

Ambivalence and penetration of boundaries in the worship of  
Dionysos: Analysing the enacting of psychological conflicts in  
religious ritual and myth, with reference to societal structure

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## Abstract

This thesis draws on Freud to understand the innate human need to create boundaries and argues that ambivalence is an inescapable dilemma in their creation. It argues that a re-reading of Freud's major thesis in *Totem and Taboo* via an engagement with the Dionysos myth and cult scholarship allows for a new understanding of dominant forms of hegemonic psychic and social formations that attempt to keep in place a false opposition of *polis* and *phusis*, self and Other, resulting in the perpetuation of oppressive structures and processes.

The primary methodological claim of the thesis is that prior psychoanalytic engagements with *cultus* scholarship have suffered from being either insufficiently thorough or diffused in attempts to be comparative. A more holistic and detailed approach allows us to ground a psychoanalytic interpretation in the realities of said culture, allowing us to critique Freud's misreading of Dionysos regarding the Primal Father and the psychic transmission of the Primal Crime. This thesis posits that Dionysos needs to be acknowledged as a projection of the Primal Father fantasy linked to a basic ambivalence about the necessity of boundaries in psychosocial life.

Using research from the classics and psychoanalysis alongside Queer and post-colonial theory, as well as extensive fieldwork and primary source analysis, this thesis provides a grounded materialist critique of psychoanalysis' complicity in reproducing a false dichotomy between *polis* and *phusis*, a dichotomy that furthers the projection onto marginalised groups whose othering is linked to a fear and desire of a return to *phusis* and denial of its constant presence in the psyche and *polis*. This re-reading of Dionysos challenges the defensive structures, which are organised around ideas of subjectification that posit that *phusis* must be severed from *polis/ego* and projected onto Dionysos and all groups that threaten the precariousness of these boundaries.

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*ὄρῶν ὄρῶντα*

- *The Bacchae of Euripides.*

*Noore chashmat gar bebinom, del sarmast shavad*

*Sare zolfat raa begirom, del heyraan shavad*

- *Yek Nazar, Niyaz.*

بنگر تو ر تا خواهم و چشم صد

- *Looking for Your Face, Rumi.*

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# Introduction

This thesis draws on Freud to understand the innate human need to create boundaries, and argues that ambivalence is an inescapable dilemma in their creation. This was accomplished by thorough research into, and analysing the function of, *cultus* (myth and ritual) in social and psychic boundary building and transgression in the Grecian Dionysos cults. The project deepens the understanding of these cults and gives a more sophisticated example of how psychoanalysis can be used in conjunction with *cultus* scholarship.

Psychoanalysis has attempted to apply the theory of its field to religion to controversial effect. *Totem and Taboo* (1913) is such a text, that fails to account for cultural difference and instead is written to prop psychoanalysis up as a theory.

Primarily, this thesis is a study in how texts like *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 1913), though seminal and unique, struggle in portraying an accurate or respectful depiction and analysis of religion using psychoanalytic tools. Its drawbacks highlight the merits of focusing on specific religious cults one at a time, with a more in-depth ethnographical awareness that places myth in context of ritual, time, and culture – acknowledging cultural influences, such as politics, history, gender relations, as well as zoology, botany, and cuisine.

We will see how this approach differs from texts like *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 1913) or *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (Rank, 2004) by not falling into the trap of leaping from continent to continent and in the process not appreciating a divinity's complexity, resulting in an arguably flawed analysis. We see how Freud's lack of appreciation of complex myth and ritual in the Dionysos cult resulted in his misunderstanding of Dionysos' position in the Grecian pantheon; and how this results in a misreading of the cult of Dionysos as a son-god

religion (pp. 151-5). This is one of the reasons I select the Dionysos cults of Grecian culture to study. Another reason is that in Freudian discourse, Dionysos' *cultus* suits that of the Primal Father.

Chapter 1 gives body to the polarity of city and wild presented by Detienne's works, establishing the constructed boundary between civilisation (*polis*) and non-civilisation (*phusis*). It provides an overview of the laws of *polis* and the demand for mediocrity to participate. It shows how the defiance of gender boundaries and sexuality of *polis* deem one to be animal and foreign to Grecian culture. Only when the scene is set does Dionysos make his appearance in chapter 2, with an introduction to his myths, the rituals of Dionysos cults and how they conflict with the traditional Hesiodic cult that is believed to maintain the *polis* structure. Chapter 3 provides a review of psychoanalytic ideas and a history of the relationship between psychoanalysis and *cultus* scholarship.

Chapter 4 establishes the Other in Grecian society and its relationship to Dionysos and *phusis*. After I present a historical understanding of *polis*' oppressive structures, I then present a psychoanalytic understanding of *polis*' motivations in defining the Other and the maintenance of these boundaries, which is rooted in the establishing of hegemonic subjectivity and fear of the Other in the self. I criticise the perception that the powerless seek to 'steal' power from the privileged by establishing the fictionality of where the phallus resides, and that Dionysos stands as an emblem of this internal conflict. I also argue that these boundaries are established and reinforced by Hesiodic sacrifice, and that the subversive ritual of the Dionysos cults acts as a threat and reminder by breaking Hesiodic taboos, which resulted in an uneasy but mandatory relationship between the *polis* and cults. This chapter is where post-colonial and Queer theory occur most clearly to support the cases of Dionysos as a god of marginalised people and elaborate on the socio-political oppression of the Other in Grecian culture.

Chapter 5 establishes that there has been a long-running history in myth of the breaking of Hesiodic taboos invoking the Dionysiac, resulting in the destruction of the ruling class. This is because the ruling class invokes Dionysos' wrath through hubris (by breaking taboos and not honouring the god, whereas the Dionysos cults break those taboos but are not punished). The desire to maintain *polis* while indulging in *phusis* is mutually exclusive. I look at analyses of Pentheus in Euripides' *The Bacchae* to understand the same psychoanalytic forces discussed in chapter 4 to understand how one negotiates with the anxieties provoked by Dionysos and the Other and faces repressed content.

Chapter 6 continues with the theme of taboos of the previous two chapters and looks at Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913). This chapter begins by establishing that I view the Primal Father and Crime scenario as a phantasy itself, and not as an event. This helps us understand the limiting focus of the hypothesis, and the central focus on castration of the phallus. I contradict Freud by establishing that Dionysos does not act as the son of the Primal Father, but as the Primal Father and the mythic match to the primal layer of the psyche. This chapter looks at the sacrifice of the Dionysos cults as subversive acts to break taboos not just present in Greek culture, but taboos mentioned in Freud's text. This returns to chapter 4's theme of boundaries being used to strengthen hegemonic subjectivity to undermine the Other. It also helps us further understand the ambivalence surrounding the Primal Father.

In conclusion, I show how Dionysos and the Primal Father are both projected onto the spatial/temporal realm of nature. They are associated with nature's barbarism, and represent the threat of regression to an era without civilisation, one founded purely on the pleasure principle. This is a regression that mainstream Grecian ritual symbolically fought against.

First, allow me to explain the primal realm of Dionysos that forms the basis of this thesis.

## *Phusis*

*Phusis*: Greek for ‘Nature’, but also ‘to gush, to emerge, to generate, to grow’ (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 5-7) is a spatio-temporal region of pre-history, the wilderness and a space of transgression (Detienne, 1979). It is the realm of Dionysos and the Dionysiac as discussed by Detienne (1979), where the *polis*’ distinctions between god, human and animal fall away. I view the state of *phusis* as being a primarily psychological one. It is a state before identity, subjectivity, laws or taboos, a primal state rife with unconscious confrontations, the id’s desire, and unchecked instinctual impulse, and a state dominated by the pursuit of pleasure.

The pure nature of this state is broken with the development of ego-consciousness and subjectivity, and the introduction of the superego. Both are carved out of the id/*phusis* state and remain partly conscious. This unconscious region of *phusis*, I argue, is then projected by the Grecians to help counter repressions and become a home to projections. Psychically, *polis* emerges from *phusis* as subjectivity emerges from unconscious undifferentiation. *Polis* faces the constraints of binding the ego and superego to form an identity, and projecting out any unconscious content that does not conform to it.

*Phusis* is projected upon the wilderness and Nature, for their existence outside *polis* law, absent of human-born taboos, and humankind’s ambivalent relationship to them: Nature is a space of birth and death, but is also nurturing. We simultaneously rely on Nature for sustenance as well as abhor it for its dangers. Similarly, as pre-history, *phusis* predates the existence of *polis*, which emerges out of it, and is therefore without *polis* law.

It is also projected onto those who reside within *polis* but are considered alien to its political arena. Marginalised groups in Grecian culture that are denied political speech, or *muthos*. *Muthos* is only granted to the citizen: Grecian males who also suit the demands of Grecian masculinity. These marginalised groups are considered ‘guests’ to *polis*, and are

denied full access to political and public space. They include foreigners, women, and those who Queer the Grecian idea of gender and sexuality. They are considered ‘*akrateis*’ or unrestrained and animal, defiant of *polis* law, and therefore are prevented access to *muthos*. This thesis highlights their close association to Dionysos and his realm of influence in myth, and explains how they are victims of the projections by the citizen who design and maintain the construct of *polis*.

### **Phallus/Penis**

Freud does not seem to make a clear distinction between the phallus and penis. In classical study, the phallus is often an image in the shape of the penis, and such ‘phallic symbols’ are a primary symbol for the Dionysos cult (statues, *thyrsos* staves). However, I consider them as representing different things and that the concept of the phallus and what it entails is projected onto the penis in Grecian culture. I go into further detail in Chapter 4, but I ask the reader to keep in mind that this is why I refer to each of these separately.

The phallus is a concept related to power, particularly of generation, life and death (Kerenyi, 2008, p. 89), it represents self-sufficiency and political power. It is falsely equated with masculinity and projected onto the penis (Butler, 1990, p. 144). When I talk about castration anxiety here, I do not mean simply the removal of genitalia, but a removal of subjectivity and agency. This is the primary anxiety of the sons of the Primal Horde and the Oedipal complex (Freud, 1913).

Dionysos as the great castrator is only a castrator because castration is the masculinised *polis*’ greatest fear. Genital castration is not central to psychoanalysis and, according to Cixous and colleagues, should not be (Cixous, Cohen and Cohen tr., 1976, p. 881). However, in light of masculinity’s great terror and preoccupation with phallic power projected onto the

penis: castration is Dionysos' space of operation. The Dionysos cults' imagery of those who *lack muthos* wielding the phallic symbol is thus a subversion of *polis* law.

### **The God Who Comes, and the Son Who Returns: Oedipus Ensured**

It is impossible to talk about Cixous (1976), genital castration and the decentralisation of genital castration phantasies in psychoanalysis without discussing Oedipus and the complex that is his namesake.

What is the relationship between the Dionysos myth and the Oedipus myth and this relationship's psychoanalytic significance? To answer the first half of this question, the mythical relationship between Dionysos and Oedipus, I will summarise Zeitlin's 1990 paper, and will elaborate on it to answer the second half.

By studying various myths, I noticed that after the events of *The Bacchae*, Thebes is plagued with madness, kin-killing, suicide, exile, themes of incest and monster attacks. From Kadmos, Agave and Pentheus, all the way to Laios and Jocasta, Oedipus, Eteokles and Polyneices, and Antigone. I came to the conclusion that these structural similarities reflect Dionysos' cursing of Thebes in *The Bacchae* and his designation as its patron deity. Upon reading Zeitlin (1990, p. 131), I find that she presents the argument that Thebes is a thematic and conceptual space, a region in tragedy to denote these tragic occurrences, 'finding its metaphorical center in Dionysos' (Zeitlin, 1990, p. 132).

Where Zeitlin (1990) believes that Thebes is a thematic space that ensures the spawning, arrival and exile of Oedipus, from a psychoanalytic and mythic perspective, I lean more toward the idea that Dionysos prepared and ensured Oedipus' tragedy, and the consequences of his tragedy in his children finally ending the House of Kadmos. As we will

see later in this thesis with structural analyses of Dionysos, he is often most present and potent when he is visibly absent.

Like Dionysos, ‘Thebes is the place... that makes problematic every inclusion and exclusion, every conjunction and disjunction, every relation between near and far, high and low, inside and outside, stranger and kin’ (Zeitlin, 1990, p. 134). For me, Thebes is the quintessential example of Dionysos’ boundary crossing, and the accessibility to the heart of *polis* that *physis* possesses.

I believe the above is symbolised in the creation of Thebes’ *polis* (Pausanias, 1918, Book 9, Chapter 10, Sections 1-5): A barbarian, Kadmos, marries Greek Harmonia, daughter of Ares. He proceeds to blaspheme in killing Ares’ dragon, whose teeth he uses to spawn the autochthonic Spartoi, which includes Echion, who becomes his son-in-law, father of Pentheus. Here we see a merger of barbarian and Greek, mortal and divinity, blasphemy and yet unity, children and self-spawn. The very creation of Thebes is a merger of opposed poles and suffused in problematic blasphemy.

Zeitlin (1990, pp. 135-6) notes similarities between Sophocles’ *Oedipus Tyrannus* and Euripides’ *The Bacchae*: the issue of parental legitimacy that we see above is repeated with the perception of Dionysos in *The Bacchae*, and Oedipus in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. True to his heritage, Dionysos is both stranger and native, and so is Oedipus. And this confusion of identity is proposed to both Pentheus and Oedipus:

Dionysos to Pentheus: ‘You do not know why you live, or what you are doing, or who you are.’ (Euripides, 1850, line 506).

Tiresius to Oedipus: ‘You do not see what a state of misery you are in, or where you dwell, or with whom. Do you know who your parents are?’ (Sophocles, 1887, lines 413-6).

Where Pentheus responds with the names of his parents, Oedipus doesn’t.

Pentheus, similarly, has his own Oedipal attractions, as seen in verses 330-46, and 964-69 (Euripides, 1850), where he lashes out against his grandfather, and expresses incestuous interest in his mother.

Zeitlin notes similar themes in *Seven Against Thebes* (1990, pp. 136-7), and *Phoenician Women* (p. 143). She then makes the crucial point that it is at a Dionysiac festival that Laios ignores the prophecy about his fate at his son's hand and conceives Oedipus with Jocasta (p. 143). It is under the eye of Dionysos that Laios ignores a crucial prophecy that allows the events of *Oedipus Tyrannus* to take place.

Thebes is the 'paradigmatic home of tyrants' (Zeitlin, 1990, p. 149), and I believe this is also why Dionysos is ever-present here. As I will explain in this thesis, Dionysos is the god who mythically rebels against human conceit, and acts as the crusher of tyrants, and ritually his worshippers subvert the laws of *polis* that oppress them.

