to be a reward comes to very little, if anything at all. If it was so simple as to call this a happy ending, we could agree with all the arguments against *Alcestis* being considered a tragedy. However, based on the analysis undertaken here, sadomasochistic themes are central to the play, and we have psychoanalysis (with the help of Nietzsche) to thank for coming to this conclusion. In the bitter struggle against death that so centrally characterises the fate of human existence, the *Alcestis* epitomises an essentially tragic notion, and this is unquestionable in its categorical power.

The tragedy revolving around Admetus' character is that he must live on without the wife he foolishly allowed to die for him. His life is tragic whilst her death brings her glory. We learn, when Admetus tells Heracles that "some impulse of my love/makes" (1080) him, as Heracles calls it "mourn for always" (1079). Admetus tries to be honest with his friend and tells him "Her death destroyed me, even more than I can say" (1082), and that he "never shall be happy again" (1084), and "No woman ever shall sleep in my arms again" (1090). He made the extremely sadomasochistic compromise of living with the pain of allowing Alcestis to die in his place. The damage of her death was the equivalent to an emotional death in Admetus. Fate, over-determined in this connection, is merely a projection of the severity of Admetus' superego: "an intention to sacrifice something to Fate in order to ward off some other dreaded loss may also serve the purpose of defiance or self-punishment" (Freud, 1916, p.77).

The punishment motif

So, in allowing Alcestis to die for him, Admetus can be seen to be punishing himself, and this is intensified by his descent into obsessive mourning and refusal towards vitality that comes with this loss. It is as if, organically, Admetus needs to experience this tension with the necessity of his loving and less-loving bonds to Alcestis, whose misfortune dictates that she die, and which

are incredibly difficult for him to break after her death. Admetus' guilt is arguably the phenomenon that renders his character at once, the most tragic in the play, and so relevant to psychoanalysis and to modern readers who are, lest we forget, still beset by the same fundamental conflicts as Admetus. This changes to a mood of melancholic resignation involving Admetus' tragedy of guilt, *qua* our tragedy: we react, as Freud would say "as though by self-analysis" (Freud, 1917, p.331). We respond, as readers, by recognizing the same complexes within ourselves, as though we had "unveiled the will of the gods... as exalted disguises of [our]... own unconscious" (ibid.). Freud also imputes an authorial intention in this respect, when he discusses the power of the Oedipus motif, and understands Sophocles to be saying to his readers: "You are struggling in vain against your responsibility and are protesting in vain of what you have done in opposition to these criminal intentions. You are guilty, for you have not been able to destroy them; they still persist in you unconsciously" (ibid.).

Besides actually sounding like a psychological truth about the characters of both Alcestis and Admetus in Euripides' drama, it is only a small step to take this on board as a psychological truth for us as readers of the *Alcestis* and find it doubly enlightening for our project of finding some meaning therein. Freud assists in our [self-] analysis of Admetus' guilt, reminding us that: "Even if a man has repressed his evil impulses into the unconscious and would like to tell himself afterwards that he is not responsible for them, he is nevertheless bound to be aware of this responsibility as a sense of guilt whose basis is unknown to him" (ibid.). In the play, Admetus is at least partially unaware of his guilt and his unconscious impulses, which have been satisfied in his wife's death, until the Pheres scene, when he meets his father, and the superego motif kicks in. Of course, the guilt Freud is speaking of, is wholly derived from the castration anxieties of the Oedipus complex, which he believed we all fall victim to, thanks to our moral education and the restriction of our natural impulses that comes as a result of the development of civilisation.

Admetus' guilt and bad conscience make Klein's, as well as Nietzsche's thoughts on such matters equally relevant. Klein helps to establish the nature of the death wishes harboured towards loved

objects, and Nietzsche helps to show how a physical quantum of affect, can be turned inward as in the ascetic ideal. By an interesting twist of fate, Freud sees that nature, or Eros and Thanatos, uninhibited by the repressive force of civilization, ruins us “coldly, cruelly, relentlessly...through the very things that occasioned our satisfaction” (Freud, 1927, p.15), such as our love. In fact, he says that civilisation defends us against the potential ruin of unharnessed nature, i.e., unrestricted instinctual freedom. No one however, “is under the illusion that nature has [therefore] already been vanquished” (ibid.), and thus we start to appreciate the deeply significant position that the necessity of our instinctual longings and the guilt associated with their satisfaction holds in Freud’s metapsychology. Civilisation represents the Apollinian order, which protects us from the boundless Dionysian chaos that would ensue without any restriction on our basic instincts.

According to Freud, happiness comes with the sudden satisfaction of damned-up libido; is episodic by nature and cannot be prolonged without being reduced to a mild contentment. Our constitution demands that intense enjoyment can only be experienced through contrast, thus “our possibilities of happiness are already restricted” (ibid, pp.76-76). Unhappiness, pain and suffering, on the other hand, surround us from all sides, leading us to temper our claims to happiness: the pleasure-unpleasure principle is moderated by reality. Perhaps this is why a tragedy, so full of unhappiness, can actually generate a feeling that comes so close to happiness: by giving vent to a swamp of emotion that might otherwise remain repressed, and liberating the libido it had damned up, for creative and reparative use.

What brings the *Alcestis qua* tragedy into question is the fact that at the apparently ‘happy’ end of his play, Euripides has Heracles return Alcestis to an almost delirious Admetus. Yet, he does this in such a way as to leave a suspicion in the mind of the reader that Admetus is hallucinating, or that Heracles is playing some cruel trick on his friend, perhaps to pay Admetus back for earlier disguising the true nature of his and his house’s mourning. Initially, Admetus refuses to take Heracles’ prized woman and remains faithful to his departing promise to Alcestis. In order to receive his wife back into his arms however, Admetus must essentially betray Alcestis, in her

presence. He does so, and receives a statuesque Alcestis; now mute for three nights “until/her obligations to the gods below are washed away” (1144-1146). Her silence only contributes to our confusion, but since the stage directions indicate that Admetus takes ‘Alcestis by the hand and leads her inside the house’, we can assume that our suspicions of trickery or hallucination are false. The audience must wonder why Heracles waited so long to inform the hopeless Admetus that the ‘prize’ he says he won for Admetus is Alcestis herself. We were already aware that Heracles was due to save Alcestis, but by now have been lured into a false sense of insecurity by Euripides, as he has Heracles spend a large portion of the text trying to convince Admetus to take, an otherwise anonymous female, who he does not, until almost the last line of the play, actually identify as Alcestis. I can only assume that this last piece of poetic deception of Euripides’ was designed to prolong the tragedy of self-torment and one could argue this treatment reminds us that his mastery of the craft was impeccable. Of course, were we watching this play being performed, there is a chance we may have been able to visually identify Alcestis, unless of course, she was veiled. Her presence, however, would only intensify our frustration and the anticipation that Admetus might be so blinded by his grief as to not even recognize his lost love had returned. The tragedy of mourning and loss, as well as Admetus’ painful learning, extends through to the last and offers some interesting insights for psychoanalytic investigators.

It would seem that Euripides ends on a poetic note, and stays true to what psychoanalysts understand to occur during the process of mourning. Alcestis’ mute and statuesque state is echoed earlier in the action when a bereaved Admetus erects a statue in her honour. The uncanny similarities between this and Freud’s comments on how the ego erects a dead, hard object, where a living, feeling one once stood, remind us that the *Alcestis* is first and foremost a play about loss. Once lost, a love object is forever lost: and the grieving psyche cannot return to that inner space where the object is alive: the whole process of mourning establishes the trend of letting go of libidinal attachments, to memories, places, objects. It certainly must have happened that we have all lost objects we loved, only to have them return, and I think, a closer inspection of the anxieties aroused by such ‘Fort-Da’ experiences offers a deeper meaning to this

final scene. What is safe to say is that from psychoanalysis, we know that the return of the loved object is no easy task for the young infant to navigate, emotionally.