Zeitlin (1990, pp. 152-3) makes the claim that Thebes thematically stands outside of time, where there is no linear development or solution to the crises it faces. Instead, just as patricide and incest take one to their own conception in regression to one's presence in the womb (ironically referenced by the Sphinx in her riddle), Thebes repeats itself. Like Kadmos, who is forced to be a barbarian once again, assaulting Thebes with foreign armies as he did before the city's inception and his blasphemy (1850, lines 1330-7). Like *phusis*, time here is circular, ancient and unmoving. The past projects itself into the present and the future regresses to the past.

This, to me, speaks of the psychoanalytic struggle of the Oedipus complex being recreated every generation and the projection of the anxieties related to the Primal Father (Freud, 1913) that project themselves through time in the form of Dionysos, Hesiodic rituals, and the



inception of the Oedipus complex. The boundaries of time, individuality, and family are destroyed.

My thesis continues in the line of critics like Cixous (1976) who have argued the rightful decentralisation of the Oedipus complex and genital castration in psychoanalytic theory. Please do not misinterpret my focus on Dionysos and the Primal Father as a way of centralising Dionysos in psychoanalysis either. Dionysos, like Oedipus, is yet another facet in the infinitely-faceted complexity of the psyche and its mythical and clinical expressions.

However, in response to those who do enforce the primacy of the Oedipus myth, my thesis presents a retaliation – Oedipus is impossible with Dionysos, just as the son of the Primal Father is impossible with the Primal Father.

Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913) explains that the worship of the Primal Father and the anxieties regarding him are the result of his sons murdering him, cannibalising him, creating a cult of him out of guilt and fear, which births the Oedipus complex, and this progresses itself through the ages as incestuous desire, kin-killing and fear of castration. If, as my thesis asserts, Dionysos is a religious expression of the psychic Primal Father, then Oedipus and his sin is ensured by the sacrifice and cannibalisation of the god.

If a fundamental claim of this thesis is that Hesiodic ritual is an attempt to bolster the walls of *polis* against the Primal Father's return, then Thebes, the Dionysiac home of Maenadic cult, is the consequence of the Primal Father's repeated return – or in fact, refusal to leave. The blaspheming Primal Horde and its parricidal sons must suffer as an example for the rest of Greece, for Oedipus' punishment was only another in a cycle of punishments at the Father's hand. The Father precedes the son, Dionysos ensures Oedipus, the Primal Crime spawns the Oedipus complex.

The way in which I question Oedipal primacy in psychoanalytic theory is by providing evidence that the complex is not a central, self-sustaining phenomenon, but one that requires prior *mise en scène*, in this case by the god of theatre and tragedy. It also explains the relationship between the two more clearly. And in ritual, it is the *mise en place* of sacrificial and dietary material that controls human relationship to the divine, particularly to the vengeful Father outside the city gates.

### **Strike Against Oedipus: Psychoanalysis and Politics**

By continuing in the line of theorists before me, what is accomplished, methodologically and politically, in this thesis?

The central thesis of this work can be divided into two parts.

First, is its methodological claim. This thesis is a response to Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913), and other psychoanalytic work comparative mythology. I am dissatisfied with the approach to myth and ritual in these works, where the attempt to be comparative to uphold certain psychoanalytic theses leads to the material being diffuse, lacking detail and sufficient foundation, causing a misreading of *cultus* material, a case I make in relation to Dionysos in *Totem and Taboo*.

I respond to this by using extensive cultural material, both from primary sources and structural analyses (like Detienne) to ground a psychoanalytic reading of Dionysos in a firm ethnographic foundation. This provides a holistic approach to the analysis that then provides a stronger psychoanalytic argument, in this case that Freud's (1913) reading of Dionysos suffers from a lack of thorough *cultus* and cultural scholarship and that Dionysos instead plays the part of the Primal Father in *Totem and Taboo*, rather than his son, as purported by Freud.

This is pursued by looking at the ambivalence regarding the Primal Father/Dionysos, grounded in Detienne's *polis/phusis* dichotomy (1977, 1979, 1989). This materialist analysis reads Dionysos as a projection of the Primal Father linked to the ambivalence to boundaries that are necessitated in psychosocial life, which is accomplished by looking at the Primal Father and sacrificial acts in terms of introjection and projection, rather than wish fulfillment. It shows us how Dionysos/the Primal Father is a psychic herald of the non-differentiated infantile psyche driven by the id and the pleasure principle, projected outward onto marginalised groups and societal Others, whose oppression in Grecian culture is sanctified by religious ritual in their mythical association with Dionysos – that is the foreign, the feminine, and the Queer.

This leads into the second accomplishment of this thesis, which is political, that this reading of Dionysos challenges the ego's defences against the repressed Dionysos and *phusis* that exists within the hegemony and *polis*. This denial of *phusis*' presence in *polis* and psyche is what strengthens the othering of marginalised groups in the hegemony's fear of, and desire to return to, *phusis*.

This political reading questions the societal formations extending from the psyche and its defences that form the hegemonic psychic stratifications of *polis/phusis*, self and Other, born of necessary boundaries of subjectification, which in turn extend to the socio-political stratifications that perpetuate the oppression of marginalised groups.

Consequently, this implies a challenge to the political motivation and stance of psychoanalysis as a field. Through engaging with Queer and post-colonial theory in chapter 4, it raises the question as to why these factors were so thoroughly ignored in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century psychoanalysis, and why this reading of Dionysos has been so delayed. By

questioning the centrality of the Oedipus complex in psychoanalysis, this thesis also questions the centring of cisgender, heterosexual masculinity, and particularly one nurtured by colonial Europe.

This benefits Queer, feminist and post-colonial readings of psychoanalysis by providing a new angle on one of the most detrimentally cis-heterosexual and masculine readings of unconscious and socio-political figures imaginable: The Primal Father. Here, the Primal Father is unveiled as the manifestation of Otherness, foreignness, femininity and Queerness. A subversion of psychoanalysis is always possible, and we find merit in an otherwise heavily flawed text (Freud, 1913) which is criticised for lacking sufficient ethnographic material by providing it precisely with the anthropological material it lacks.

What this thesis contributes to psychoanalysis is a novel re-reading of a hypothesis stored in the attic of psychoanalytic theory that is occasionally dusted off to be ‘broken... on a wheel’ (Kroeber, 1939, p. 446). It also provides a new materialist methodology as an example of the kind of ethnography that allows an allegorical psychoanalytic reading without the criticism of flimsy research, which is easily levelled at Freud (1913), Abraham (2012), Jung (1969), Rank (2004), and others. This methodology also counters a post-colonial critique of trans-cultural generalisation for which these works are culpable. What it contributes is also its underlying critique, that in acknowledging the conscious decision to oppress that we see present in Grecian *cultus*, modern psychoanalysis needs to acknowledge the conscious part played in oppression, rather than shirking responsibility onto the unconscious.

In the spirit of Dionysos, we must continue to question boundaries, question power, and finally, question the self to reposition psychoanalysis in a way that benefits the marginalised, just as the stranger god does in myth and cult.

With this, I will proceed to chapter 1, a literature review of the *cultus* scholarship for this thesis and presenting Detienne's work to set up the scene of lawless *phusis*. Like Agave of *The Bacchae* with the pieces of Pentheus, we begin to place the pieces back together, without division (line 1300).

# Chapter 1: *Cultus* Scholarship and Establishing the Thesis Foundation: A Review

Chapter 1 is preparing a foundation for this thesis. **Section 1.1.** provides a literature review of *cultus* scholarship regarding the purpose of ritual, and perspectives on Dionysos. This prepares us for the detailed structural understanding of *phusis* in **Section 1.2.**, which forms the basis of the *polis* versus *phusis* dichotomy that his thesis rests on.

## 1.1. Literature Review of *Cultus* Scholarship

Studying *cultus* scholarship of Dionysos means studying three particular strains of texts: (i) the source texts, varying from myth, to legal records, philosophy, and medicine; (ii) modern texts by researchers who have compiled the above and more into compilations; (iii) texts presenting theories to explain the existence of that *cultus* data – there is significant overlap between the three.

All three have been central in both the inception and completion of this thesis. It was in studying *Totem and Taboo* (1913) that I recognised that Freud's commentary on Dionysos failed to explain most of the information I had studied on the cult and its culture until that point. This literature review will look at the primary *cultus* texts that appear in this thesis, and what brought me to select Detienne as the primary theorist for explaining the Dionysos cults as a subversive force against *polis*.

Regarding source texts, my attention was directed to several ancient writers. These are important for both putting the modern commentary into perspective and understanding the context the cult existed in. Some of the work is anonymous, such as the *Orphicorum*

*Fragmenta* (Kern, 1972) and *The Hymns of Orpheus* (Taylor tr., 1990). Others are popular ancient texts such as Hesiod's *Theogony*, and *Works and Days* (Evelyn-White tr., 1914), and Homer's *Iliad* (Murray tr. 1924) and *Odyssey* (Butler, 1900; Murray, 1919) which form the primary bases of Grecian *polis* religion. Others that contribute to our understanding of Dionysos come in the form of several translations and interpretations of *The Bacchae* of Euripides, the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus (Rouse tr., 1940), and various texts with the god's involvement.

The various other works involved range from the philosophy of Plato, records of Livy and Herodotus, observations by Pausanias and Plutarch, anatomical work of Aristotle, *Metamorphoses* of Ovid (Kline tr., 2000) and others.

Regarding researchers in the Dionysos *cultus*, among the most informative texts will remain Karoly Kerényi's *Dionysos: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life* (1976). Though many researchers have done a great deal of work to piece together the vast variations in the Dionysian myths and influences on his faith, Kerényi (1976) puts forward a fantastically detailed summary of the god present from the Minoan and Mycaenean cultures and throughout Greece and well into the Roman era of Grecian cultural permutations in Late Antiquity. It is the text I began my studies in Dionysos with, and remains one of the most influential in my understanding of the various details of the *cultus*.

Like Graf & Johnston (2007), and Otto (1965), it seems to refrain from making entirely too many interpretations as to *why* the cult existed and was practised the way it was. Other equally exhaustive collections of information on the cults tend to veer more into theorising the 'purpose' of the ritual practises, such as Harrison (1960), and Seaford (1994, 2006).

One must be careful of Otto's (1965) flights into narrative, as well as an occasional tendency to shoot down the ideas of previous writers, then presenting his contradictory opinion with sometimes very little evidence or explanation. I have also noted the occasional ignoring of information or omission to prove a point. Kerenyi (1976), and Graf and Johnston (2007) though, are better at documenting their research. Sometimes Kerenyi (1976) will not clearly state the place and time period of the matter being discussed, leading to complication in a long timeline of this god and his various sects, but I feel this is not particularly intentional as much as this text is enormous and a magnum opus if there ever was one. Graf and Johnston (2007) have a much easier time with a short text focusing entirely on the eschatological aspects of the Orphic Mysteries.

Among the theorists of the cult, there are more contributors that have analysed the myths, rituals, theatre, and culture revolving around the god and Greek religion in general. They include Bell (1992, 1997), Girard (Gregory tr., 1977), Charles Segal (1982, 1986), Robert Segal (1998) among others.

One of the theorists whose work features prominently in this thesis is that of Detienne (1977, 1979, 1989, Detienne & Vernant, 1989), whose work is heavily informed by the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss and attempts to not just study isolated cults, but put them in the context of their culture to find references to the subject of the cults in various cultural phenomena.

It is important to note that two of Detienne's primary texts here, *Dionysos Slain* (1979), and *Dionysos at Large* (1989) are different in tone. *Dionysos Slain* is a thoroughly researched text, and well referenced. It does its best to stick to ancient records as plainly as it can, drawing its conclusions directly from them. *Dionysos at Large* on the other hand, is a flawed



book. It is the piecing together of four of Detienne's separate papers, with questionable referencing, and often forces the reader to look back at the original Greek text, or papyrus fragment, to see if Detienne is even stating the fact plainly or taking refuge in flights of fancy as he tends to in this book. I have done my best to find these original references and scour them (both in English and Greek) since it is necessary to not take Detienne at his word here, and reference the original works after studying their accuracy.

*Dionysos at Large* is a study in Dionysos' epiphanies and as nomad, and his presence across the Grecian world. *Dionysos Slain* is a text focusing on diet and procedure of sacrifice in ancient Grecian culture as a stratifying force and being the determining factor in deciding who belongs to the city, and who belongs to the wild and pre-history. It explores the idea that the Dionysos cults act as a subversive force against the culture that builds these boundaries to enforce oppression – this is the crux of my thesis. *The Gardens of Adonis* (1977) have notably more structuralist themes, and further delve into diet in Grecian *polis* and the hierarchy between god, human, and animal.

I would like to give a background of theorists encountered in researching this thesis to provide an explanation as to why I select Detienne as the primary classical theorist of the project.

Of the various religious theorists of the twentieth century, Durkheim and those who've followed Durkheimian tradition interest me the most, due to the interest in not just the social causes of ritual, but social effects.

Durkheim (1965) presented the theory that ritual acted as a means of social stratification and binding, although this phrasing appears pessimistic compared to Durkheim's theory that it benefits communal living through emotional security. This encourages a psychological aspect, of choosing to adopt a communal form of living

reinforced by repeated ritual. This psychological aspect is developed further by Turner (1967), with the assertion that by infusing the values encouraged by ritual with emotion, even ones considered base or gross, results in both catharsis and in the adoption of those values, creating community.

Lukes (1975) criticises Durkheimian theorists who focus on the socially integrative aspects of ritual by asking about the costs of ritual, their effects in social stratification. Ritual could also be perceived as enforcing a specific narrative that comes with the caveat of establishing power structures within the community. It is Lukes' criticism that orients my work in this thesis. I am interested in what drives an individual to building these boundaries to exploit, and the ambivalence involved in both building them and having them penetrated.

This pessimism is further sought by Girard (1977), with a Freudian bent. It rests on the idea that blood sacrifice is a scapegoat killing. By killing the scapegoat, one manages to avoid the violence that threatens the group's unity under one set of cultural norms. Girard seems influenced by Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913) in that it presents a theory that blood sacrifice was instigated by an original murder motivated by desire and concluding with guilt that then propels itself down the ages as a sanctified religious rite. Another similarity with Freud is that it finds that bloodshed is a way of curbing mimetic desire, the way that taboos and their punishment curb mimetic violation of taboos. Simultaneously, he diverges from Freud in attributing motivation to conscious mimetic desire rather than internal unconscious forces. To prevent a growing wave of mob violence provoked my mimesis, a scapegoat is used (he explains why the violence against the scapegoat then doesn't fly into mob violence by using an arbitrary set of rules he spots in various cultures).