Yet, Aristotle confirms that tragedy needn't end unhappily (cf. *Poetics*). The terror and desolation of abandonment can only be mediated by a healthy internalization of a good object, which demands the overcoming of depressive anxieties, associated with the stage of guilt for all the harm done to the loved object. Since Admetus, through to the last, remains within the paranoid-schizoid stage of persecutory anxiety, and does not fully accept his own guilt (preferring to blame his father and deny his equivalent culpability), we cannot say that he approaches the depressive position in quite the same way Klein sees Orestes as doing. At the end of the play, Admetus is literally still punishing himself, which shows a lack of the compassion necessary for his successful achievement of depressive guilt, and the activation of reparative urges depending on the internalization of a good object. Perhaps this, in an uncanny way, explains why Alcestis is mute and statuesque: Admetus cannot take her in, he is still too petrified by the consequences of further betraying his loyalty, and still too frightened of the memories. He cannot see Alcestis for what she is, because he is so overwhelmed with turmoil and can never forgive himself for what he has done. He is so committed to his own unhappiness, he fails to recognize the object of his self-inflicted misery had been undone: and on that account, his misery remains just that, a misery. For Admetus, it has not been undone, and nothing in the text indicates otherwise. However, he does take her and go inside the house, and one could argue that in this, the internalization of the good object has been commenced. The reparative urges and the approach toward the depressive position are indicated by his willingness to face his inner-shattered world, and to 'make-good' the damage he has done. As before, Admetus still has to die: perhaps now he will face it.

Discussion

Edwards (1824), following Monk's 1818 translation, provides a single corroborative source from the 19th Century, and points to:

“The pusillanimity of Admetus, and his ingratitude and insolence to his father are impressive of contempt for him personally, notwithstanding the great stress laid by the Chorus on the hospitableness of his disposition” (Edwards, 1824, p.7)

In his ‘Moral Inferences’ at the close of his translation, Edwards ventures:

“Hospitality is the mark of a noble mind, and has in many instances been crowned with the amplest reward...Many a one befriended in the hour of distress, has lived to do his benefactor an inestimable service...In prosperity Fortune ought to be feared because her smile is generally of short duration...In adversity it is better to hope than to despair, for, in cases even the most hopeless, relief has arisen...Often unexpectedly and by extraordinary means hath succour come to the distressed” (Ibid. p.80).

One would be hard pressed to miss these inferences even today. Edwards' translation, notably includes an acceptance of Alcestis, as Alcestis, by Admetus, and this final passage bears mention here as it seems to have been lost in the scholarship bar Edwards' text:

“Admetus [Addressing Alcestis with exstasy] O countenance, and person of my dearest wife, possess I thee beyond my hopes, when I thought never to see thee more? [Alcestis answers with a gentle nod of the head]” (1152-1153) (Edwards, 1824, p.79)

This uncertain, happy ending to the play has contributed to 20th Century literary interpretations of the *Alkestis* having “always been a critics battlefield” (Wilson, 1968, p.1). Wilson is perhaps

the only classicist in agreement with myself that “Alcestis looks forward to those other heroines Makaria in the Heracleidae, Polyxena in Hekabe...all of whom show the same brittle purity of self-sacrifice” (ibid. p.3). Trammell, in an essay on Alcestis’ muteness in Wilson’s edited collection of critical essays, convinces the reader that Alcestis’ “silence...means something” (Trammell, 1968, p.85), but lacking a psychoanalytic perspective on mourning, the best literary criticism can conclude is that Alcestis’ three-day muteness is “a clever and ingenious invention to glorify her resurrection amidst the stillness of the tomb” (ibid, p.91). Charles Segal, (1993) sees Euripides’ almost obsessional treatment of female destructiveness and sacrifice as a rhetorical device, actively questioning the traditional notions of heroism, but again, lacking in any depth psychological knowledge, these literary interpretations do little to illuminate in any meaningful depth, the paradoxes and sublimations at play.

When we look at the *Alcestis* with an informed Kleinian perspective there is no escaping the sadomasochistic dynamics. Admetus’ most tragic contribution to the meaning of the play is that he allows his wife to die in surrogate for himself, thinking that will save him from death: only to realise that life without Alcestis is more painful than death itself. He is guilty of bringing destruction upon himself, he is responsible for his wife’s death, and he must suffer a doubling of grief for that fact. Despite the *Alcestis* somewhat departing from the traditional expectations of a tragedy, when we view the play in psychoanalytic terms and with the narration of affect as our focus, there is an indisputable wealth of destructive material disguised in the pieces of fantasy being played out. Psychoanalysis has explanatory power in that it takes a phenomenon, such as mourning, and interprets it in a psychoanalytic way. This doesn’t mean that mourning can’t be explained without this reference to dead, hard or heavy objects, but that looking at mourning as involving dead, hard or heavy objects adds a dimension of depth to our understanding and interpretation of the process. Ultimately you have to be committed to the psychoanalytic perspective, but as a consciously palliative discipline, the value of this perspective for life seems palpable. Hence, finding Euripides describing death and mourning with reference to heaviness and hard, statuesque figures being erected, warrants a deeper appreciation of the similarities

between the science of psychoanalysis and the ancient Greek tragic literary tradition.

Nietzsche's 'spectacular economy of punishment' expressed as a 'logic of equivalence' in ancient times, between damage and pain, seems perfectly fitting with the levels of cruelty we find in the *Alcestis*. In allowing Alcestis to die for him, Admetus can be seen to be punishing himself and this is intensified by his descent into obsessive mourning and refusal towards vitality that comes with this loss. The pain he feels is equivalent to the damage he has done, and it will last for as long as he shall live. As readers we experience at an aesthetic level, our own cruelty and vengeful destructiveness, which even if unpleasant, provides the 'feeling of integration' and the 'profound form of reassurance' that Segal talks of. Formalising cruelty within an aesthetic object makes it more bearable.

Euripides was a great poet with an intuitive grasp of the inexhaustible depth of the unconscious such as Klein attributed to Aeschylus. Admetus' journey of tragic learning does map roughly onto the Kleinian presentation of paranoid-schizoid and depressive states of mind. The gods Apollo and Death as well as the demi-god and hero Heracles express "the diverse and often conflicting, impulses and phantasies which exist in the unconscious and which ultimately derive from the polarity of the life and death instincts in their changing states of fusion" (Klein, 1963, p.298). The symbols expressing fundamental conflicts between the instincts of love, hate, destructiveness, reparation, life and death, all seem to be present in the *Alcestis*. Indeed, they even approach Klein's 'universal form' whereby the condensation of infantile symbols combined with "the full force of the emotions and fantasies which are expressed in them" (ibid.) are successfully transferred into the characters, making them "real people" (ibid.). This transfer of the poet's own negotiation of the infantile struggle, into the struggle of the play is the only prerequisite for our own enjoyment and potentially reparative enjoyment of the work that I am arguing for in this thesis.

Authentic artistic work represents both an expression and sublimation of the artist's struggle

with the truthfulness of his own inner shattered world: the audience are gripped by an identification with the characters and the author's struggle "to give this struggle form in the work of art" (ibid.). If we are gripped, like so many people, by the struggles portrayed in Greek tragedy, we can interpret this as evidence for the activation of deeply unconscious instinctual longings, much like those discussed in this interpretation of the *Alkestis*. Whether such activations lead to genuinely authentic, or merely manic reparations would be a subsequent issue to explore. The slight removal from clinical to aesthetic realms, vindicates the consideration that aesthetic reparation is more of a rehearsal, a re-living, or a *nacherleben* of reparation proper, which would demand the engagement of 'real life', rather than 'imagined-life', provided a distinction can be made between the two. If however, real life as we know it, cannot be understood as anything other than imagined, such as a sceptical-subjectivist epistemology demands, then the question of whether the reparations engendered by these plays are authentic or manic begins to find grounds for exploration in favour of the former.

It would seem as though the *Alkestis* and the *Heracleidae* deal with similar material around the sacrificial heroine. However, my reading of the *Alkestis* is concentrated more on elaborating the tragic paradox involved in Admetus' sadomasochistic choice, the punishment motif, pathological mourning, loss, pain and guilt revolving mostly around the figure of Admetus. The link I have detected between the *Alkestis* and the *Heracleidae* centres around the feminine mythologem, which in the *Alkestis* is predominantly chthonic, she gives her life, and in the *Heracleidae*, is more explicitly fragmented into both giver (Macaria), and taker (Demeter, and Alcmene) of life. A final, almost throwaway remark in the *Heracleidae* confirms a thematic link with the *Hecuba* (whose Polyxena also fits the sacrificial heroine motif) around the phantasy of the devouring mother, which bears a closer analysis.

**CHAPTER VII: DOGS, DEATH & THE PHANTASY OF THE DEVOURING
MOTHER IN EURIPIDES' *HERACLEIDEI* & *HECUBA***

I) *The Charmed and the Cheated Hopes of the Heracleidae:*

Euripides' *Heracleidae*, was first produced around 430 or 429 B.C. It tells the plight of the sons of Heracles, who have been moving from place to place, fleeing the persecution of their father's enemy Eurystheus, king of Argos. Perseus is Heracles' great-grandfather, and Eurystheus' grandfather, so they are related genealogically, confirming a blood tie, which appears to be strained in the play. Arriving in Athens, the fugitive Heracleidae and their guide Iolaus finally find refuge but must sacrifice a daughter of noble birth to Demeter, in order to secure a military victory. Eurystheus encounters an opposition from the Athenians that becomes fate changing for all the *dramatis personae* in the play.

Euripides' version of the myth is not without its complications, however. The religious, social and military context of the tragedy has great importance, "for the presentation of mythical human sacrifice before a battle and for the institution of the enemy hero"⁵⁴ (Wilkins, 1993, p.xxii). Wilkins cannot account for the scholarly "lack of any reference to the sacrifice of the daughter... and secondly the acquiescence of the chorus in the killing of Eurystheus at 1053" (ibid, p.xxvii), when he is thrown to the dogs by Alcmene, Heracles mother. There is a severe dearth of literature on the play. As always, literary criticism points toward some but not all aspects of the play, which might have grounds for exploration through the psychoanalytic lens. Once again, the goal of this interpretation is to establish some measure of value for the consideration of elements within the play, which could be argued to have significance for psychological health, making Nietzsche's thoughts on value for life complementary to the psychoanalytic theories being employed to impart some deeper understanding of the dynamics at play within the tragedy. My theoretical stance is that we re-live every torture and joy of the

⁵⁴ Wilkins, J. (1993). Euripides: *Heracleidae*. Oxford: OUP

characters we unconsciously identify with when we engage with a literary text. Therein lies the significance and potentially reparative effect of reading such stories. They echo and manifest in distorted, disguised form, infantile sexual wishes associated with the Oedipus complex, which through a process analogous to dream-interpretation can be found to be meaningful, albeit through a rather complicated and circuitous path to discovery.

With this in mind, the relevant areas of the text, to be explored include the voluntary self-sacrifice of Heracles' daughter Macaria, and the nervous cruelty of Alcmene, who throws her son's tormentor to the dogs. Reference will be made to the idea of the segmentation of the mother/woman in Greek myth, focusing on the figures of the Mature Nurturing and Erotic Mature mother, which we can find in the text and which find support in the work of Ada Farber *Ph.D.* The image of the dogs in the final scene will be analysed as indicating a preponderance of the destructive impulses associated with the paranoid-schizoid position as conceived by Klein. The argument will be made that the *Heracleidae* provides ample opportunity for the *nacherleben* of early infantile phantasy life, and as a result takes its place within the corpus of Euripidean texts, which lend themselves to the possibility of arousing aesthetic reparation within their audience members.

The 'saviour-heroine' motif

In addition to being an innovation on the myth, the figure of the self-sacrificial heroine is something uniquely developed by Euripides. Macaria of the *Heracleidae*, is according to Wilkins "probably the prototype for the five other known self-sacrifice plays" (p.xx), and is consistent with what he calls the '*topos*' of self-sacrifice elaborated by Euripides in the *Alkestis*, the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, and in the *Hecuba*. This is a strong motif that begs for explanation, yet one that eludes a deterministic conclusion. To demonstrate the elusive nature of the self-sacrificial heroine, one could venture to interpret the figure from the immediate perspectives that come to bear on such an analysis. The first of these would be a feminist critique, which would surely interpret the

literary phenomenon as an example of the cultural impediment of women within ancient Greek culture. Going deeper, Euripides' self-sacrificing virgin Macaria somehow gives up the promise of sexuality and immortality for her brothers and this too echoes a dimension of sexual inequality that feminists would take issue with. The value of female life does come into question, but it does not go without saying that its value is therefore judged as less than the value of male life. The praise bestowed upon the brave and courageous Macaria hardly justifies her decision to die, but when we examine the text no justification is needed. Macaria finds herself caught between a Scylla of shame and a Charybdis of destitution. For she says:

“To keep on snivelling like this
At altars while we show to all the world
Our cowardice would admirably fit
Our father's name, or is it like the brave
To make fools of themselves?” [507-511]

The oracles had been sought and a noble daughter was to be sacrificed, but neither the Athenians nor Iolaus seem prepared to give up such a life. Only Macaria, who upon hearing the oracle says:

“how shall
I look when people ask why trembling slaves
Like us have come to ask protection there.
They'll turn us out and say they're not disposed
To lift a finger for such spineless things.
Why, even if I did survive the deaths
Of my brothers, I'd have no hope left.” [515-21]

Macaria's choice is between continued hardship in the face of impending military failure (for Demeter will not help in the battle without the blood of a virgin), and a *noblesse oblige* where she can actually assist in her family's success by giving up a life that would be no life at all were she to not give it up and lose her family anyway. Her preference is clear:

“To end things now is much to be
Preferred to that shame” [525-26].

Here we find the forces of life and death entangled around the figure of Macaria (literally translated from Greek as 'she who is Blessed'). She is courageous like her father and makes the only decision worth making. Hoping to finally charm the hopes of her family, and secure a

military victory in the battle between their Athenian protectors and Argive enemies, Macaria walks gracefully and honourably toward her death. She is thus held in the highest esteem as a 'saviour heroine' of Athens and the *Heracleidae*. As it turns out however, Macaria's talisman is foretold by Eurystheus to actually damn the descendants of the *Heracleidae* to the same persecution in the future. This is just one example of how Euripides writes to cheat and charm the hopes of his protagonists, drawing us into an oscillating rhythm between hope and despair. For we are the *Heracleidae*, we are Macaria, and we are also Demeter, at least according to my psychoanalytic reading.

The fragmentation of the feminine:

Demeter is the goddess named by the oracle prophesying the death of a noble daughter; she demands a virgin's blood for her co-operation in the military struggle. In effect, Athens acquires a temporary 'saviour', analogous to "other saviour-heroines in the city" (Wilkins, 1993, p.xxiv). These saviour heroines win with their lives, safety for the city in which they die. In cult, Wilkins tells us, these figures "cared for the city's warriors, particularly their young warriors" (ibid.). Demeter is a representative of the Mature Nurturing mother, according to Farber's (1975) classification of female roles in Greek myth. Freud deals with the segmentation of women in literature in his 1913 paper on the Theme of the Three Caskets. These segments include the erotic, nurturing and mature aspects, two of which often appear together, but rarely does Farber find a woman who embodies all three aspects in Greek myth (besides Penelope). This could be accounted for by the suggestion that myth is a polytheistic impulse to split up the universal and cosmic forces felt to impede on human existence into more manageable, distinguishable icons. However, there is another layer to this, which could be elaborated with reference to Klein's paranoid-schizoid position, where primitive fears and anxieties force the infantile subjectivity, to split and segment primarily the 'mother' into good and bad aspects. This too can be evidenced by even a cursory glance at any of the three great tragedians' work. 'Woman' is split: perhaps not only in the way Farber outlines, but also on a

more fundamental level, between her two aspects as giver and taker of life, and this we find more than once in the *Heracleidae* specifically, and in Greek tragedy more generally.

We can interpret evidence that Euripides is symbolizing his own experience of splitting the maternal imagoes with the figure of Macaria counterpoised to the figures of Demeter and Alcmena separately. In both instances, Macaria is the innocent, young virgin. Pure of courage and giver of life: she gives her own. Demeter and Alcmena both represent takers of life. According to Klein, 'mother' is always both giver and taker of life and it is the infant's struggle to tolerate this unity of the maternal imago that can propel it back into the schizoid mechanism of splitting. Farber states that the segmentation of mother in Greek myth, calls forth "feelings that are not in disharmony with the superego, whereas together they would be in conflict with it" (Farber, 1975, p.30). The mature, nurturing goddess "who is not erotic, may be safely loved since she does not bring to consciousness forbidden erotic feelings for the mother (Demeter)" (ibid, p.31). Farber contributes a piece of critical understanding, which becomes crucial for my own attempts to characterise these myths as 'diachronic narrative' about personalities in conflict and as narratives having the quality of symbolic representation. Her conclusion, with which I agree, that the frequently segmented form of female figures is evidence of the Oedipus complex at work in the ancient Greek psyche, seems sound enough. As disguised segments, "these females represent versions of the relationship with the mother which are acceptable because she cannot consciously be recognized" (ibid, p.47). As such we find strong support for the thesis that the figures of Demeter and Alcmena counterpoised with the figure of Macaria guarantees some oedipal investment with the story of the *Heracleidae*. With that, the promise for the aesthetic reparation of the psychic wounds from that infantile period, for both Euripides and his audience is again indicated.