It is fair to ask why my thesis, which also focuses on *Totem and Taboo*, Dionysos, and sacrifice does not include Girard outside this chapter.

My primary criticism of Girard's work is his thesis on Dionysos – that Dionysos brings order to a chaotic disorder that he himself caused; i.e., that Dionysos' retribution is a reaction to the Maenadic madness that follows him, rather than the actions of those he punishes (1977, p. 134). I personally think this tendentious claim is made purely to attempt to twist the Dionysos Triumph myths into fitting Girard's own thesis about sacrifice than serving a reading of the Dionysos *cultus* fairly. In later chapters, my thesis elaborates on Dionysos' retaliation to the oppressive actions of the elite and an unmasking of their own inhuman behaviour, rather than provoking it – that Maenadism is a form of revolt, not a false-flag operation to warrant punishment. To serve his own thesis, he also demands we see the violence in *The Bacchae* as arbitrary (p. 138), and then there is his complete bafflement at the preponderance of women in the play (p. 139). A fact so startling to him that he then goes to great lengths to try to explain it by centring the position of men in an indigenous Amazonian tribe (p. 140). I will not be attributing more space in my thesis to his work.

This pessimistic take on ritual is echoed in Burkert (1983), where blood sacrifice creates two things: myth, which immortalises the first act of cathartic murder and sanctifies it; and hunting, which ritualises the murder and alleviates human aggression and guilt by normalising the behaviour and maintaining a social structure. In other words, religion and sacrifice acts as a societal organiser and binder, setting out the rules by which the society's residents must live by. Religion acts as the social, and perceived 'civilising' force upon human instinct.

Detienne's work (1977, 1979, 1989, Detienne and Vernant, 1989), focuses on these stratifying and civilising forces, asking what is decided to belong to humans and culture (*polis*), and what belongs outside, to nature and uncivilised early humanity (*phusis*) with which Dionysos is affiliated. We can see the influence of Douglas (1966), where *polis* can be

read as what is 'pure' and *phusis* as 'impure'. Douglas (1973) also points out that it is more than just ritual that builds these social determinations, but a series of various influences.

Detienne provides the perspectives that the upholding of the *polis* works on several levels that his structuralist approach highlights, ritual, myth, folklore, dress, various cultural codes as pedagogy. The punishment of characters associated with *phusis* modes of life in myth and the ritual encouragement of *polis* values encourages the social dimension of these scholars' work. For Detienne, forms of sacrifice that do not correlate with the traditional Hesiodic forms of sacrifice are in direct opposition to *polis*, this not only defines a boundary between them, but also shows the ways in which the Dionysos cults' attitudes to sacrifice defy them. He explains how these sacrifice-built boundaries create divisions between god, humans and animals, the citizen and foreigner, between royal and priest class and those living in the city, between men and women and those who defy gender norms.

These ideas of hierarchy building and stratification are developed on by Bell (1992) with the pursuit of understanding ritual's place in the building of dominant and oppressive structures. She looks at the cyclical ingestion and regurgitation of these power structures by the social body. These structures are projected out by the social body which reincorporates them as experience, often with the mistaken consent of individuals oppressed within that body. That those who are objectified here (the Other of my thesis), who suffer at the hands of the structures reinforced by ritual, never completely consent to the order. However, they are not given an option to defy it, since the history of the hegemonic order has been the only societal structure they've known. This deception of the social body becomes self-perpetuating. This is an excellent development on the idea of stratification witnessed in Detienne's work. To Bell's idea I present Detienne's claim that the Dionysos cults engaged in a ritual semiotic rebellion against the *polis*, asking, can we further understand the functioning

of this cult and the challenges presented to the *polis* when placed in a psychoanalytic context?

The reason I select Detienne's texts as primary is that they present us with thorough cultural context for the Dionysos cult in Grecian culture. He takes into account sources from various aspects of Grecian life to provide an idea of what 'belongs to Dionysos', and thus exists outside *polis*. I will explain his ideas that are primary to my thesis: that of the realm of Dionysos, *phusis*; of the nature of the human Bacchic body and the potential of the human mind being possessed by Dionysos, therefore making the internal invasion of *phusis* possible; and how Dionysos cults act as agents of subversion through sacrifice.

Detienne is one of the primary theorists in my thesis regarding: the mythical tropes of *phusis*, the identification of the human body and Dionysos (therefore allowing ecstasy to be a communion with Dionysos), and finally, the nature of Maenadic and Orphic ritual in relation to Hesiodic ritual.

His ideas and argument are fundamental to my thesis and my argument. His explanation of *phusis* and its structural themes across myths is unique to his work and forms the basis of my *polis/phusis* argument. His argument about the Bacchic body and communion is heavily reliant on and thorough with primary sources (which would have been the basis of my argument otherwise) and is also supported by my inclusion of other classicists who provide the same argument about ecstasy like Kerényi (1976) and Otto (1965). His argument about Maenadic and Orphic ritual as opposed to Hesiodic for socio-political purposes is unique to him as far as I am aware.

I wish to place Detienne's ideas in a structure utilising psychoanalysis to the benefit of both *cultus* scholarship and psychoanalysis. Where psychoanalysis tended to focus on myth and the internal struggle, we can expand to an exploration of culture and ritual to understand the

boundaries built both internally and externally, crediting both the psychological and social influences of the Dionysos cult in Grecian culture. This will help address some of the concerns of Freud's seminal *Totem and Taboo* (1913), and provide an understanding of the challenges faced by humans in the building and penetration of the boundaries that uphold subjectivity, the self, and the *polis*.

Here it seems reasonable to ask why there is no mention of Nietzsche with his fascination with the god. It is for the same reason I spell Dionysos more phonetically rather than the conventional modern Dionysus, and write Dionysiac rather than Dionysian – I wish to distance myself from Nietzsche's popular philosophical treatises and poetry and instead adhere to an anthropological and materialist approach to Dionysos. This is not to say that Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1993) plucked the idea about the opposition between Apollo and Dionysos from thin air, we have the Orpheus myth to blame for that, but it is a dynamic with flimsy support. For more information, a materialist critique of the concept by Detienne (2001) presents substantial evidence of how the gods worked together far more often than opposed each other. Besides that, my choice to leave Nietzsche out of this thesis is also because I would prefer interpretations of the anthropological material to have a thoroughly anthropological basis.

I will begin by establishing the meaning of *phusis*, 'Nature', 'to emerge, gush, generate, grow'. This involves presenting Detienne's analysis of that which exists outside *polis*. Only once we set the stage of wild *phusis* will Dionysos and his *cultus* make their appearance in chapter 2.

## 1.2. The World of *Phusis*: Nature's Hunting Ground

A myth does not exist in a vacuum. It is birthed from the culture it exists in, and contributes

back to it and its future generations. An understanding of myth is substantiating the interpretation of it when taking into account other myths in the culture that it existed with, and the body of myths that consist of the same thematic appearances.

This section presents Detienne's (1977, 1979, 1989) structural argument that there is a relationship with Dionysos and various mythic characters that seem unrelated to him. In order to understand how Dionysos is related to these myths in which he is absent, we must understand Detienne's argument about the themes that are associated with the god, and the way in which they appear in various myths, and how they appear in ritual. This is due to these themes' involvement in the world of nature outside the laws of *polis*, referred to as *phusis*. If *polis* was constructed out of *phusis* to drive humankind's development forward, Dionysos and characters like Atalanta and Adonis reject *polis*, to their detriment. This will later show us how the Dionysos cults reject *polis* as well, for political reasons.

Detienne's thesis relies on the popular 20<sup>th</sup> Century perception of Dionysos as a god opposed to *polis*, which Seaford (1994, 1996) disagrees with, claiming Dionysos is a civic deity who maintains *polis*. Further discussion on this matter can be found in my section on Seaford in chapter 5, **section 5.1.**, along with my critique of Seaford's stance in favour of Detienne and others.

### **Spices, Sex and Sacrifice**

Vernant (in Detienne, 1977) describes a selection of myths; those of Adonis, Atalanta, Mintha, Iunx<sup>1</sup> and her male counterpart, Ixion, display an integral aspect to the Ancient Greek attitude toward sex: that coitus without procreation is deviant to nature's plan and an

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<sup>1</sup> Iunx, a character who attempted to seduce Zeus from Hera, gives her name to the *iunx*: a love or seduction spell meant to lure anyone away from their partners; also the wryneck bird, whose head and limbs whirl with great mobility, signifying the creation of dizziness, called the 'bird of delirium' by Pindar, and turning the spouse's attention away. This suggests elements of both Dionysiac madness and of seduction.

act of debauchery – it is signal of a regression to a beastly time before civilisation. Looking to Aristotle (1934, Vol 19, 1148a) and Seaford (1994, p. 208) we find that seeking sex for the sole sake of pleasure was seen as a great danger of women and femininity, who in their inherently sensual nature (in the eyes of the Ancient Greeks), needed to be yoked first to their father, then their husband in a monogamous union to control. These men believed that together, the ‘divine’ nature of man and the ‘bestial’ nature of woman bring the couple to the median space where humankind ‘should’ be.<sup>2</sup>

The sexual encounter in marriage then becomes both the requirement to living, and the halfway point between promiscuity in *phusis*, the stage of uncivilised and untrodden Nature, the age before civilisation, and abstinence in the Golden Age when men and gods dined side by side.

Detienne (1977, 1979, 1989) argues that this marriage and sexuality, like sacrifice and agriculture, show us how the conditions of human life must fall between bestiality and the Golden Age of the gods. You will note that the focus of this thesis is the god Dionysos, whose various worshippers swing to either extreme, to find a union with the divine, rather than a compromise. By defying the laws attributed to the *polis* with sacrificial meat and sexuality, the Dionysiacs and the Orphics launched an offensive to the heart of where Greece thought humankind belongs – seeking a spiritual experience beyond that median point enforced by the *polis* – one that confers on the devotee contact with the divine. The Orphics, appealing to Dionysos and Persephone, through philosophy, the denial of sacrifice and preaching the hatred of women, attempted to encounter the divine in successive incarnations by emulating them (Graf and Johnston, 2007). Conversely, the Dionysiacs descend to the *phusis* before civilisation (Kerenyi, 1976), by ecstatically running, hunting and eating raw meat like their maddened god.

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<sup>2</sup> This will be pursued here and further in chapter 4.



How do the themes of sacrifice and sexuality come together? The answer lies in botanical symbolism according to Detienne (1977, 1979, 1989). Unless specified otherwise, the information presented in this section has been provided from Detienne's research, as when these three texts just referenced are read together, they provide a convincing and unique account on the separation between *polis* and *phusis*. Detienne (1979) argues that traditional Hesiodic sacrifice aims at re-enacting the *Theogony's* Golden Age where once men and gods dined at the same banquet table, but also forms a distinction between human, god, and animal. The act of sacrifice taking place in the temple is meant to be an offering of food to the gods, who must be invited to the ritual through the use of hymns and incense, before being presented with their section of the flesh: the thighs and femurs, burnt in the pyre.

The gods subsist on the scent of the burning flesh, outside their feasting on ambrosia (and sometimes wine), they normally disregard eating in favour of inhaling (Detienne and Vernant, 1989). Just as they feed by inhaling burning flesh, they are invited by smelling incense, the burning of flowers and resins, but most importantly: spices, especially myrrh. This symbolic importance of myrrh and spices might be due to the incredible price and rarity of myrrh being imported from Arabia – 'the only country that yields frankincense, myrrh, cassia, cinnamon and labdanum' according to *The Histories*, Book III, chapter 107 by Herodotus.

Traditional sacrifice emphasises one aspect about the relationship between gods and humans: they are very separate from each other. The gods must be enticed and appealed to, simply to consider even taking food from humans, this channel of communication only reminds humans how far from the deities they are – very much unlike the Dionysiac and Orphic rituals where direct contact with the divine is demanded.

We must look at the incense here: myrrh. Costly myrrh mixed with lilies was a popular incense, myrrh made an effective unguent, and a popular perfume for how long it lasted on the skin. Spices had a spark of the divine in their hot and dry nature, perfect for storing and burning as incense with their heady smoke – solar, they were associated with the gods and the Phoenix, who builds its nest with spices in the highest treetops and cliff-faces, only to catch fire and be reborn – and fatal to animals like vultures and scarabs, who feed on decay (Vernant, in Detienne, 1977, p. v). Spices were also associated the Dog Days of Sirius (hot as Arabia from where these spices hail), when the sun was hottest on the earth, unlucky days of great danger and of many rituals and festivals. As such, the divine burning spices brought the gods' attention to the dining hall of the temple sacrifice and the cooking and seasoning of food by spices marks humankind's evolution to civilised human versus raw eating. And much like how divine burned food is contrary to an animal's raw meat; these aromatic, hot, dry, solar spices are contrary to the cultivated, wet, flaccid, spoiled vegetables of the earth – to which we will return in a minute.

You will have noticed the use of myrrh and spices in perfume – myrrh was considered a potent aphrodisiac and was closely associated with seduction. In both sacrifice and sex, spices, specifically myrrh, was associated with bridging gaps, with bringing something closer to oneself. At the marriage, the bride and groom perfume each other to tie themselves together (Vernant, in Detienne, 1977, p. vii), to make a family unit where the child recognises their father and vice versa, unless the parents' attentions are drawn to another source of perfume – for the goal of marriage is not pleasure, which can be a distraction from the marriage vows. Courtesans are for pleasure, not wives – courtesans do not promise lineage and immortality of the father's name.

Here sex and eating begin to relate: what marriage is to coitus, sacrifice is to the consumption of meat. First, the *phusis* era of raw meat and promiscuity, where animals

devour each other unknowingly, consummating sex out in the open and sacred spaces with no thought of who is father or child – there is no family unit, no paternity, and no immortality. Then there is the Golden Age of the *Theogony*, where men need not consummate sex when they sprung into existence, feared no death, or worried about paternity. They need not worry about the actions or procedures of sacrifice or murder, or toil in the field when Prometheus prepared the banquet table for them. So, humans must stand equal distance in between: between wildness and divinity, to control sex with marriage; meat with sacrifice; and find the halfway point between spice and vegetable with wheat (Vernant, in Detienne, 1977) – notice how Demeter of wheat is a patroness of marriage, and how the wife lives the life of ‘milled wheat’, with the marriage gift to the wife was a loaf of bread and a pestle. In contrast, the *hetaera*, entertainer and concubine, douses herself with myrrh for the men whom she beds, but will not conceive with, for that belongs to the realm of their wives. As claimed by Detienne (1979, p. 23), the earliest Greek settlements were those of cereal and domestic animals, with the *phusis* wildness of the hunter-gatherer lost to a primordial haze.