Dogs & Death:

The death of Eurystheus at the hands of Alcmene at the end of the *Heracleidae*, once the battle has been fought and won by the Athenians brings us to consider one of the aspects of woman/mother that is indicated when Alcmene says:

“Take him away, and when you’ve killed him, throw (1050)
Him to the dogs, to scotch his last hope that
He can come back and exile me again”

Alcmene wants Eurystheus to pay for the hellish labours he imposed on her son Heracles, but this decision becomes hubris on her part for killing a prisoner of war, which goes against Greek military law. Eurystheus admits that he used Heracles to kill off his own enemies, confirming his own culpability, but whereas Eurystheus comes to some kind of eye-for-an-eye standard of justice, Alcmene’s vengeful action becomes self-destructive. Eurystheus foretells that his “death pollutes the one who strikes me down” (1011). “I’ll have blood for blood” (1015), he says, but Alcmene and the Chorus singularly ignore this prophecy and we are left with the image of the dogs devouring Eurystheus’ corpse. Wilkins (1995) mentions the acquiescence of the Chorus in the death of Eurystheus as an innovation by Euripides. Although it would seem to imply some sort of ‘social sanction’ to Alcmene’s hubris, this aspect of the final scene has distracted scholars from noticing a motif, which through a psychoanalytic lens invests far more symbolic meaning than Euripides’ innovation of Choral complicity ever could.

In what would otherwise appear to be the epitome of an abrupt ending, there is a slither of light beckoning our examination. Eugene Halpert, in his analysis of the Egyptian god Anubis (half man, half Jackal – the female ‘Anput’), who judges the dead, offers a rare insight into this motif with the thesis that “wherever the association between death and dogs arises (whether it be in myth... or individual fantasy), the dog represents the mother” (Halpert, 1980, p.391). In connection with death, be it in myth, religious or individual fantasy, dogs are “representative of early superego precursors” (ibid.). Halpert finds evidence of this unconscious association in Homer’s *Iliad*, where “the poet expressed the fear of being eaten by a dog after death in the

words of many of his characters” (ibid.). In this, Homer is thought to be giving voice “to a fantasy mutually shared by him and his audience” (ibid.).

Halpert is convincing in reminding us that symbolic representations of mother “contain contributions from all the developmental stages of childhood from oral to oedipal, but the earlier contributions are the most significant” (ibid, p.392). To that end, we can interpret all of the “rage, anxiety and longing engendered by the threatened loss of the maternal object... *via* repression, displacement and projection in the figure of the dog (or jackal)” (ibid.). Klein tells us that destructive impulses projected outwards by the young infant are “first experienced as oral aggression” (Klein, 1946, p.101). She says that, “oral-sadistic impulses towards the mother’s breast are active from the beginning of life” (ibid.). When Halpert describes the symbolic language of ‘mother’ in Greek tragedy as containing the echoes of earlier developmental life, we can turn to Kleinian metapsychology to really detail how this might be so in the *Heracleidae*.

Although Halpert doesn’t apply his insights to Greek tragedy *per se*, they fall well within the scope of the thesis at hand, where authentic art and authentic aesthetic ‘moment’ demand such a mutually shared phantasy between the artist and his audience. When Eurystheus is thrown to the devouring dogs by the vengeful Alcmene “the anxiety engendered by the threat of the loss of the object (one of the meanings of death)” (Halpert, 1980, p.391) incumbent upon “the wish to eat and be eaten by mother” (ibid.), is activated. It would be difficult to rule out the possibility that, as Halpert suggests, the devouring, vengeful dogs, appearing “in connexion with death, is a representative of early superego precursors” (ibid.), *via* an identification with the aggressor. The cannibalistic motifs so prevalent in the oral-sadistic phase of development, revolve mainly around the mother who at this stage of development is identified with as the source of aggression, although this as we have said is merely a denial of the ontological aggressiveness of the infant themselves. However, if we agree with the theory that the *dramatis personae* within a tragedy represent parts of the self, we would, according to the Kleinian approach to aesthetics,

relieve unconsciously our oral-sadistic impulses toward our own mothers at this concluding stage of the reading. According to my thesis, this is the only thing that can guarantee an authentic aesthetic pleasure, or reparation

We know that the earliest superego precursors are introjects of the first part objects about which the infant phantasises: primarily the good (nurturing, loving, protecting) breast, and the bad (devouring, destructive and persecuting) breast. The infant cannot help but feel frustration and hatred towards his earliest maternal imago of the breast when it is not available or does not provide the security the infant yearns for. As a result all the sadistic attacks projected onto this denying, frustrating breast, are felt to happen to the self-same object, which the infant has internalized. The status of the object in the outside world is echoed within the infant's mind and these internal objects become retaliatory, hence all the fear and anxiety that the breast has finally been defeated or destroyed. Concern for the safety of the good breast marks the transition from the persecutory paranoid-schizoid position – where splitting helps to manage the anxiety about the oneness of the mother as both good and bad – to the stage of depressive guilt. Now splitting is undone, and the need to make reparation becomes paramount in order to overcome the fear of annihilation consequent upon the earlier paranoid-schizoid mechanisms. This can only be achieved with a successful and robust internalization of a good maternal imago. We are talking about the super-ego precursors because the transition from blind fury and instinctual gratification, to actually objectifying one's objects and feeling concern for them, marks the beginning of the process of super-ego formation: that part of oneself that monitors all of our ethical actions and desires.

According to the Kleinian, (and Freudian) reading at the intra-psychic level, we have all experienced the anxiety of Eurystheus being thrown to the dogs that tear him to pieces. This is the moment where our own “oral sadistic and cannibalistic desires are reinforced” (Klein, 1946, p.101), and we felt as though we had, “taken in the nipple and the breast, in bits” (ibid.). At that moment in our development, we all feared being torn to bits by our internal imago of the bad

breast, as well as the loss of the good object (breast/mother). All that rage, anxiety and longing was so unbearable, that for the most part, it was repressed, and we do not feel it consciously. Like in the dream, what is repressed in the psyche finds expression through displacement and projection, and Halpert helps to establish this in relation to the figure of the dog, which is so cursorily mentioned by Euripides, one would almost take it to be insignificant. In this case, without the figure of the dogs, there would be very little to say about this play from a psychoanalytic perspective.

The images of the dogs give us the clue that unconsciously the oral-sadistic stage of ego-formation is indicated, and Klein says that, “The onset of the Depressive position is the juncture at which by regression schizoid mechanisms may be reinforced” (ibid, p.110). Since the “projection of a predominantly hostile inner world which is ruled by persecutory fears leads to the introjection... of a hostile world” (ibid, p.103), we can say that the death of Eurystheus, by the dogs, represents the internal situation which Klein describes as being the fate of all young infants before they have mastered their pre-oedipal impulses. The schizoid mechanism of “annihilation by one part of the self of the other parts” (ibid, p.109), seems a possible interpretation of Eurystheus’ death, when we consider Klein’s comment that the “anxieties and phantasies about inner destruction and ego disintegration bound up with this mechanism are projected on to the external world and underlie the delusions of its destruction” (ibid.). Of course, the external world in this case, would be the action of the play, but apart from that, it is plausible to map this on to Euripides’ stagecraft. According to Klein, the annihilation by one part of the ego (the devouring breast), of the other parts, “implies a preponderance of the destructive impulse over the libido” (ibid.).

We could argue that Euripides expresses a mutually shared struggle to overcome “paranoid dread of internalized persecutors” (Klein, 1935, p.149), and that this is something we identify with as readers unconsciously, reliving our own internal struggle with *paranoia persecutoria*. Yet, we are not left with an experience of the tragedy devoid of any depressive phenomena. Throughout the

whole play, we as readers have been easily lured into a positive identification with the Heracleidae. Underlying every sigh of relief and every thwarted hope has been a strong concern for the survival of these dispossessed fugitives. Euripides clearly favours the typically female underdog. Concern for the object and facing the realities of the threats to the object (including our own sadistic tendencies) are part of the phenomenology of the depressive position as described by Kleinians. So, we cannot rule out the possibility that Euripides is playing out the eternal *agon* between the forces of life (depressive position) and death (paranoid-schizoid position) through his tale of the Heracleidae and their oscillating fortune. Since Euripides ends on the powerful motif of the devouring dogs in connection to Alcmene, who has for the most part symbolised the figure of vengeful and devouring mother, we cannot say that Euripides truly masters the depressive position: he merely traces our regression back to the anxieties of the antecedent position of *paranoia persecutoria*.

Coming face-to-face with symbolic representations of our own oral-sadistic impulses, even unconsciously, as would surely be the case for most non-psychoanalytic readings of the *Heracleidae*, justifies my inclusion of this tragedy within this investigation. Rehearsing the struggle of infantile psychosis can still be reparative on an aesthetic level. 'Authentic' art according to the Kleinian aesthetic demands that the struggle and anxieties of the depressive position and its paranoid-schizoid concomitants, are to be present and worked through. These primitive psychological constellations are symbolically expressed by the artist (as evidence of them being active within their own psyche), and felt by the audience too in their aesthetic moment with the work. This is equivalent to saying that our enjoyment of, or prerogative even to read a literary text like a tragedy, stems from the active *nacherleben* of our early infantile life, which if it is an authentic work of art, is demanded of us in our reading alone.

To argue that if we feel pleasure or pain in response to a text, it is connected to our own infantile pleasure and pain in experiencing the tumults of splitting, projective identification and loss of the object, one would have to demonstrate that those intra-psychic happenings could be interpreted

from the text. It does not go without saying that the vexations of the depressive position are always thereby indicated. In the *Heracleidae*, it is at the very last moment we are given the image of the devouring dog in connection with the vengeful Alcmene and the death of Eurystheus, but without that, it would be incredibly difficult to make the comments that have been made in this relation. It is like the process of interpreting dreams, which does not always come to any 'sense'. Gratefully, the image of the dogs, and the work of Halpert assisted in forging a certain path of discovery, and the question regarding whether such textual encounters lead to any authentic reparation, can now at least be asked.

The image of the dogs in the final scene indicates a preponderance of the destructive impulses associated with the paranoid-schizoid position as conceived by Klein. The *Heracleidae*, according to this thesis, provides ample opportunity for the *nacherleben* of early infantile phantasy life, and as a result takes its place within the corpus of Euripidean texts, which lend themselves to the aesthetic arousal of authentically reparative symbols within their audience members. Supplemental evidence for this constellation of intrapsychic affects, (dogs, death, mother), is found in Euripides' *Hecuba*, which will now be discussed.

II) *Hecuba and the Phantasied Devouring Mother*

It is in the maternal figure of Hecuba, "mother of Hector, that Homer most clearly expresses the equation between dog and mother" (Halpert, 1980, p.391) in the unconscious. Not only does Hecuba turn into a dog in Greek legend, but her rage "at the prospect that her dead son will be devoured by dogs, expresses the wish to 'devour the vitals of that man [Achilles] leeching into his living flesh" (ibid.). Hecuba *becomes* a devouring dog "expressing her own and her dead son's wish for revenge" (ibid.).

Homer's words are also understood by Halpert to express "a wish for reunification of dead son and mother via displacement onto 'the stronger man' Achilles" (ibid.). This reunification, we are

told, expresses “in distorted form the wish to undo the death by means of a primitive cannibalistic impregnation fantasy; the mother will eat and take inside herself his ‘living flesh’ as a replacement for the dead flesh of her son” (ibid.). The figure of Hecuba *qua* a devouring, vengeful dog is another assertion of what Halpert calls “a primitive superego precursor via identification with the aggressor” (ibid, pp.391-92). Graves (1955) describes the Greek legend whereby Odysseus slays Hecuba, to still her voice which “uttered such hideous invectives against him and the other Greeks for their barbarity and breaches of faith” (Graves, 1955, p.341), rendering Hecuba “the biting voice of conscience” (Halpert, 1980, p.392). In Euripides’ (424 B.C) version, Hecuba describes her wretchedness:

“once a queen, and now
a slave; blessed with children, happy once,
now old, childless, utterly alone,
homeless, lost, unhappiest of women
on this earth [...]” (809-813).

She implores Agamemnon:

“...give me my revenge on that treacherous friend
who flouted every god in heaven and hell
to do this brutal murder” (790-792);

She goes on:

“—to refuse my son a grave, to throw him
to the sea, unburied!
I am a slave, I know,
And slaves are weak. But the gods are strong, and over them
There stands some absolute, some moral order
Or principle of law more final still.
[...] Apply that law
for me. For if you flout it now [...]
then human justice withers,
corrupted at its source.
[...] Punish this murder” (795-810).

Hecuba surpasses the gnawing conscience motif and exacts revenge for the murder of her children, with Agamemnon’s “passive support” (872). Murdering the two sons of Polymestor, her own son’s murderer, she then gouges out his eyes before he makes this prophecy:

*“I foretell that you
[...] shall drown at sea
[...] changed to a dog, a bitch with blazing eyes [...]*

[...] *Die. And when you die
your tomb shall be called—
[...] Cynossema, the bitch's grave, a landmark to sailors*" (1259-1274).

In the connection with death, which we know is "unconsciously conceived of as castration" (Halpert, 1980, p.392), Halpert also mentions that the image of the dogs "is at times regressively conceived of as a representation of the orally incorporating phallic mother" (ibid.). He cites the three-headed Cereberus and fifty-snake-headed Medusa, where the "displaced proliferation of heads undo the absence of the penis in mother" (ibid.). In the deepest layers of his mind, the boy, Klein tells us "has such a tremendous fear of his mother as the castrator" (Klein, 1932, p.189); closely associated with that fear is the fear of the 'woman with a penis'. Fear of mother as a body containing father's penis includes the "displacement of feelings of hatred and anxiety from the father's penis to the mother's body which harbours it" (ibid.). This is the way the infant modifies the more terrifying and threatening figure of the father and mother in one: the coital phantasy if you will.

Unconscious fears of castration focussed on the figure of the devouring (orally-incorporating phallic) mother, are according to Rank "the psychological representation of the biologic tendency to go back to mother" (Rank, 1924, p.245). Since returning to the womb is another equivalent of annihilation, or psychological death, the human psyche puts up barriers to the return, such as castration anxiety. Claustrophobia is interesting in this respect since in Latin the 'claustrum' is the womb on an unconscious level; even a small room, or House, can symbolise the womb and regression to the womb.⁵⁵ In the symbolic equation of death and castration, the phallus is equated with life; the womb thereby with the grave. This unconscious association is detected in the solar myths of early cultures, understood as attempts to overcome the fear of death, with the wandering Sun (Helios), its zenith and nadir: born from the watery womb of mother earth, separated then reunited with her again⁵⁶. Freud says that, "So immense is the ego's self-love,

⁵⁵ Meltzer (2008) wrote a whole book on the subject of *The Claustrum: An Investigation of Claustrophobic Phenomenon*. London: Karnac.

⁵⁶ This is precisely the material Jung deals with in *Symbols and Transformations of the Libido* (1912/1952). Specifically he deals with the return to the dangerous/monstrous mother, as a trial of infantile development, and an archetypal motif.

which we have come to recognize as the primal state from which instinctual life proceeds, and so vast is the amount of narcissistic libido which we see liberated in the fear that emerges at a threat to life, that we cannot conceive how that ego can consent to its own destruction” (Freud, 1917, p.252). Death therefore can only be represented in the unconscious “in terms of other dangers, from castration down to separation from the mother” (ibid.).

In 1924, Rank wrote a paper on ‘The Trauma of Birth in its Importance for Psychoanalytic Therapy’ where he states that through “a reproduction of the separation from the first original libido object, namely, the mother... the patient attempts to repeat in a quite obtrusive way the process of birth” (Rank, 1924, p.242). According to Rank, the “primal libidinal binding to the mother shows itself in various attempts to reestablish the intrauterine state” (ibid, p.245), and it is a re-experiencing of this original libidinal severance “as it occurred in parturition” (ibid.), that must be “fully accomplished in a shortened period of time” (ibid.), in order for a successful psychoanalysis of neurotic symptomatology. Such reflections actually serve to refocus classical psychoanalytic theory around the ‘threat of being devoured by the mother’ and all the sadistic pleasures of the devouring infantile psyche forging this phantasy. Jung, however, was probably the first to concentrate on this motif.