What we have learnt in this section is the significance of spices when it comes to attraction – this is significant in various areas of life: marriage, the violation of marriage vows, the summoning of gods to sacrifice and ritual, their importance in cooking, and that abuse of these attractive abilities draws one into a primitive, *phusis* time and space.

Devouring and seduction are again linked under the patronage of Dionysos (Kerenyi, 1976). The god travelling back to Greece through India and Arabia with his locks perfumed, seductive to any or all, whose madness violates the marriage vows, has his chariot drawn by panthers. Detienne (1979) expands on the meaning of the Perfumed Panther – both because of the significance of their association with Dionysos, and because it allows him to clarify certain crucial points to do with the delimitation of wild and sexual spaces, converging ultimately on the ‘hunting ground’ – key for both rituals and myths of initiation.

## The Perfumed Panther

I refer to the Leadenhall Street Mosaic at the British Museum shows Dionysos riding a tiger, symbolising his conquering of and return from India, most often though, he is shown accompanied by a large spotted cat (The British Museum, 1803). Detienne (1979, pp. 37-8) explains that the *Pardalis* or *Panthera* (terms used indifferently) can loosely be translated as ‘panther’, but the Greeks lacked the zoological speciality in this area – meaning it could refer to leopards, cheetahs, panthers, servals, any large spotted cat.



The Leadenhall Street Mosaic, The British Museum.

Dated 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> C. AD; discovered in London, England, 1803.

Image courtesy of the British Museum website.

In a *botanical* text, *De Causis Plantarum* (in Detienne, 1977, p. 38), Theophrastus claims that no creature smells sweeter than the panther, and no creature has a natural smell – but the panther is perfumed. Pliny claims that the panther is aware of its frightful appearance, and insists it must mask itself – so it camouflages into the underbrush, and releases its fragrance.

Aristotle's *History of Animals* testifies to stags wandering blindly to the source of the scent. Aelianus says that unsuspecting wild goats, fawns and forest creatures approach it blindly, as if charmed by an *iunx* (in Detienne, 1979, p. 38).

This tendency to sweet smells attracted them to wine and styrax resin (Detienne, 1979, p. 39). I notice that both wine and styrax were used in the rituals to Dionysos (*The Hymns of Orpheus*, 1999); and in Euripides' *The Bacchae*: 'The Bacchic One, raising the flaming torch of pine on his thyrsos, like the smoke of Syrian incense, darts about' (line 145, 1850).

And here, (the sex that led to sacrifice that led to) the spices that led to hunting leads back to sex and Grecian misogyny (which I expand on in Chapter 4): like Dionysos, Pandora, and womankind, the panther's hunt needs no weaponry – the trap lies in the seduction of its perfumed body. In *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes calls *hetaerae* panthers (*pordalis*): when the men give in to their wives, the male chorus lead exclaims, 'There is no beast, no rush of fire, like woman so untamed / She calmly goes her way where even panthers would be shamed.' (line 1014, 1926). Lysistrata orders one of her women to go and seduce her husband, to toy with him to submission, through her dress and perfume, to 'roast' and 'broil' him (like a sacrifice).<sup>3</sup> It should be no surprise then, that this woman's name was Myrrhina ('Little Myrrh') (Detienne, 1979, p. 39). In other words, Detienne highlights a relationship between seduction, hot spices, and cooking.

Through botanical and zoological records (perfume, spices and panthers), Vernant and Detienne (1977, 1979) argue there are symbolic links between beliefs regarding sacrifice, hunting and sex – and their governance within the *polis*, and disordered expression outside

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<sup>3</sup> We shall see in a future chapter how the choice of words also harks to the aspect of Greek sacrifice that represents primitivism, versus the boiling of the civilised man. 'Roasting' and 'Broiling' are important aspects relating to the 'primitive' forms of cooking in Greek sacrifice, discussed in other sections.

the *polis*. *Phusis* is the space outside the realm of *polis*, belonging to Dionysos is the wilderness, the hunting ground, which becomes a space where boundaries are either developed and adhered to, or where boundaries fail to develop and are easily transgressed – in the time of human wildness.

The Classical Period shows hunting to be a prominent part of a man's life. For most of Greece, the hunt was a sport for the citizen bourgeois and marks the rite of passage into manhood (Detienne, 1979, p. 25).

The hunting ground is outside the space of the civilised *polis*. A place of extremes living side by side and blending together, it is not unlike Kerenyi's (2008, p. 89) spaces of the '*mortis et vitae locus*', spaces like the garden and graveyards where life and death meet and exist together – marked by phallic deities like Hermes and Dionysos. It provides food, like farming, but spills blood, like war. The hunting ground is a space bountiful, but dangerous; possessed by savagery at the crossroads of life and death.

And this space is open only to the male of the species. Young boys await manhood first by selecting their *erastes*, the older man of the pederastic relationship, who gifts him with fruits of the hunt (often hares, animals sacred to Aphrodite), but also daggers and his first girdle, which carries scabbards – unlike the girl's first girdle which is a toilette (Detienne, 1979, p. 25).

These seemingly vastly different rites involve the separating of male and female, and an association with the forest. They stress the dominions of male and female, and the freedoms they are allowed. This pertains to the discussion of Dionysos as transgressor of the boundaries of male and female, as well as the transgressions of gender by his worshippers as seen in the following sections. In terms of ritual, Dionysos seems to govern the boundary between childhood and adulthood, as well as between male and female – reminding one of

the Orphic initiation rituals which mimic adolescent rites of passage and marriage scenes to apotheosis (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 360).

The hunting ground, the forest or mountain, is rendered a landscape where men can venture but not control – away from women. The exclusion of women in this environment then, excludes any rules *pertaining* to women in this environment. As phrased by Detienne (1979, p. 25): ‘In the space where social rules are silent, deviance is articulate, and transgressions come to pass.’

The hunting ground becomes Detienne’s space of *phusis*, where language is without articulation, death is bloody, and exists alongside unmanaged and irreverent sexuality practised outside the rules of man and *polis*. I note it is where Dionysos *Zagreus*, ‘bare handed hunter’ (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 82), roars out to begin the *oreibasia* (‘mountain-treading’) as women abandon home for the mountains and forests – an action that almost no myth of his is complete without. In the lawlessness of this space, women – who are not allowed to wield the sacrificial *makhaira* knife (Osborne, 1993; Detienne and Vernant, 1989)<sup>4</sup>– take sacrifice into their own hands (literally). They subvert the law of sacrifice by weapon, by using their hands. The spatio-temporal region of Dionysos is one of lawlessness and loopholes, especially those that show indignance to the laws of *polis*.

I believe the presence of women in the landscape emphasises also the fabrication of hunting as a man’s activity. Man and woman blur, and we arrive at the *phusis* time/space belonging to Dionysos, not that of the gods at Olympus’ banquet table in the Golden Age. *Phusis* is a time and space that subverts socially dominant relations and behaviour. And whereas Maenads are the quintessential depiction of *phusis*, we have further evidence for transgression in the hunting ground: a myth does not exist in a vacuum. It is birthed from the culture it exists in, and contributes back to it and its future generations. Let us look at what

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<sup>4</sup> Osborne, 1993, p.397 highlights this is particularly marked for women between menarche and menopause.

Detienne has to say about the myths that best exemplify the movement from the worlds of male to female, and female to male, Ovid's myths (2000) that best display the raucous lack of control over the realms of bloodshed, sex, and gender in the hunting ground. With his resistance to adulthood and marriage, a rampantly sexual boy escapes to the woods hunting only petty game; a girl flees marriage in an unending hunt to fight wild boars, and turn her suitors into prey.

*Phusis* is thus a place where the imagined barrier between masculine and feminine can be removed. Those that turn to *phusis* thus question the distinctions manufactured by *polis* law. Important to **section 4.1.4.** on Queerness in chapter 4, this and the following subsection discuss how *phusis* creates a space for the queering of gender, and consequently, how queering gender is inherently related to Dionysos in this lawless space. Detienne turns to two myths that help demonstrate this fact using structural analysis of botany, zoology and cultural norms, once again in the context of Dionysos and seduction to *phusis*. Let us then consider the spiced and perfumed foreign god from the East, born of the incestuous union between father and daughter, in turns a vegetative god, and the dying god, renowned for his youthful beauty, seduction of women, and lack of self-control. Not Dionysos, but Adonis.

### **The Gardens of Adonis**

One of the earlier, and most famous, interpretations of Adonis comes from Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1994), which – by way of comparative analysis – assumes he is a vegetation god (especially of wheat). The link is tenuous, it focuses on Adonis spending a third of the year in Hades with Persephone, and the other two with Aphrodite in the sun; and connecting



him with foreign dying/vegetation gods like Tammuz, therefore assuming he *must* be a vegetation/wheat god.

This is tenuous since there is no mention of farming or vegetation in the myth (though certain botanical facts are important, as we will see). The practice of the ‘Gardens of Adonis’ during the festival of Adonis is hardly a farming practice. And though his myth mentions his arrival from Syria or Cyprus, and his name is Semitic (from ‘*Adonai*’ for ‘Lord’), we must look at his myth in the context of Grecian culture to understand how it was adopted in this region of the Mediterranean.

A god is no more one particular essence than a single detail of a myth is significant on its own. Every god is defined by the network of relations which links him with and opposes him to other deities included within a particular pantheon; and similarly, a single detail in a myth is only significant by virtue of its place within the ordered system to which the myth itself belongs.

- Vernant, in Detienne, 1977, p. iii.

When we *do* look at vegetation in relation to Adonis, there is a fascinating development – both in relation to understanding Adonis, and in using our method of widening our understanding of myth by looking at the entire culture, as well as limiting it only to that culture and avoiding comparative mythology.

Detienne (1977, 1979) argues that Adonis is not a wheat deity, wheat belongs to the middle-ground of men who farm and civilise, Adonis traverses the extreme of the spectrum of the hot, solar spices of divinity, to the cold, watery, animal vegetation below. He is born from a spice tree (taking us back to what we learnt above in **Spices, Sex and Sacrifice**): Myrrh, the highest, driest and hottest. He finds his death in a bed of lettuce.

Myrrh, used lawfully, is to bind spouses and invite even the gods down to temple sacrifices, but used unlawfully, lures men, women and even deities away into immoral relations. Contrary to lettuce, which in Grecian culture was the '*nekuon bromia*' (Detienne, 1977, p. 67), 'Food for corpses', and has an entire chapter of Athanaeus' (1854) second-century cookbook devoted to its loathsome properties: impotency.

This was commonly known and accepted in Greece, making several appearances in comedies, pharmaceutical, botanical and culinary texts. Dioscorides' *Materia Medica* (Detienne, 1977, pp. 66-7) advises its prescription to take men's attention away from sex, and for those suffering wet dreams; an entire comedy revolving around the repeated appearance of lettuce to the abhorrence of the male protagonists is called *The Impotents*.

Acknowledging the importance of Adonis' birth in myrrh and death in lettuce, Detienne (1977, 1979) theorises Adonis' nature as a figure of seduction, and the abuse of it. He is a god who exists in the extremes outside the realm of men, in the forest and hunting ground.

Detienne (1979) argues that the myth of Adonis displays the abuse of seduction and use of myrrh, the excesses of sexuality and its cost.

Adonis' birth comes from the princess Myrrha, who falls in love with her father, Cinyras of Cyprus (in other stories, he is Phoenix – named after the fire bird that sets itself aflame in spices). Set apart and never to be united, the opposition of father and daughter (Vernant, in Detienne, 1977, p. xi) is like the other polarities of the story: god and human, spice and lettuce, courtesan *hetaira* and virgin *kore*. Myrrha rejects all marriage and men, offending Aphrodite who curses her with lust for her father – the man she cannot, and should not, have – this marks the absence of taboos in *phusis*. Myrrha, with the qualities of her namesake, tricks and seduces her father into bed on a festival of Demeter, where men and

women and ritually obligated to be separate from each other. In her effort to avoid marriage, Myrrha finds herself in the furthest point away from it.

Enraged, Cinyras hunts her down. Taking pity on her, the gods change her into a fragrant myrrh tree. Ten months later, it bursts into flame and splits open, with the infant Adonis revealed shrouded in its incense. The gods then have to settle the argument between Aphrodite and Persephone, goddesses infatuated with the boy. Zeus states that Adonis spends a third of the year with Persephone, and another with Aphrodite – he can do what he likes with his final third. Adonis gives his final third again to Aphrodite, when he spends most of his time hunting petty game in the woods, avoiding all other women. We see another polarity here, Persephone, alias *Kore* the maiden, and Aphrodite, the quintessential courtesan *hetaira*, both women outside the domain of marriage – drawn together by the seduction of the son of Myrrha on the hunting ground.

Thus, at an age when children are chaste, Adonis hunts and is graced with perfumed sexual seduction, and seemingly inexhaustible libido. Aphrodite, in her nature, who takes advantage of this libido is ceaselessly protective of the boy, and she throws herself into the wilderness, chasing after him with her dress tucked up to her knees like Artemis or a Maenad. She also draws a polarity between animals of the hunt in insisting he avoid hunting the violent animals that she loathes, the animals that make the hunt a fight for one's life: the boar, wolf, bear and lion – true marks of a hunter. Contrary to the animals she allows him to hunt, that do not fight back and only run, the doe and the hare – latter which is sacred to her in their excessive libido.

In this, he is not 'male' – his upbringing has him separated from the world of Greek masculinity, separated from the horrors of the hunt an adolescent his age would come to discover by his *erastes'* side, who girds him with weaponry and wit to fight wild animals. He

has neither the skill nor the valour to fight the boar that will kill him – nor the courage to face its onslaught. He instead hides in a bed of *lettuce*. His manhood is now made parallel to his sexual virility. His myrrh – excess of potency at an age when he should avoid amorous relationships – is extinguished the moment he reaches puberty, when he will be bound to monogamous marriage, in a bed of lettuce and precocious impotence. Regardless of spice or lettuce, potent or not, the wild boy remains ‘infertile’ and ‘un-male’ due to his lack of the Greek society’s control over him (Detienne, 1979, p. 40).

The conclusion of the myth raises a question regarding his death:

Plato, in his *Adonis*, saying that an oracle was given to Cinyras concerning his son Adonis reports it in these words - “O Cinyras, king of hairy Cyprians, your son is far the fairest of all men, and the most admirable: but two deities lay hands upon him; one is driven on by secret courses, and the other drives.” He means Venus and Bacchus; for both of them loved Adonis.

- Athanaeus, 1854, p.720, Book X, 456a.