Since the nurturing maternal imago is typically ‘present’ and contains the fears and anxieties of the infant, it speaks to logic that the alternate maternal imago is thereby absent; ergo ‘abandoning’. Being absent in itself however, does not make the ‘bad’ maternal imago necessarily devouring: this comes from the crucial projection and displacement of the infant’s own unbearable sadistic rage, during the oral-cannibalistic stage of ego formation, onto the absent, ergo abandoning maternal imago. The devouring maternal imago is therefore consequent upon a devouring infantile psyche, which feels in equal part, the wish to eat the breast, be eaten by the breast, and sleep in blissful reunion with the breast. Polymestor’s prophecy that Hecuba will be turned into a dog for her hubris, and his mention of ‘*Cynossema, the bitch’s grave*’ provides the symbolic link in the unconscious equation between dogs, death and Mother. The biting motif

renders the issue of orality as crucial for understanding the symbolic significance of this unconscious equation for the Kleinian interpretation.

Cannibalism and the Canine in the Hecuba

Based on actual analyses of young children and infants, Klein's interpretations from the 1920s to the 1950s increasingly focused on reparation and demonstrated that the ubiquitous "oral frustrations which children undergo release the Oedipus impulses in them and that the super-ego begins to be formed at the same time" (Klein, 1932, p.179). Klein's pre-oedipal infant typically proceeds from the pleasure in sucking during the breast-feeding period, to the pleasure in biting. This pleasure in biting increases in relation to both a lack of gratification during the oral-sucking stage, and in relation to internal frustration derived from the increased oral-sadism during teething and weaning: "we may regard the force of the child's fixation at the oral-sucking level as an expression of the force of its libido, and, similarly, the early and powerful emergence of its oral sadism as a sign of the ascendancy of its destructive instinctual components" (ibid, p.180). Abraham (1921) also points out that too much oral-sucking gratification during the suckling period can lead to a strong fixation on the pleasure in biting. Freud's infant, when hungry feels anxiety "*as a result* of an increase of tension caused by its need" (ibid, p.181, my italics). Klein adds that the infant also feels sadistic rage toward its object, which suggests a "fusion of the destructive and libidinal instincts" (ibid, p. 182). For Klein it is *the destructive instincts themselves*, which give rise to the perils of what Freud would call 'psychological helplessness in the face of instinctual danger', where "the ego senses a danger in abstinence" (ibid, p.183). Rado points out "the importance of rage in the reaction of the suckling to hunger" (ibid.), although he makes different inferences from this, than Klein: "From the paroxysm of rage in the hungry infant proceed all the later forms of aggressive reaction to frustration (e.g. devouring, biting, striking, destroying, etc.) and it is on these that the ego, *in the period of latency*, concentrates its whole sense of guilt." (Rado, 1928, p.426, my italics). Klein has a different way of conceptualizing the problem of destructive libido, whereby the infant: "displaces

the full burden of his intolerable fear of instinctual dangers on to his object, thus exchanging internal dangers for external ones. From these external dangers his immature ego then seeks to protect itself by destroying his object” (Klein, 1932, p.185)

The frustration of the infant’s oral-sadistic cravings exacerbates, but does not generate those longings according to Klein. Even Freud at an, albeit earlier stage in his thinking, conceived of how hatred (*Thanatos*) can, and indeed does precede love (*Eros*) in human development. He says that the “relation of hate to objects... is derived from the primal repudiation by the narcissistic ego of the external world whence flows the stream of stimuli” (Freud, 1915, p.82). This primal repudiation of our objects is still in the service of the instincts for the preservation of life, which would indicate that despite our dependence on our objects for self-preservation and instinctual gratification we still feel the need to defend ourselves against them and all the terrifying qualities they are surrounded by in our minds. To wit: “The ego hates, abhors and pursues with the intent to destroy all objects which are for it a source of painful feelings, without taking into account whether they mean to it frustration of sexual satisfaction or gratification of the needs of self-preservation” (ibid, p.81).

According to Freud, narcissistic libido “deflects the death-instinct outwards in order to prevent it from destroying the organism itself”: a process that underpins object relations and projection. Another portion of the death instinct, however, remains within the organism. This portion of the death-instinct that remains within the organism and derives satisfaction in self-destruction is recognized by Freud as “the original erotogenic masochism” (ibid.). Here, the deflection of the death-instinct impacts on object relations and leads to the full expression of the infant’s sadism, where specifically oral-sadistic phantasies “in which he gets possession of the contents of his mother’s breast by sucking and scooping it out” (ibid.), reach their zenith. The desire to suck and scoop out is first directed to the mother’s breast, but “soon extends to the inside of her body” (ibid.). Klein attributes to Abraham in his 1924, *Short Study of the Development of the Libido*, the suggestion that the infant’s oral-sadistic pleasure in biting is

evidence of “strongly marked destructive cravings which aim at the injury or annihilation of its object” (Klein, 1932, p.186). This goes a long way to confirming the symbolic associations between dogs, death and mother.

With each increase in sadistic rage, there is a corresponding increase in the expectation of punishment and stimulation of fear (*persecutoria paranoia*). Once the boy begins to experience oedipal longings, of destroying and replacing the father’s penis, it is clear that the impulses of hate bring on the formation of the super-ego “and which govern the earliest and most decisive stages” (ibid, p.192). As far as Klein is concerned, “the nucleus of the super-ego is to be found in the partial incorporation that takes place during the cannibalistic phase of development; and the child’s early imagos take the imprint of those pre-genital impulses” (Klein, 1932, p.195). The symbolic ties between the image of the dog, the theme of death, and the figure of the mother, now expressed as indicating oral-sadistic phantasies, provide a useful signpost to the Kleinian interpretation of the *Hecuba*. In 1928, Klein declared that it is:

“understandable that in a child of one year the anxiety caused by the beginning of the Oedipus conflict should take the form of a dread of being devoured and destroyed. The child itself desires to destroy its libidinal object by biting, devouring and cutting it, and this leads to anxiety, since the awakening of its Oedipus tendencies is followed by introjection of its object, which then becomes one from whom punishment is to be expected. The child now dreads a punishment corresponding to its offence, and the super-ego becomes something which bites, devours, cuts up” (Klein, 1928, p.168).

When Halpert detects representations of a super-ego precursor *via* identification with the aggressor in the image of the dog, and in connection with death, it is the same biting, devouring, dissecting conscience that Klein describes. Freud states: “The authority of the father or the parents is introjected into the ego and there forms the kernel of the super-ego, which takes its severity from the father” (Freud, 1924, p.273). For Klein the severity of the super-ego stemmed directly from the destructive impulses of the subject. The threats barked at the id, by the early super-ego contain “the whole range of sadistic phantasies that were directed to the object, so that now every item of them is turned back against the ego” (ibid, p.199). As Abraham states “the tendency to spare the object and to preserve it has grown out of the more primitive destructive tendency by a process of repression” (Abraham, 1924, p.428). Our desire to protect our objects

is therefore merely the result of our unconscious desire to do them harm. The fear of being devoured, cut up or killed by one's parents cannot be considered a reality fear: hence the displacement onto the figure of the devouring dog. Such excessive anxiety for Klein: "can only be the effect of intra-psychic processes" (Klein, 1932, p.201), or from the pressure the super-ego exerts on the destructive, sadistic phantasies.

The universality of the phantasies described by Klein lends support to the thesis that symbols of dogs and death in disguised and distorted form, have the power to activate a *nacherleben* of such phantasy object relations through the text of Greek tragedy. That the figure of the dogs in association with death represents 'mother' within the unconscious seems to be demonstrable. Such a symbol speaks to the artists' own projection and displacement of rage regarding the abandoning mother who becomes devouring on the inside through unbearable oral-sadistic phantasies, felt first by the pre-oedipal infant *toward* the mother, but then projected into the mother as now coming toward the infant during the early stages of super-ego formation. The association between, dogs and death in the dreams of analytic patients, evidenced by Halpert in "diverse burial practices and myths" (Halpert, 1980, p. 394), goes some way to show that when the image of the dog "is evoked in response to fears of death, the dog most basically represents the mother" (ibid.). This representation of mother contains "contributions from all the developmental stages of childhood from oral to oedipal" (ibid.), but the pre-oedipal contributions are according to Halpert "the most significant" (ibid.). It is therefore all the "rage, anxiety and longing engendered by the threatened loss of the maternal object (one meaning of death)" (ibid.) that finds representation "via repression, displacement and projection in the figure of the dog" (ibid.), at least according to this Kleinian reading.

Halpert tells us that the representation of an "early superego precursor carries within it the projection and displacement of the child's own rage at being abandoned" (Halpert, 1980, p.392). Hence, these legends of the "primitive, biting, murderous, castrating voice of conscience...imaged as a...bitch" (ibid.) evoke the image of the abandoning, ergo devouring

mother. The image of the mother who leaves her children is, according to my thesis, the hook guaranteeing a potentially reparative *nacherleben*, within the scheme of Klein's depressive position and the necessary overcoming of the mourning engendered by such abandonments, or even in the reliving of them in our aesthetic engagement with the text. Since these phantasies form part of early superego development, we must also bear in mind the fact that these imagoes are both internalized and projected onto figures in the external world. This means that the damage they are imagined to be able to do goes on in full force within the infant's mind. The fact that these are phantasies means one can argue that a) they do not actually go on in the outside world and b) therefore have a stronger valence of 'reality' on the internal perception of them.

So, when we interpret an image of the devouring mother from a literary figure, we must articulate the circuitous path by which a uniquely psychoanalytic approach may venture such an interpretation. It involves first the assumption that the symbol within the artist speaks to his own projection and displacement of rage regarding the abandoning mother, who becomes devouring on the inside through unbearable oral-sadistic phantasies which are felt first by the infant toward the mother, but projected into the mother as now coming toward the infant. Secondly, we must assume that without conscious knowledge of these symbolic equations, an audience member responds to these motifs: reliving unconsciously their own experiences of these early infantile struggles. Both assumptions involve uniquely Kleinian propositions, and these are important, in Klein's view, because: "his fear of those introjected objects sets in motion the mechanisms of ejection and projection...and there now follows a reciprocal action between projection and introjection, which seems to be of fundamental importance not only for the formation of his super-ego but for the development of his object relations to person and his adaptations to reality" (Klein, 1932. p.203).

Discussion

Classical literary criticism of Euripidean tragedy is poignant to a degree: in addition to an almost extinct scholarship around the *Heracleidae*, there is a severe dearth of literature on the *Hecuba*, which has suffered several centuries of neglect despite being named one of Euripides plays from his great, late tragic period. William Arrowsmith, in his essay on the ‘Turbulence of Euripidean Tragedy’, in Wilson’s (1968) collection of critical essays, contains one of the few references to the *Hecuba*, in his demonstration that the most “immediate salient fact of Euripides’ theatre is the assumption of a universe devoid of rational order” (Arrowsmith, 1968, p.105). He quotes Talthybius in the *Hecuba*:

“...do we, holding that the gods exist
Deceive ourselves with unsubstantial dreams
And lies, while random careless, chance and change
Alone control the world” (ibid.)

Regarding these divine delusions Arrowsmith says “Usually desperate, feeble, sceptical in the first place, it is the fate of these hopes to be destroyed in action” (ibid.). Here we find a correlative to the psychological reading of the Euripides’ skill in cheating and charming our hopes as readers, and continue to find support from Arrowsmith, who confirms the main psychological interpretation offered in this thesis regarding the fragmentation of Euripides’ main characters:

“The wholeness of the old hero is now represented divisively, diffused over several characters; the paired antagonists... represent both the warring modes of divided culture and the new incompleteness of the human psyche” (ibid, p.107)

Hanna Segal takes the stance that all creativity and all authentic art depends on dreadful unconscious conflict, such as that portrayed in Euripidean tragedy, and demands identification in

the recipient with such dreadful unconscious phantasies in the artist. This provides sufficient support for the notion that symbols relating to the devouring maternal imago, *via* displacement onto the images of the dogs, and always in connection with death (as evidenced by Halpert), can provide a hook that guarantees such unconscious conflict is implicated in our aesthetic encounter with Euripides *Hecuba* and *Heracleidae*.

Being unconscious, these conflicts are undetectable, but their content seems sufficiently evidenced from various sources. It is a question of whether one entertains the idea that these images are representing *these* conflicts. If so, there is a potentially reparative aesthetic, if not, there isn't or at least it hasn't been discovered, developed, or perhaps as Freud might say, 'noticed'. My thesis that the reason we enjoy these tragedies speaks to deep-seated psychological tension and despair in connection to our very early object-relations, depends on the psychoanalytic interpretation of symbols and is built firmly on the philosophical thought of Nietzsche and the psychoanalytic findings of Freud, Klein and Segal.

My conclusion is that from a hermeneutic standpoint, there is more interpretive potential in approaching the text with sensitivity to these reparative symbolic possibilities.

That the figure of the dogs in association with death represents 'mother' within the psyche of the artist seems to be established. The second assumption, regarding the audience members' unconscious recognition and *nacherleben* of early-infantile conflict around this constellation is slightly harder to 'prove'. One can simply argue that an enjoyment of the text, or any kind of authentic aesthetic moment with the text, demands such a *nacherleben* (of whichever symbolic association the artist draws from). It is important, and yet problematic to remind the reader that such a reliving, need only be unconscious, for the reparative dialectic to be ignited.

One can argue that the artist had to be giving vent to his struggle to overcome the anxieties of the depressive position, and our unconscious reliving of that struggle as readers is what guarantees our enjoyment of the tragedy. The symbol, Segal says, "is like a precipitate of the

mourning for the object” (Segal, 1991, p.40); symbols are needed to “overcome the loss of the object from one’s own aggressiveness” (ibid.). For Segal, art depends on the loss and repair of internal objects and this is why there can be such depth to the “quality of uplift that aesthetic experience gives us” (ibid, p.89). In enabling us to take part in a creative, reparative act, we experience “beauty in the feeling of inner consistency and psychological truth in the depiction of those destructive forces of conflict and their inevitable outcome” (ibid. p.91). Segal finds Nietzsche saying the same thing: “no great art without tension... maintained to the last... no truly beautiful surfaces without dreadful depths” (ibid, p.93).

One need go no further than Nietzsche’s perspectival yardstick of ‘value for life’, to realize that an association of potentially reparative worth to a work of art and our intra-psychic reception of it, has greater value for life than an association of little or no reparative worth whatsoever. Value for life is the direction both Nietzsche and psychoanalysis point to. My argument is that this is a more useful hermeneutic, i.e., there is more potential in approaching the text with sensitivity to these reparative symbolic possibilities. Why else, is another question, have these tragedies been preserved? If not for some deeply profound truths hidden in them for future generations to decipher and posit interpretations: that they may ever re-learn and repair the true nature of themselves?

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

“literary masterpiece[s]... do not have one single, definitive meaning but rather... an endlessly shifting constellation of possibilities, multiple relations and interactions, fixities and indeterminacies that are constantly rearranging themselves with each reading and each reader. This is not to say that such a work can mean anything one wants it to mean. There is a text which prescribes definite limits and directs us to its principal concerns. But this text is an open network rather than a closed field. Any interpretation is an intervention in the text and a re-creation of the text... there is no avoiding the hermeneutic circle: the problem is to come into it in a meaningful way.” (Segal, 1936, p.5)

Even a classicist such as Charles Segal (above), admits that “psychoanalytic criticism... [is] particularly illuminating” (ibid, p.6) and that it is a mark of depth and richness if a text “invites and sustains such diverse readings” (ibid), sounding very much like Nietzsche’s metainterpretive proliferation principle. Charles Segal neither benefits from an in depth knowledge of psychoanalytic criticism, nor Nietzschean philosophy, but this does not stop him, one of the foremost scholars in the field, from breezily mentioning parts of Freudian nomenclature, without explanation or justification.

The question of this research was: ‘to what extent can it be demonstrated that we engage in a reparative dialectic with the text of Euripidean tragedy?’ In order to answer that question a theory of pleasure and pain is required that explains how something violent and sadomasochistic in literature could evoke feelings of pleasure or joy. Nietzsche’s theory about the will to power and the ascetic impulse are as necessary as the Freudian elaboration of libido theory in order to appreciate how pleasure and pain can intermix to the point of being inseparable. Based on this dialogue between Nietzschean and psychoanalytic thinking, it can be understood that even violent and self-destructive themes in art can evoke life-enhancing, reparative processes *via*

deeply repressed longings and anxieties, which according to Kleinians demand an overcoming of the depressive position if they are to be considered ‘great’ works of art. This contributes a possible solution to a perennial debate in aesthetics as to how to, or indeed whether it is at all possible to judge whether a work of art is good, or not.