The reader will notice Dionysos is mentioned nowhere in this myth. He makes no appearance, yet, as we have seen in the sections leading to the discussion of Adonis – manifestations of Dionysos suffuse the environment of this myth. In fact, this section began with a parallel being drawn on the nature of the two gods being similar as well. Neither divine nor mortal, spice nor vegetable, male nor female, masculine nor feminine, civilised nor animal: the hunting ground Adonis revels and dies in is the very state of *phusis* that the region of Dionysos is. Even the very female, very antagonistic to hunting, Aphrodite throws herself (Maenad-like) into this realm, bringing her sexuality and Adonis’ into the fray of the wilderness (Detienne, 1979). And the tragedy that befalls Adonis for defying the rules of *polis* very much belongs to the space of Dionysos with all its danger and unpredictability, for it relies on the eternal cycle of birth, sex, and death – unlike the immortal, chaste Golden

Age. Dionysos, as Athanaeus (1854, p.720) says, is indeed one of Adonis' murderers, alongside Aphrodite's coddling.

The worship of Adonis would eventually blossom in Greece, the festival of Adonia practised in the heady Dog Days, when men are claimed by fevers and heat. Courtesans, concubines, and prostitutes build shallow baskets where they plant quickly germinating seeds as 'Gardens of Adonis', which die as quickly as they germinate – marking Adonis' short-lived life and sexual potency, like the brief flowering of the fragile anemone that he was changed into after death. On the rooftops, the women bring their lovers and Gardens – unbridled, drunk, and given sexual license. These are the opposite of farming wheat and monogamous marriage, these saplings are the marker of sexual excess, and in carefree without toiling for their fruit – the anemone being nothing but a weak, odourless, brief blossom (the hunter-seducer, panther in the woods, born from spices, goes to die in flaccid lettuce and ends as an odourless weakling – following the semiotic botanical set up presented first with Myrrha, ending with Anemone) (Detienne, 1977, pp. 66-7). But the absence of fruit and burning of myrrh also marks what I consider the positive aspects of seduction being communicated here: without result, the world of spices and sexuality is one that can be enjoyed, albeit at the risk of entering the *phusis* of Dionysos, the way Maenads seek it.

This liminal space open to transgressions hosts another character intimately associated with its absence of boundaries. The effeminate seducer who, panther-like, confounds the art of hunting and seduction meets the lion-huntress in this wilderness. The princess whose loathing for conjugal relation and marriage turns men into the hares and deer that she hunts – her suitors now run from her, naked and defenceless. Where Adonis escaped masculine virility to the world of the feminine, Atalanta raced headlong away to the realm of masculine hunting, surrounded by the violent, androgynous wilderness of Dionysos.

### **The Footrace of Atalanta**

Entering fertility, it is now Atalanta's duty to marry and bear children; instead she girds herself ('*zosamene*') and seeks out 'endless' (synonymous with 'useless', i.e.: fruitless, without child) exploits ('*atelesta telei*') in the wild. In this space, the woman's image is blurred, and she has no obligation to marry, or be restricted at a hearth if she didn't wish to (Detienne, 1979, p. 32).

But instead of the woman's girdle with its toilette, that will be untied for the first time by her husband, Atalanta bears the 'girdle of Ares' with its weapons – the same worn by the queen of the '*anandros*' ('husbandless') Amazons, assuring them victory in war. Like the Amazons and Maenads in this space, she is '*antianeira*' ('hostile to man') and '*kreoboroi*' ('flesh-devouring') (Detienne, 1979, p. 33).

Apollodoros' version (1921, book 3, chapter 9, section 2) mentions her rediscovering her father who demands a male heir. She does so with a challenge, a footrace; if he wins, they marry – if she does, he dies. Her superiority to her male suitors demands that each has a few lengths head start as a handicap, and is naked to ease his run. She starts behind him, and is clothed, she carries her girdle, with its lance, javelin and dagger – this is no race, it's a hunt.

After several murders, a man finally tricks Atalanta into marriage using irresistible golden apples from Aphrodite, thrown in front of Atalanta each time she caught up to him in the race. The man was Hippomenes<sup>5</sup> – himself a boy who consigned himself to the woods to escape marriage ('For hatred of women he never went home again, so much did he abhor

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<sup>5</sup> The grandson of Oenope ('The Wine-Faced'), the daughter of Epopeus, 'Hoopoe'. The hoopoe came into existence when a man misuses his honeymoon, indulging in sensual excesses: *seducing* and raping his sister-in-law, followed by *cannibalism*, then is transformed into an excrement-eating hoopoe – sweetness, when experienced in excess (seduction outside marriage, cannibalism) leads to filth and degradation (Detienne, 1979, p.55). We see a trans-generational semiotic connection with *phusis* and the price paid. A Greek anxiety warning against transgression and *phusis*.

them.’ Aristophanes, 1926 lines 785-96). In Atalanta he doesn’t find a feminine counterpart (‘From hatred of women’), but an androgynous companion.

Atalanta rejects sexuality and Aphrodite, when she escapes to the woods, but accepts these golden apples from the goddess, which catch her attention like a *iunx*. Now that Atalanta has been drawn into her domain with the golden apples, Aphrodite unleashes the same erotic madness that claims ‘grim-eyed lions, and bears, and fleet leopards, ravenous for deer... and put desire in their breasts, so that they all mated, two together, about the shadowy coombes.’ (*Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, 1914, lines 70-5).

But Aphrodite’s vengeance isn’t over; in preparation for marriage, Hippomenes doesn’t sacrifice to Aphrodite who helped him succeed, so she seizes him with the same madness – and the couple copulate in a sacred space, a cavern dedicated to the ‘old religion’, still decorated with primitive wooden statues. The gods ‘turned their eyes away’ (Ovid, 2000, Book 10, lines 681-705), and by rejecting respect for the gods, Atalanta and Hippomenes rejected humanity, and were transformed into lions – loathsome to Aphrodite – for only animals could mate in the sacred spaces of the gods.

Atalanta finally becomes an apex predator, but we must also look at Grecian zoological observations: it was believed male lions could not copulate, either they never did; or because they couldn’t thanks to Atalanta and her lover. Strangely, Aphrodite helps Atalanta achieve her goal, because the only way Aphrodite could do so was by refusing Atalanta her ‘gifts’ (Detienne, 1979, pp. 43-4).

Atalanta becomes the perfect counterpart to the boy who indulges himself in sexual courtship till exhaustion, her refusal of a woman’s duties is followed by animalistic *phusis*, and to finally becomes a sexless, bloodthirsty beast in the category of the animals Adonis is warned to not face – though they both roam the same territory. Opposites within the space of

Dionysos, they meet at the intersection of hunting and sexuality – the frigid lion, hateful to Aphrodite; and amorous hare, her favourite victim and object of the pederast's lust (Detienne, 1979, pp. 43-4).

The terror possessing the Greek populace regarding transgressions of sex, gender and violence have been projected onto the effeminate hunter-seducer, and the masculine virgin-huntress. They no longer belong to either gender, and their sexuality is their own – taboo to that of Greece. Their rejection of the dominant models of Greek gender dynamics and sexual expression returns them to Dionysiac *phusis*, not that of the other Olympians of Hesiod – and Olympian Aphrodite who governs the gender and sexuality of the Greek *polis* attempts to exorcise the transgressors.

This hunting behaviour sections a liminal space that opens to subversion of consumption and sacrifice, and in turn sexuality and gender: all spaces Dionysos usurps and perverts. These mythic operators form a semiotic relationship, that through exegesis and structural understanding, provide a framework through which Detienne can decipher the world in which Dionysos works, and the portals he opens to those that queer gender and *polis* sexuality, like Adonis and Atalanta – and consequentially, the members of his controversial cults who use these semiotics to their advantage to defy the socio-political powers of Greece that use texts and religion as their law-makers.

As the thesis proceeds to the psychoanalytic analysis of the information gathered in these sources from chapter 3 on, I will examine how the defiance of *polis* in the Dionysiac acts as a challenge to the men who designed *polis* in their favour. I will also look at the possible explanation we can find in *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 1913) – and Dionysos' place in the development of ritual, communion and sacramental sacrifice performed by humans to negotiate with primal anxieties.



The following chapter presents an overview of Grecian myths of Dionysos, followed by sacrificial ritual in *polis*, and among the Dionysos cults. This will help us understand Dionysos as the god of simultaneous opposites and duality (Dodds, 1960; Kerényi, 1976; Otto, 1965; Segal C., 1982) who transgresses boundaries and his presence in Grecian culture. This sets the stage for the argument about Dionysos as Other, and as projection of the Primal Father and anxieties regarding introjection and projection in later chapters.

## Chapter 2: Dionysos in Grecian *Cultus*

This chapter will act as an overview of Dionysos in myth and ritual, which will provide information on his historical background, mythical portrayal, and cultural influence. The overview will provide enough to present the overall perception of the god in *cultus* and in Grecian culture. This will provide us with the foundation of the analysis in later chapters. This is necessary to understand what we mean by the ‘Dionysiac’ and the cultural significance and influence of his myth and cult, which forms the basis of the thesis’ argument. Much of what is read here will be expanded on later, such as his association with foreignness, gender subversion, and femininity in chapters 4 and 5, or the subversive nature of ritual practice, expanded on in chapter 6.

This information has been gathered and presented from several sources and reduced to those most rewarding. Among these will be the incredibly detailed works of Kerényi, Otto, Detienne and Seaford, as well as source texts from Grecian writers.

I will begin by looking at Dionysos in myth, before later proceeding to the importance of sacrifice in Grecian culture.

### 2.1. Dionysos in Grecian Myth<sup>6</sup>

The complexity of this god might have derived from his long-winded evolution – he was long considered more than just a singular god in a single culture, but like his personality in the legends, is an amalgam from numerous sources – both a citizen and a foreigner – his cult could be much older than what’s found in mainland Greece. Rohde (Otto, 1965, p. 58) states

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<sup>6</sup> Parts of Subsection 2.1. have been paraphrased from my own unpublished MA dissertation for MA in Myth, Literature and the Unconscious, University of Essex, 2012: ‘The Familial, Foreign and Fornicator: Dionysus, Dracula and the Sanguine Economy’

that the historical Dionysos did (violently) infiltrate the Greek pantheon from the east, brought by the Thracian cults of the Balkans. This god was inspired by the cult of Sabazios, himself a result of the southward movement of the Zalmoxis cult of Romania's Dacians. Wilamowitz (Otto, 1965, p. 60) highlights the name Bakchos in Lydia and Semele, the half-Greek, half-Syro-Phoenician mortal woman that would birth the god, as a Phrygian Earth goddess in Asia Minor. This idea has been questioned, especially with the finding of the Mycaenean Pylos tablets mentioning Di-Wo-Ni-So-Jo and the 'women of Oinoa' (Oinoa referring to the place of wine) in the mid-twentieth century (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 68-9), placing Dionysos in Grecian culture as far back as 1425 to 1200 BCE. This name occurs once again in Khania, Crete, this time confirming both a cult to Dionysos and possible human sacrifice (Archaeology News Network, 2014). This suggests that for all the myths of his hailing from a foreign land, his historical origin remains in Grecian culture.

But when discussing the historical origins of Dionysos, one will see distinct uniqueness in the mythical birth of the deity and his following rebirths, which might explain why in *Alkmeonis* it is stated "Mistress Earth and Zagreus who art above all other gods!" (in Kerenyi, 1976, p. 83) – a recurring subject being his birth or arrival – the 'divine epidemic' of the over-powering Dionysos *Epidemia*. But, myths are myths in their variations and what makes the Dionysos cycles so complex is the myriad of inherited rites, mainstream *polis* Dionysos *cultus*, the Dionysiac Maenads and Bacchantes, the mostly-lost beliefs of the Mysteries and their initiates kept with such secrecy, and the secretive *orpheotelestai* (the Orphic initiates).

Many ambiguities are found in the characters associated with this birth-death-rebirth myth. Many deities mirror others, many are identified with others, many transform their identities as various cults saw fit, making conflation common and confusing.

### **The Birth, Death, and Rebirth of Dionysos**

The most popular story about the birth of Dionysos in *polis* would have been that of Hesiod's *Theogony* (Evelyn-White tr., 1914, line 940), Hymn 1 To Dionysos from the *Homeric Hymns* (Evelyn-White tr., 1914), and *The Bacchae* of Euripides (lines 1, 90, 245, 285).

Here, Dionysos is born to Zeus and a mortal woman, the virgin priestess and Theban princess, Semele. Her pregnancy resulted in a rejection by her family who refused to believe that she courted a god. She fell for Hera's ploy, who told the priestess that in order to make sure the father was indeed Zeus, she must ask him to swear an oath upon the River Styx, an oath even a god cannot break. Zeus did so, and Semele asked to see his divine form. Reluctantly, Zeus accepted, and the epiphany incinerated the virgin mother of god.

As ivy leaves surged from the ground to protect the infant from the conflagration, Zeus took the foetal Dionysos and sewed him into his 'inner thigh'. This was likely a euphemism; an epithet for Dionysos' was '*Enorches*' – 'with testicles' / 'in the testicles'. Hera wasn't aware of the infant gestating in her husband, and it is suggested Zeus was emasculated by a *labrys* (double-headed axe sacred to Dionysos and the Minotaur) to birth him. The infant is left with various nurses: on the Mount Nysa, the newborn Dionysos is left by Hermes either with the Nysai (nymphs of the mountain) who would be his first Bakchai, or the Kouretes, ecstatic warrior daimons who also guarded his infant father from Kronos. Possibly even Melisseus, the god of honey who nursed baby Zeus with mead: honey, the blood of the gods, and alcohol, the domain of Bacchus. In all three tales, the nurses will never leave the god's side even in adulthood (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 274-7).

However, these myths vary in the fringe cults to the god. According to Orphic myths that bleed into Mystery and Maenadic *cultus* related by the Orphic Hymns 29, 30 and 46 (Taylor tr., 1999), Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* (Rouse tr., 1940), Diodorus Siculus and Ovid on the birth of Dionysos (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 110-2):

When the children of the Titaness mountain goddess, Rhea were free of the scourge of god-devouring Kronos, her son Zeus raped his sister, the harvest goddess, Demeter. The trauma convinced Demeter that her daughter of that union would be faced with the same fate by Zeus and decided to hide her child, Persephone (likely from '*pherein phonon*': 'Death-Bringer') euphemistically known as *Kore* ('Maiden') or *Nestis* ('Water') in a Cretan cave, the womb of Rhea (a possible reference to Kore's future marriage to the god of the Underworld, Hades). Orphic myth claims that giant serpents, similar to Rhea's Pythonesque offspring, were placed at the entrance of the cave to protect Persephone from Zeus. Demeter may have foreseen her brother's actions, but not that he would take the form of a large serpent, the animal that represented the Cthonic women of Persephone's heritage, entering and seducing Kore as Zeus *Meilichios*, conceiving the horned infant Zagreus, the 'bare-handed hunter'.