I suggest that the aesthetic joy or delight we experience in reading certain ‘great’ tragic literary texts is indicative of a reparative dialectic being played out between the author, the text and the reader unconsciously. This is in line with the British psychoanalytic aesthetic, and grants these Euripidean texts a great value for life, contradicting Nietzsche’s critique of Euripides as a playwright representing the ‘death of tragedy’.

Since, with the British psychoanalytic aesthetic we have a putative standard upon which to most accurately judge a work of art’s aesthetic value, i.e., its ability to evoke a *nacherleben* of our earlier instinctual life, we can simply read a text, remaining open and receptive to what it contains; reading slowly, and with delicacy as Nietzsche’s transvalued philology demands.⁵⁷ Being open to the interpretations, which proliferate rather than reduce the number of perspectives which can be brought to bear on a text, allows us to validate an individual’s subjective reading and engagement with the text. The unique thing about psychoanalytic interpretations is that they can allow for an individual’s experience of something being unknown to them. The fact that an individual might not read a text in this way, nor experience anything in the way psychoanalytic theory suggests, does not negate the value of psychoanalytic characterisations of internal experience. Psychoanalysis can account for the fact that these things go on unconsciously, and states that these experiences do not need to be conscious in order to be plausible or explanatory.

⁵⁷ “Only through this transvalued sense of philological diligence, directed by a sense of honesty and justice that precludes the overly enthusiastic assertion of any one interpretation as the correct one, will we be able to avoid the fate of all bad philology...in which the text finally disappears under the interpretation.” (Nietzsche, *BGE*, §38); “the art of reading well” (Nietzsche, *A*, §52).

That said, Nietzsche's criterion of 'value for life' demands a further appreciation of how we are to rank the many perspectives which can be brought to bear on a text. Since we are free to decide for ourselves between that which is more valuable to our life and that which is less valuable, we are free to rank our perspectives according to the values in which we believe.

Nietzsche doesn't say that our unique ranking or individual perspectives are thereby 'true' for everyone. We are free to be decadent, and free to be ignorant of Nietzsche's grand re-evaluation of all values. 'Value for life' itself would seem to gain a deeper appreciation in the field of depth psychology. 'Health' and 'Degeneration' also receive Nietzsche's keen interest⁵⁸, and he plumbs the depths of the human instinctual constitution in ways that only lead organically to Freud. That is not to say Nietzsche and Freud are to be lumped together as classical pessimists, obsessed with the plight and strife of the human soul.

What differentiates them is how they envisioned humanity achieving the goal of 'redemption', or 'overcoming' our shameful state of disgrace. Nietzsche called for the rebirth of the tragic comportment to the world, where our suffering can be faced with courage and valued as a necessity for the eternal forces at play in the human soul. Freud, rather preferred to analyse the detail of our fears and anxieties: providing a mythology of human emotion that gave us a narrative with which we could experiment intellectually and clinically, with the many different ways of coming to terms with our basic natures. True, they both have strong, fixed ideas about the nature of our basic conflicted nature, but the way we deal with it could be accounted for in many different ways. Both of these projects come to bear on my approach to these Euripidean

⁵⁸ Health and sickness are not essentially different, as the ancient physicians and some practitioners even today suppose. One must not make of them distinct principles or entities that fight over the living organism and turn it into their arena...there are only difference in degree between these two kinds of existence: the exaggeration, the disproportion, the nonharmony of the normal phenomena constitute the pathological state.

Just as "*evil*" can be considered as exaggeration, disharmony, and disproportion, "*the good*" may be a *protective diet* against the danger of exaggeration, disharmony, and disproportion" (Nietzsche, *WP*, §47); & "*Against Darwinism*...What, after all, is "useful"? One must ask "useful in relation to what?" E.g., that which is useful for the long life of the individual might be unfavourable to its strength and splendor; that which preserves the individual might at the same time arrest and halt its evolution. On the other hand, a deficiency, a degeneration, can be of the highest utility in so far as it acts as a stimulant to other organs. In the same way, a state of need can be a condition of existence, in so far as it reduces an individual to that measure of expenditure which holds it together but prevents it from squandering itself" (Nietzsche, *WP*, §647).

tragedies. Trying to stay true to Nietzsche's hermeneutical scepticism and his call for the rebirth of the tragic comportment to the world, I use the psychoanalytic approach to quantifying 'value for life', within an essentially reparative dialectic, and trace the evocation of instinctual *nacherleben*, in three Euripidean tragedies.

In identifying the themes of loss, mourning, punishment and guilt, to wit: the whole gamut of primitive emotions surrounding destructive urges being twinned with life, my reading of the *Alcestis* extracts the most extreme expressions of tragic action and verse. These expressions become sensible through the lens of Kleinian metapsychology. The *Heracleidae* bridges the themes of the sacrificial heroine from the *Alcestis* and the initial splitting of maternal imagoes as evidenced in mythological systems more generally. The image of the dog in association with death suggests the presence of oral-sadistic and masochistic phantasies, which can be read as indications of early super-ego precursors via an identification with the aggressor. Finally, the *Hecuba* provides an exquisite example of the fantasy of the devouring mother; something Kleinians describe as an orally incorporating phallic mother. It was important to state that such a fantasy is originally a consequence of an orally incorporating infantile ego. As such the projection and displacement of abandonment rage, makes the *Hecuba* equally capable of evoking the *nacherleben* of early instinctual life, as the *Alcestis*, and the *Heracleidae*.

It would seem that we do certainly have the possibility of engaging with these particular Euripidean tragedies along the lines outlined in this thesis: as texts containing at least some material which psychoanalytic thinking can be applied to, revealing a reparative potential. To what extent we do actually engage with texts in this way, is a much harder question to answer, since we need to be able to measure the quantum of 'reparation' being proposed. The best we can do is formulate a monistic theory of pleasure and pain that equates pleasure (even in destruction), to an evocation of early instinctual anxieties associated with the depressive position *which*, if overcome, can be seen to be the source of both the creativity behind the work itself and the aesthetic enjoyment of it. Then we can say, 'Yes. This work seems to evoke those symbolic

associations', or, as the case may be, 'No. this work contains nothing that has any symbolic association to anything psychoanalysis has discovered about the workings of the mind'.

That does seem to be the choice. One choice proliferates, while the other reduces the number of perspectives that could come to bear on the subject. Since I am arguing for a subjectivist epistemology couched within the constraints of Nietzsche's perspectivism, which prefers the increase rather than decrease of perspectives: saying 'Yes' would seem to be the more valuable choice. Saying 'No' leaves us none the wiser as to the question about the value of these texts and whether they were truly great works of art, or not, as so many including Nietzsche have been content to dismiss them as.

I did not go into the texts with some *a priori* notion of what I was looking for, only that I was looking for evidence as to whether these particular texts had any reparative value, and if so, how, and where? The *Alkestis* was a good choice as the theme of self-sacrifice dictated an explication of the sadomasochistic dynamics detected in my reading. This led organically into an appreciation of the same motif in the *Heracleidae*, and demanded an engagement with Nietzsche's psychology of cruelty.

In the *Heracleidae* however, one must wait until the very last image to find a motif that distinguishes it from the *Alkestis* in its symbolic content. Such a throw away image, so easily passed over at the very end of a play, seems too hidden, even if incidental, to be completely insignificant, if the standard method of the interpretation of dreams is anything to go by. I also chose these texts because of the dearth of literature available regarding their symbolic content and significance in the literary, classical, and psychoanalytic criticism. I hope thereby to have restored these works to their previous glory as 'great' works of art, in opposition to Nietzsche and others (though with his help also), and conclude that, thanks to the British psychoanalytic aesthetic at least psychoanalytically informed critics now have some useful measure by which to

judge aesthetic value. More importantly we begin to appreciate the deepest value of art and creativity, as an ontologically reparative phenomenon, for both creator and spectator.

Fundamental for growth, the themes of object loss, self-annihilation and the hope for reparation offered to us as readers of Greek tragedy, recall archaic struggles from our own psycho-history and offer a renewed chance of mastering the anxiety associated with them. Perhaps because these texts are so rich with the violent, sadomasochistic impulses, which for Kleinians characterise infantile life, they offer us the most direct opportunity to repair or at least enter into a dialogue with our own experience of those same archaic psychic wounds.

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