Zeus developed great expectations for his horned son, whom he took to the throne of heaven and elected heir to the throne. Myths here diverge, some state that the jealous Hera, goddess of marriage and fidelity, would not allow an illegitimate child not born from her to be heir, threw the infant to the Titans bound in Tartarus, or allowed them to rise to Olympus to lure the child to them with what would become instruments in the orthopraxy of the Mysteries and Attic infant circumcision or coming of age rituals (human sacrifice remains unconfirmed, but suggested), such as a mirror, tops and toys. Nonetheless, the horned infant Zagreus falls to a grievous fate, cut into seven pieces, boiled in goat's milk, roasted on a spit, and then eaten. This cannibalism leads to the Titan's execution by Zeus' thunderbolt (Seaford, 2006, pp. 72-5).

The myths' variations get more complex from here (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 259-60). One rare myth describes Demeter piecing the boy back together. An Orphic myth states that the bones of the infant are taken by Apollo to bury under the Delphic tripod to replace the source of prophecy now that he had killed the Python. Another states that either Athena or Hermes snatches the remaining uneaten piece, the infant god's heart, (most probably a euphemism for genitalia, which will be a secret hierophany of the Mysteries and hidden in the veiled winnowing fan of Dionysos *Liknites*).

According to the *Orphicorum Fragmenta* (Kern, 1972, fragment 210), the genitals/heart were turned into a bloody drink, Athena or Hermes handed it to Zeus, who took it to feed Semele. While she slaughtered a bull (sacred to both Zeus and Dionysos) for him, Zeus gave her the drink, causing the virgin to fall pregnant with the infant Zagreus. Here too, Hera suggests to Semele that Zeus should swear on the Styx, eventually leading to Semele's death and Dionysos' sewing into Zeus' thigh/testicles.

Already Dionysos has seen three births and two deaths, but it does not end there, for his deaths will be innumerable, as will be his resurrections. Many interpretations are suggested, mirrored in the seasons, the vegetation, the Zodiac belt, but it is the rites and ritual of his followers that are the most notable. Maenads, Bacchantes, Thuiades and various Mystery initiates performed numerous rituals meant not only to re-enact his death-rebirth cycles, but to actually *perform* them. At Argos, from Lake Lerna he is resurrected as he returns to and is birthed from the Earth where he was first born and hidden (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 184-8), just as in Athens at the festival of Anthesteria (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 200).

Participation in these rites would then bless them as his resurrectors, but damn them as his murderers, which can be seen in them being banned from entering the Temple of Delphi. This most probably reflects the nature of humankind in Onomakritos' myth, where mankind

is formed from the soot of the incinerated baby-devouring Titans, tainting man with the ‘Titanic’ sin of deicide (Detienne, 1979, p. 69). But one must remember that one cannot truly kill a god in Grecian myth. In his first birth to the goddess Persephone, he was truly a deity, not half mortal after his gestation in Semele. His remains that lived inside the god-eating Titans formed a spark of divinity in man that must be nurtured to, according to the *telestai*, be freed from the cycle of rebirth – since they will no longer be mockeries of Persephone’s mutilated horned son – and are now absolved of the Titanic sin. But such an interpretation was purely Orphic; for the Maenads, the cycle of murder and resurrection was a necessity of Dionysiac nature (Graf and Johnson, 2007).

### **Epidemic and Ambiguity**

The importance of the birth and death myths reflects Dionysos’ disregard for the laws that govern man and god. Though he is half-mortal, he is still a god and can return to life; but as a half-god, he can still die. Unlike other half-mortals and gods, he is not hero (in a Grecian sense, of being bred of the two).

For the Orphics, the *Orphicorum Fragmenta* (Kern, 1972, fragments 85, 87, 167-169) draw an extensive family heritage whose sole purpose seems to be mapping out how the sceptre of government over the universe from the first consciousness, Phanes, the Divine Hermaphrodite, after being torn in half passes to the androgynous Dionysos once he is resurrected after his own dismemberment (Kern, 1972, fragment 170).<sup>7</sup>

In his heritage we see his transgression of boundaries as a god: as Zeus of the Heavens births Underworld goddess Persephone with earth goddess Demeter, then Dionysos from

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<sup>7</sup> Phanes hatches from the Cosmic Egg, who shares with Dionysos the epithets ‘*Bromios*’ (‘Thunderer’), ‘*Protogonos*’ (‘First-Born’) and the untranslated ‘*Erikepaios*’. In the context of Phanes, ‘First-Born’ seems appropriate as the first intelligence – however, for the generally accepted ‘last Olympian’, Dionysos would be a strange candidate for that role, reinforcing the continuity.

Persephone, or with the earth goddess Semele, we see Dionysos unite the highest of heavens to the deepest chasms of the underworld. In him as Phanes, all of creation was united.

As Dionysos sits on the throne of Zeus, he is undivided... at the same time indivisible and divisible, for such is the nature of the universe, which has rather the character of an aggregate and is held together by a totality whose parts are distinct.

Why are the Titans said to plot against Dionysos? Because they initiate a mode of creation that does not remain within the bounds of the multiform continuity of Dionysos.

Their punishment consists in the checking of their dividing activities. Such is all chastisement... (human) life is reduced to the utmost limit of differentiation... when we recover that lost unity, we become Dionysos, we attain what can truly be called completeness... Dionysos... is God of creation.

- Damascius, verses 4-7 in Uždavinys, 2004, pp.274-5.

The quote from the Orphic Damascius brings a few pieces of information to our attention. We see a clear reference to Hesiodic sacrifice being a repetition of Titanic murder, and therefore further dividing ourselves from nature, each other, and from greater divine potential within ourselves.

Dionysos' shattering is given credit as origin of thought, named the 'cosmic intelligence' that suffuses the universe, and also the origin of all things unto which all things return – a position held by Phanes.

Something Damascius does not entertain is the implication of unity: unity demands ambiguity, the combination of good and evil, creation and destruction, the Divine *and* Titanic. Destruction here does not take the form of division, but instead as reunion. A primordial being representing *phusis* and the transgression of boundaries, Dionysos inherently opposes humanity's need to divide.



From this, Dionysos continues to defy the boundaries that separate any dichotomies in Grecian culture. Chapter 4 places this in a cultural context, here we will look at some of the myths that depict this.

As the one descendent of all the Earth Mothers, he is the manifestation of the world of wilderness and nature. Where panthers, women, and satyrs hunt, where he sleeps under roofless temples, and the laws of man are broken by ill-fated gender-defying souls like Atalanta and Adonis, who abuse the Dionysiac forces of seduction, and disregard all laws of the city. They are ill-fated because they turn against human nature, the linear evolution of humanity, to return to Dionysiac primitivity that manifests as *phusis*.

Grecian *polis* attempts to extricate itself from nature, not only to protect itself from the elements but also to protect itself from its hatred in its ambivalence toward nature. The state of *phusis* both provides and destroys. The ambivalence to nature results in a desperate attempt towards autonomy and self-preservation. *Polis* thus loathes nature for its own dependency on nature. However, that development of *polis* does not remove itself completely from nature as it still needs the land for resources. What cannot be tolerated is the breaching of *phusis* into *polis*.

Before we can talk about ritual behaviour and marginalisation as a way to invite *phusis* into *polis*, we must first become acquainted with Dionysos' own invasion of *polis*. In Grecian myth, this occurs as his *Epidemia* – myths and festivals of the god's arrival into the city.

Being strange is a very important aspect of Dionysos. But by saying he is the 'God who Comes' (Otto, 1965, p. 79) he must come from somewhere else, and his arrivals are often the central part of his myths. This is important since this arrival is rarely just an appearance at the city gates, it is a penetration into a closed space, unexpected and unannounced. Finally, the

antagonists in these myths, if there are any, find that even the once secure realms of their mind have been broken into by the stranger god.

The word ‘epiphany’ is to ‘bring to light’, which did not always refer to our modern concept of the word meaning a realisation – often the realisation they were in the presence of Dionysos comes all too late to the humans in the myths. Here, epiphanies refer to any manifestation of the god, like the sudden manifestation of ivy and vines, wine, honey, milk – or even emotions and mental states, like madness, rage, amorous desire, or insatiable hunger (for animal or human flesh); the unifying aspect of Dionysos’ epiphanies being their unpredictable, volcanic, sudden nature (Information all easily accessible throughout Kerényi, 1976; Otto, 1965; Seaford, 2006; and many more texts ancient and modern).

Under ‘epidemic’, we study the Greek understanding of the word ‘*Epi-Demos*’ – ‘Upon the People’. It is fascinating how a word referring to the arrival of deities into a city translates today into a word for plague. Most cities had fixed dates through the year for certain deities where a festival including large sacrifices would be held. Some would argue it was the sacrifices that brought the gods there. Dionysos had festivals too, which were a central aspect to his mainstream, non-occult worship – but myths focus on his sudden, unexpected arrivals, often unseen, but always chaotic. His epidemics are demanding, insurgent, and tragic for those who fail to recognise him and give him his due in *theoxenia* (the art of caring for a god when in your presence). If angered, his epidemic can quickly translate to mass hysteria, city-wide venereal disease, sterility and/or priapism, familial murder and/or cannibalism (Otto, 1965, pp. 74-9. The scope of the reference is much more extensive than just its immediately preceding text).

Another manifestation is in the form of the introduction of wine or viticulture, as he introduces wine to Athens through Ikarion. Finally, in the form of his ambassadors, like a

mortal named Phanes the Apparitor, or the people of Eleuther who brought his idol to Athens in myth (Detienne, 1989, pp. 7-8).

He arrives in several contradictory guises. Dionysos presents many faces in his myths, and his imagery varies as much as his personality. He is glorified as *Agathos Daimon* (Good Spirited), in the same breath as *Omestes* or *Omadion* (Eater of the Raw Flesh, Lord of Raw Flesh), he is *Eiraphiotes* (Goat-kid) as well as *Aigobolos* (Goat-Slayer). He is both *Auxites* (Giver of Increase) as well as *Anthroporraistiai* (Crusher of Men). An androgynous youth (*Androgynos*, *Anandron*), as well as a bull-like monstrosity (*Dikeretos*, *Tauropon*). He cures madness (*Lusios*), as well as inflicts it (*Bakcheion*) (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 68-73; Detienne, 1989, pp. 23-6).

In the exhaustive accounts of arrival stories presented by Kerenyi (1976, pp. 129-85), supported by the work of Dodds (2004), Detienne (1979, 1989), Otto (1965) and Seaford (1994, 2006), I have selected primarily the Triumph myths for study.

These stand out among his myths as those where Dionysos appears in his most concerning aspect: purifier and destroyer. Stories of his fertility and blessings are manifold (Frazer, 1994; among others), and are countered by the Triumphs. In these, Dionysos is rejected for being too alien (*xenos*), ambiguous in too many ways: foreign though claiming to be Greek, male and female, mortal but immortal, human and god. Moreover, these myths most directly accuse him of his cruelty being ungodly and excessive, for no god should behave in such a way (Euripides, *The Bacchae*, lines 1340-50). These stories exemplify the ambivalence felt towards his simultaneous benevolence and malevolence, he does not just punish those who have wronged him, but the entire royal family suffers the price, and so do

their descendants. These myths will primarily include those of Pentheus and the House of Kadmos, the Minyades and the House of Minyas, and King Lykourgos.

Moreover, what will be important are myths where qualities associated with *phusis* and its lack of rules or structure come into the city. Among these tales are those of Oedipus and the House of Oedipus, and the royal house of Troy. These are well documented by Seaford (1994) and others, and play a part in depicting the threat to the city posed by Dionysos and the Dionysiac. The god who benefits the city also poses a threat to it. Similarly, those akin to Dionysos and his worshippers are considered harbingers of the Dionysiac, and intimately associated with *phusis*.

The explanation we have been presented with for his ambiguous behaviour is really his association with the unbound *phusis*, and his tolerance of an ambiguous reality unperceived by humankind. Dionysos as a cosmic intelligence with an unknowable ambiguous agenda evokes a comment from Maenads in *The Bacchae*: ‘But cleverness is not wisdom, nor is thinking on things unfit for mortals’ (Euripides, 1850, Buckley tr. lines 395-399).

This comment, ‘Cleverness is not wisdom’, ‘*To Sophon d’ ou Sophia*’, has been translated in various manners. Here, *Sophon* can be translated as knowledge in a skill through which intelligence attempts to communicate itself, but is very different from truth, using a Platonic understanding; whereas *Sophia* is wisdom since the Maenads of *The Bacchae* use it to reference the wisdom of far off gods, like Dionysos whose intentions are unknowable to humans.<sup>8</sup>

I believe Dionysos’ wisdom is the central issue in Euripides’ *The Bacchae* (lines 1330-90), not the issues of *theoxenia* (welcoming the gods) that is used to interpret the play. The conclusion of the play draws our attention to whether or not Dionysos’ wrath is justified as he

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<sup>8</sup> Further information on this subject can be found in Versnel, 1990, p.176-7.

dismantles the entire house of Kadmos, replaces the idols of the Olympians with all his own, and soon Thebes faces arguably Dionysiac plagues and monstrosities, even though he becomes its patron deity.

Both in the city, and outside it, he breaks the laws that bind any single thing. For this thesis, this sets up the Dionysiac as the mythical primal state that translates into the psychological primal state represented by him and his myths, and the emergence of the *polis* in opposition to him, to be analysed in the following chapters.

The next section presents data on Dionysiac ritual action in opposition to *polis* cult, and its significance theorised by ancient authors like Aristotle, but developed on by Detienne.

## 2.2. Ritual in the Dionysos Cults

This chapter will present an overview of the Dionysos cults' rituals and myths pertaining to the thesis to be analysed in the psychoanalytic sections of the thesis. Certain key themes will orient the study of Dionysos cult: the subversion of taboos; the acts of ingestion and incorporation of the foreign; the nature of personal, psychological, cultural boundaries and their transgression; and the internal arising of ambivalence associated with said Dionysiac realms of life.

What is unique about the Dionysos cults in Greek religion is its adoption of communion or identification rituals.

This section compares the methods of identification with Dionysos presented in Grecian sources. It presents Detienne's ideas on alternate sacrificial methods of the Dionysos cults as a subversive act, how the katabatic/downward-moving ecstasy of the Dionysiacs

opposes the anabatic/upward-moving initiations of the Orphics, and how these conflicting methods shared similar goals.

Once I have looked at the presence of identification with Dionysos in his cult and in Grecian culture, I will present Detienne's comparison of *polis* ritual to Dionysos cult ritual, the latter of which relies on aforementioned identification with the realm of Dionysos. There are the Maenadic ecstatic experiences, where the women afflicted by the Bacchic madness involves the Maenads being possessed by Dionysos via *enthousiasmos* (to be filled with god), usually by the eating of sacramental sacrifice (where Dionysos is manifested in the eaten meat). Then there are the initiation rites of the Dionysiac Mysteries, gathered from pottery and murals, showing male and female initiates going through a *hierosgamos* ritual to achieve apotheosis as Dionysos and Ariadne (or possibly Semele) (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 360). There are also the multiple rituals of initiation and ascendance in Orphic cult to ascend to a higher state of consciousness with the god over the period of several lifetimes (Graf and Johnston, 2007; Kerenyi, 1976).

This chapter questions where the boundary lies between Dionysos and his worshippers' bodies, and how that boundary is penetrated by them. For the thesis, this explains the permeability of identity and boundary being reflected in socio-political transgression via *cultus*. That will allow us to proceed to looking at boundaries in the psyche, between subject and object, and *polis* and *phusis* as an externalisation of those boundaries.

I'll begin by looking at Detienne's analysis of the boundary of the self and the body as Bacchic, and therefore penetrable by Dionysos. This involves data collected from *cultus* sources of myth, ritual and theatre, dancing manuals, philosophy, texts on childrearing, medicine and anatomy.

### 2.2.1. Philology of the Blurring of Boundaries and the Bacchic Body

This understanding of the Dionysiac capability to cross boundaries of not just space, but also the body and psyche is accomplished using Detienne's philological analysis of common terms occurring in Dionysos cults and the various meanings and contexts of those terms. The following section presents the key points of Detienne's philological critique, since it sets the Grecian perception of bodily boundaries very clearly, and I feel the reader would be best acquainted with this before the analysis of chapters 4 and onward. With my research in the area of the Dionysiac, Detienne's work is best sifted through to remove any unsupported claims, revealing these valuable insights, rather than directing the reader to read through his entire texts that have sufficient obstacles hidden in the work. It will also integrate research from other scholars like Kerényi (1976) to add to Detienne's findings. Though multiple scholars agree that the body is Dionysiac and that is what allows communion through ecstasy to take place (see, Kerényi, 1976; Otto, 1965; and others), Detienne provides a thorough philological and structural analysis to support the hypothesis. Where I reference the original text is my findings from the source texts, their translations, or my interpretations of the Greek.

Within the context of Dionysos cults, these terms and turns of phrase are normally associated with his epiphanies. Let us explore what is meant by 'epiphany' in a cult context.

#### **Dionysiac Epiphany**

It is important, first, to define 'epiphany'. The Greek '*epiphanein*' comes from '*epi*' – 'on, to'; and '*phanein*' – 'show'; in Ancient Greek, this would mean 'manifestation'. In modern, common terminology, 'epiphanies' describe sudden realisations, whereas it also referred to manifestations of unseen forces, especially deities. When used in the context of myth and

theology, an epiphany refers to manifestations of the deity in corporeal form tangible to humans, and sacred to the god (e.g.: ivy and grapevines are sacred to Dionysos). For this thesis, this will help provide context for the symbols and themes we will see recurring through the thesis.

In physical state, the epiphanies of Dionysos include vines (ivy or grape), wine, honey, fire, among others (including his animals, like bulls, he-goats, snakes, and panthers). In psychological state, ecstasy and madness can be seen as a Dionysiac epiphany.

Detienne draws attention to the ‘sudden and spontaneous’ (Detienne, 1989, p. 53) nature of these actions that spring, spurt, burst, gush and leap. Be it women’s sudden possession by Dionysos, or the sudden surging of his epiphanies, the wine from the ground, or the ivy that shields the foetal Dionysos from fire and lightning – they are ‘*ex automatou*’, automaton, spontaneous. ‘*Automata*’ is used by Euripides (line 447) for when the chains fall off the Maenads ‘of their own accord’ (line 447, 1850), or ‘on their own’ (line 447, 2005). Dionysos’ religious epiphanies, and bodily expressions in the worshipper, are of their own accord, and are characterised by their immediacy.

Greek cults revolve around the importance of symbolism. Not everything must be spelt out literally, giving space for contemplation and analysis. Symbols, more associated with imagery, would therefore be associated with the epiphanies; whereas semantics, being associated with language, denote the layers of meaning in a term (Barsalou, 1999). For example, a piece of pottery could display a confrontation between two individuals, but the presence of a rabbit or hare implies there is an erotic nature to this encounter, with rabbits being an epiphany of Aphrodite.



The language of the cult betrays a belief that the boundary between Dionysos and his worshippers is slim, if non-existent, especially in a state of ecstasy. There are times when the nature of that permeable boundary is also stated plainly; for example, the Greek word,

*'Trupheron'* in *The Bacchae*:

'Though only sustaining the character of the servant of Dionysos, the Bacchant has all the bloom, luxuriance, and fragrance which the Greek attributed to the god himself.'

- *The Bacchae of Euripides*, 1917, p 81.

Detienne (1989) devotes a large part of his work to looking at the language of Dionysos cults. This would involve unifying common themes in literature. By analysing the semantics of Dionysos cults, Detienne (1989) identifies key Dionysiac themes and terms – and placing them in the context of the era they were used in, and the popular use of those words, using higher criticism, enlightens readers to the deeper and implied meanings of the terms. This helps ground my work in a materialist manner in a Grecian context.

Detienne's (1989) reasoning in this text is to survey the 'physiological basis' of the Dionysiac experience reflected in the cults' language and Dionysos' epiphanies. The physiological basis of many of these terms: the movement of the Maenad reflected in the ivy; or the pulsing of the heart and blood in the grape and wine, was to give Detienne the ability to argue that Dionysos is the stranger existing *within* his worshipper, giving us the material to argue that Dionysos transgresses the boundaries of body and psyche. This was accomplished by looking at the use of the terms in not only in the context of Dionysos cults, but outside as well. The Bacchic body was the divine epiphany expressed through the worshipper's body. Dionysus unveils the vulnerability of the body whose strength is taken for granted, as Zeitlin states, tragedy (governed by Dionysos) highlights the 'misadventure of the human body' (1985, p. 69).

## The Bacchic Step

Euripides' *The Bacchae* often draws attention to the Bacchante's feet and legs, e.g.: 'And the Bacchante, rejoicing like a foal with its grazing mother, rouses her swift foot in a gamboling dance.' (Buckley tr., 1850, lines 165-9).

The translation by J. Roux referred to by Detienne, translates line 169 as 'she springs forward with a quick thrust of her leg' (1972, in Detienne, 1989, p. 46). Detienne draws attention to Agave's 'bacchic step' as she brings her son's head mounted on her *thyrsos* back to Thebes. He argues the foot or leg is a key part of the Bacchic body. It displays that the movement of the legs and the dance are central to the Dionysiac experience and ecstasy.

Pratinas, the Athenian dance instructor in 500 BCE, taught the 'bacchic step' to the satyr dancers – calling out to the 'Prince crowned in ivy; note the movement of the right foot, its kick' (Hyporchemus, in Detienne, 1989, p. 46). It is the same instruction that Dionysos, in the guise of a foreign priest, teaches to Pentheus in *The Bacchae* to sneak into the *thiasos* dressed like a Maenad; to raise the *thyrsos* at the same time as the right foot (lines 941-943, Euripides, 2005). Even in Sophocles' *Antigone* (lines 1140-5, 1891), Dionysos is summoned to cleanse Thebes by the dance.

Detienne points out how the Bacchic body's foot begins the dance, inevitably leading to the 'foal' like skipping and leaping (*pedan*), and its variation 'to leap away from' (*ekpedan*). Ancient Greek linguist Didymos draws attention to the word *pedan* when discussing the origins of the word '*askoliasmos*'. *Askoliasmos* was a game played by boys and men on the Dionysos festivals of the Dionysia and Anthesteria (after the sacrifice of a he-goat) that involved leaping, one-legged, onto greased goat wine-skins and then hopping on them without falling over – after having their equilibrium already compromised by wine. It is the murky etymology of this game's name that highlights interesting aspects of Dionysos: on the

one hand, the etymology for ‘raised leg’ (*ana-skelos*) was lost and a false etymology put in its place. It was assumed the name may have come from the homonym of the word ‘*askos*’, for goat-skin (Detienne, 1989, pp.47-8).

On the subject, Kerényi (1976, p. 324) says the ancient scholar Hyginus pointed out a more significant purpose for these rituals besides being hilarious for the players and onlookers. Jumping on the goat wine-skin was a punishment for the he-goat that was sacrificed – in providing the body that contained Dionysos at the time of sacrifice, it was assumed that the goat played a part in his murder as well. Thus, the performance both allowed for amusement after the ordeal, and was meant as a ritual of atonement for the he-goat itself, in its sin against Dionysos.

Returning to Detienne, *Ekpedan* appears again in Dionysiac context, but as a homonym to ‘leap away from’. Euripides (line 705) uses the word ‘*ekpedan*’ in relation to gushing water: ‘The one of them, taking a thyrsus, struck a rock with it, and water *gushed* out, fresh as dew’ (lines 704-6, 2005).

There is further entwining in terminology according to Detienne: the *pedan* of the bull that will be chosen for sacrifice, and *ekpedan* of wine into unopened casks appears in an Elean ritual of *Thuia* – ‘Boiling’. This term, besides its culinary implications, has common appearance in Dionysos’ epiphanies. The discussion of fire and boiling leads us into understanding of the Dionysiac and the penis, which is important for discussing phallic significance, Otherness, and fear of castration in the main arguments of chapters 4 to 6.

### **Fire and Boiling**

The *Thuia* festival ritual was said to have been pioneered in Elis (one of the many rumoured birthplaces of Dionysos) by Thuia of Parnassos (the mountain sacred to Dionysos, as well) –

mythically the first to lead the orgies under Dionysos' flag (Pausanias fragment 10.6.4, in Detienne, 1989, p.54). In Delphi, by her mountain, she was the Whirling One, who mastered the great winds and drove away the Persians from Delphi (Herodotus 7.178, in Detienne, 1989, p. 54).

Kerenyi (1976, pp. 217, 360) tells us this is the mountain the manic *Thuiades* ('Boiling Ones'), worshippers of Dionysos and his mother Semele, deified post-mortem as *Thuone* ('The Enflamed') lived on. The epithet references two aspects of Semele: her fiery death and her abilities to enflame worshippers with ecstasy as goddess of the ecstatic mania. In the caverns of sacred Parnassos, the Bee Women fed on honey and pollen till they would become 'effervescent' (*thuiein*) and prophecy (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 49). The immediacy of bursting into flame is evocative of the sudden spurting of wine in casks, *ex autamatou*.

But what is the relationship between fire and the body?

Besides the enflaming of Maenads mentioned above, fire also appears regularly as a Dionysiac epiphany, most often confined *within* the body. Fire in the body is repeated in Dionysos of Rhodes, who is called *Thuonidas* – 'Who enflames', 'like fire' – and whose idol is a fig-wood penis (Farnell, 1977, p. 197). The penis is not unusual for Dionysos, after all, he himself carved a fig-wood penis for himself in a katabatic myth (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 260), but it is interesting to note an inscription in Chalcis (Veyne, 1985) calling the elected phallus-symbol-bearer: '*Thuonophore*', The Fire-Bearer.

### **The Body as Bacchic**

Dionysos' epiphanies are sudden, uncontrollable, and of their own accord, like the bursting of wine, vine and flame; mirrored in the bodily epiphanies of spurting blood from arteries, tumescent penises, and maddened, effervescent women. We see now, how Greek semantics

draw all these terms into the interpretations of Dionysos' and his sacrificed animals' most prized organs that he and they are so often separated from. These are the heart and penis, those which dance of their own accord.

About these organs, Detienne (1989) draws attention to the ancient mythic and secular works referring to these powerfully sacred organs of the Bacchic body and their expression. Homer's *Iliad* (in Detienne, 1989 p. 57) compares Andromache to a Maenad ('She is like a maenad') with her 'palpitating heart' (*pallomene kradien*) in her grief. Plato's *Symposium* (Plato, 1925a, 215e), compares Socrates to Dionysos' tutor and leader of the Sileni, Silenus; and even to his minister, Marsyas the Satyr. Here, Socrates' words make Plato 'worse than a *Korybante*' ('wild fanatic', 1925a), the ecstatic protectors of the infant Dionysos. They make his 'heart leap' (*kardia peda*) and tears 'gush forth' – again drawing attention to the gushing, leaping, and heart of the Bacchic body in ecstatic revelry.

Taking Detienne's (1989, p. 58) observation and explaining it from the source texts, Plato then brings attention to Dionysos' inherent presence in the human body *from birth* in book 2 of *Laws*:

There is a secret stream of story and report to the effect that the god Dionysus ... brought in Bacchic rites and all the frenzied choristry, and with the same aim bestowed also the gift of wine. These matters, however, I leave to those who think it safe to say them about deities; but this much I know,—that no creature is ever born in possession of that reason, or that amount of reason, which properly belongs to it when fully developed; consequently, every creature, during the period when it is still lacking in its proper intelligence, continues all in a frenzy, crying out wildly, and, as soon as it can get on its feet, leaping wildly (*'ataktos au peda'*).

- Plato, 1967-8, pp. 672e 5 - 673a 10.

In this quote, Plato makes sly use of the word ‘choristry’ to reference both dance and song; as well as body and mind. Here, Plato (1967-8) comments that the ‘frenzied’ motion ascribed to life is exhibited in the body of all infants and children, caused by Dionysos, who also as adults, brings it to rhythm (1968, pp. 653d, 664e, 665b, 666a, 671e, 672d). He in fact describes this frenzied, thrashing nature as ‘*all fire*’ (664e) that can be simmered down, but not entirely removed from mankind; and how Dionysos’ wine can both soothe this misery, or aggravate it (653d). This frenzy must be tamed, but without it, there would be neither rhythm, nor harmony – and in fact this control is achieved by counteracting the frenzy with rhythm, fighting fire with fire; hence the singing and rocking motion by mothers and carers of the infant’s fiery, Bacchic body (1967-8, Book 7, 790c). In fact, Plato claims that this singing and movement is necessary to calm both: infants and their ‘grievous palpitation (*pedeais*) of the heart’ (791a); and *Korybantism* (790d). Plato is thus claiming that the unrestrained thrashing of the body, indeed the Bacchic body, is rooted in the leaping (*pedan*), palpitating (*pedeais*) dance of the heart, forever dancing on the body’s entrails from embryo, till death. This relates us back to the beginning of the section, on the Bacchic step. For Plato, Dionysos’ epiphany is expressed bodily through the heart, then the rest of the body.

Plato delves into the anatomy of the fiery heart in *Timaeus*: passion excites the ‘leaping of the heart’ (*pedeais tes kardia*) caused by the ‘heavenly fire’ (Lamb tr., 1925b, 70c).<sup>9</sup> He explains the gods placed the ‘bloodless lungs’ to cool the ‘burning heat’ (1925b, 70c-70d).

Staying in the realm of anatomy, Aristotle’s *Generation of Animals* (1943, 740a-743a) claims that dissections show the heart is the ‘first principle’, the first organ to grow in a body, and the last to die. It is the origin of sensation and the seat of Soul (Aristotle’s capitalisation),

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<sup>9</sup> A detail Detienne really should have pointed out, as it links divinity with the body and the Bacchic – as well as Promethean fire and fire of sacrifice.

which the embryo inherits from semen. It is supposedly formed of the condensation of blood, and is restored by it – it is burning, and sends that fire to each limb in blood, intimately knowing every cell, spreading its heat and need to leap.

Detienne (1989, p. 60) notes from Aristotle's *On the Motion of Animals*, the heart is not alone in its movements. He ends his treatise by discussing the non-voluntary motions of animals; the organs that move *ex automatou*: the heart and penis. Here he discusses how both rely on heat, and how their movements are unregulated. He gives them enough autonomy to call them organisms unto themselves. The heart is the seat of Soul, and the penis contains enough Soul to release (*spurt, burst, gush*) for an embryo to be filled with Soul – the seminal fluid 'is in a sense a separate vital organism' (1912, 703b).

Taking these associations back to the context of rituals of Dionysos, I find that both within Dionysiac Mysteries and in Orphic cult, peculiar attention was given to these 'involuntary organs'. Plutarch (in Kerényi, 1976, p. 44) mentions that Dionysos *Liknites* (Dionysos in the Winnowing Basket) is resurrected by the Boiling Women on his sacred Mount Parnassos, and is often associated with his infancy or resurrection. Similarly, a later Roman image shows us a *thyrsos*-wielding Maenad and satyr dancing, holding up the infant Dionysos in a winnowing basket (Figure 1). This is, of course, a mythic scene; but a *ritual* scene shows Dionysiac women around a winnowing basket containing a mask of Dionysos as his representative (Figure 2). The relevance of the basket and the scene of resurrection to my previous discussion of the heart and the penis is made clearer in the following material.



Fig. 1: Dionysos in the *lignon*, swung by a Maenad and satyr. Terracotta relief from a Roman building. London, British Museum.



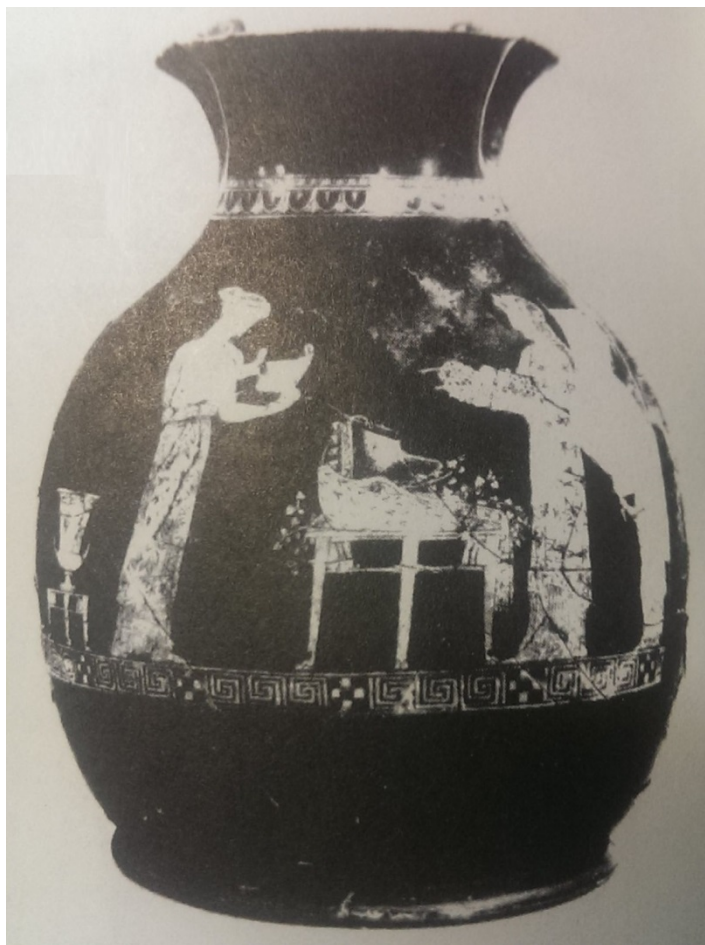


Fig. 2: Rite around a *liknon* containing an ivy-crowned mask. On a chous by the Eretria painter.

Athens, Vlasto Collection.

I continued to study this relationship between the heart and penis further, looking at their similarity and significance in Dionysiac myth. The *Orphicorum Fragmenta*'s fragment 210 (in Kerényi, 1976, p. 260) discusses what happens immediately after Zeus incinerated the Titans who ate the infant Dionysos-Zagreus. Pallas Athena rushes to the scene, snatching the one organ neither cooked nor eaten: 'for they left only the knowing heart'. This heart, carried in a winnowing basket (*liknon*), would then be turned into a potion with which Semele would conceive Dionysos upon drinking. Earlier in fragment 199 (in Kerényi, 1976, p. 260) shows Dionysos-Zagreus being brought to Olympus in a *liknon*, under another name:

Dionysos *Kradiaios*. This epithet is thought by Kerényi to be a pun on ‘*kradia*’ (heart), and ‘*krade*’ (fig tree), which references the material the phalli of Dionysos are carved from, both by himself and his worshippers. Semele’s non-copulated conception reminds us of Aristotle’s hypothesis that the penis is what transferred Soul into the uterine vessel to create life – that will contain Soul primarily in the heart (1912, 703b).

But, the most revealing information comes in the form of certain reliefs or friezes. One such frieze from the Villa of Mysteries in Pompeii (in Kerényi, 1976, p. 359) shows the winged goddess Aidos (‘*Shame*’) beating Bacchantes away from the *liknon* as they try to unveil it (Figure 3). A relief currently at the Louvre (Kerényi, 1976, p. 273) shows a Bacchante unveiling the *liknon*, with an ithyphallic man moving toward it, whereas a winged goddess is repelled by its contents (Figure 4). And finally, a relief showing an initiation ritual unveils the contents of the *liknon* held above a man’s head: a phallic symbol surrounded by fruit (in Kerényi, 1976, p. 377) (Figure 5).



Fig. 3: Before the uncovering of the phallus. Mural in the Villa dei Misteri, Pompeii.



Fig. 4: The uncovering of the phallus. Terracotta relief from a Roman Building. Paris, Louvre.



Fig. 5: Scene from the initiation of a man. Terracotta relief. Hanover, Kestner Museum.

The child and the mask that he is identified with in the *liknon* in these images show us how closely identified Dionysos is to what is carried in the *liknon* in myth and ritual. Myth shows us Athena carrying the heart that will resurrect the dismembered god, but ritual shows us how his member would be carried in it instead. I relate this to Detienne's claim about a relationship between the heart and penis (1989, p. 60) and believe that, the heart and the penis are identified with each other as life-giving and fiery (*thuia*), leaping and gushing (*pedan*), spontaneous and autonomous (*ex automatou*), and with the god himself in the Bacchic body.

On a separate but related note to the penis and birth in the *liknon*, Detienne references the Hippocratic records in *De Natura Pueri*, to compare the growth of the embryo and the fruit, that both are 'boiled' (*thuia*) to fruition. Dionysos is not then a god with 'power over others', but '*within*', that is defined by the spirit of potentiality and growth within the growing body, as seen in Aristotle's *dunamis* – used to describe the emergence of potential from actual, and the growth of fertilised flower into full fruit (1989, p. 61). I interpret this as not just as a Grecian anatomical phenomenon, but a psychical one as well; a representation of the potential of development from an undifferentiated and ambiguous whole.

The investigation of the Bacchic body displays how the semantics of Ancient Greece open a greater understanding of Dionysiac myth. The Dionysiac epiphany is sudden and volcanic in movement and ferocity, and this epiphany is mirrored in the actions of his frenzied worshippers. The immediacy and motion of his ivy, vine, wine and fire is reflected in heat, leg, penis and the very heart of this vivisection. This demonstrates the importance of identifying with the god – of possession by him – and the way in which his expression emerges from *within* the sacramental sacrifice and Bacchante. It represents the boundaries of the body – and correspondingly, the psyche – being fragile, and those boundaries themselves being manufactured from the Dionysiac whole. The epiphanies that dominate both nature and

the nature of the human body portray them as Dionysiac. I assert that the Bacchic body and the undifferentiated psyche must be tamed and infringed upon by society for *polis* participation. Identity must be carved out of the undifferentiated psyche the way *polis* is carved out of *phusis*, while also being aware of the potential of the return of the Dionysiac that penetrates those boundaries.

This above discussion of the importance and presence of Dionysos in the body of the sacramental sacrifice and worshippers leads to the exploration of sacrificial methods in the following section. It explores the methods of Hesiodic sacrifice to the gods of Ancient Grecian culture, and compares them to that of the Dionysos cults, which are drastically different. This is the primary focus of Detienne's *Dionysos Slain* (1979).

The rituals of two primary sects are compared and contrasted, with the reasons and goals of their methods analysed. On the one hand, there are the raw meat consuming Dionysiacs, and on the other, there are the Orphics with their strict anti-meat protocol inspired by the murder of Dionysos-Zagreus. This will prepare us for the main arguments of the later chapters, that the practice reinforces the foreignness of the worshippers as a subversive act against *polis* practised in myth, and presenting an argument for Dionysos as Freud's Primal Father figure (1913).

### 2.2.2. Hesiod and Prometheus, Versus the Orphics and Dionysiacs: *Polis* and *Phusis*

This section and Chapter 6 will show us how sacrifice and sacrificial methods play an important part in the defining of societal structure and the city's relationship with the gods in

Grecian culture. I will provide an overview of these sacrificial rites, as well as expand on some of their symbolic implications, to continue to a psychoanalytic reading of ritual's place in Grecian society in a later chapter. The following summary of the theory posited by Detienne's 1977 and 1979 texts argues that where Hesiodic sacrifice forms distinctions, *polis* from *phusis* and royalty from the rest of the city, men from women and those lacking access to political power, Dionysos' cults undid them. This forms the basis of this thesis' argument about the transgressive nature of the Dionysos cult and its use against the political structures of *polis*.

It is not just diet, but also methods of cooking that hold various significations in Grecian mythology and culture. Various examples of what seems like cannibalism in Greek myth cannot necessarily be classed together, since the significations of each myth are different. This analysis of cooking makes Detienne's work a fascinating addition to understanding the cultural and religious influence on the stratifications of Grecian society.

I notice, for example, Kronos and Zeus do not cannibalise their respective children, since they swallow their prey whole, keeping them alive in their bowels (Hesiod, 1914, lines 471, 886). In keeping with the theme of the psyche internalising the physical food, swallowing (not eating) Metis grants Zeus her cunning, and he even births her wise daughter from his forehead.

Swallowing and keeping alive is not at all similar to the process of cooking and eating adopted by the Titans who ate Dionysos, or Tantalus cooking his child for the gods, and thus cannot be equated as being the 'same' form of cannibalism: it does not involve murder.

Cannibalism in any form was only a modality of *allelrophagia* in Ancient Greek thought: *allelrophagia* meaning 'to eat one another' (Detienne, 1979, p. 55). Sacrifice initiated by Prometheus opened up a separation between humans, god, and animal, meaning that with

the distinction, humans eating animals is no longer considered allelophagia. However, if the distinction between them is once again removed, we find humans, god, and animal existing on the same plane, i.e. without a hierarchy separating them (Detienne, 1979, p. 55).

Understanding these intricacies will allow us to further grasp Dionysos' motivation in ritual and dietary violation.

Detienne (1977, 1979) posits that since it was Prometheus who had to introduce these rules of cooking, it is clear that before their introduction, this distinction did not exist. There is no transgression if there are no rules to transgress – the very era of *phusis* Dionysos governs. The establishment of this hierarchy means that there is a possibility of dismantling the hierarchy – and since the hierarchy is based on cuisine, it is via an alimentary process that the transgression and reversion to a primal state can take place. If Hesiodic sacrifice creates a division between god, humans, and animal to create civilisation and *polis*, undoing the acts of Hesiodic sacrifice undoes the hierarchy and *polis*.

How does Hesiod's Prometheus accomplish this? He roasts the *splankhna* (viscera) and *sarx* (flesh), then boils only the *sarx*, finally the thighs and fat for the gods. This is the inverse to the Titans grabbing the goat-kid Dionysos, boiling and then roasting him.

There is a whole Aristotelean problem in *Problemata* (1927) devoted to why the Greeks roasted then boiled their sacrificial meat. Aristotle asks if it is because the Orphics believed the Titans did the reverse, or if humans only learned how to boil after they knew how to roast? He also asks why separate parts of the animal were cooked in different manners, the *splankhna* roasted and the *sarx* roasted then boiled.

In city-wide sacrifice, those guilty of the crime of blood (in city-wide sacrifices this involves the *mageiros*, priests and royal personages), first sit to eat the *splankhna* before the cooked *sarx* is distributed. The 'inner circle' purify the blood crime in their complicity of



sharing the *mageiros'* guilt. The inner circle of *splankhneutes* – those who eat the viscera – not only purify the crime, but set themselves apart, and above, the rest of the community as scapegoats, representatives, and those who sit in the presence of the gods at the temple meal. This also reinforces their positions as representatives of the city, i.e.: a royal *oikos*.

Ancient philosophers expand on this, explaining that another function of sacrifice is to make a map of human evolution (and consequently, cultural and ethical evolution) in the sequence of sacrificial steps (Detienne, 1979, pp. 76-7).

Detienne (1979, pp. 76-7) tells us how Athenaeus saw humans as living in savagery before the culinary arts, and the roasting of *splankhna* marking a time between cannibalism and the use of spices in boiling *sarx*. He also states how Theophrastus marks the tossing of grain in front of the sacrifice as representing a time before humans knew how to cultivate. Therefore, we see the part played by salt and spices in ritual, as showing an evolution away from a Primal era of savagery, allelophagia, and *phusis*. As Athenaeus and Theophrastus see the eating of *splankhna* associated with early humans, Plato considers the primitive style of roasting as being opposed to civilised society – a powerful commentary on the important significance of cuisine in a society.

It is that point I'd like to stress – cooking was powerfully symbolic to all involved, something we might not take as seriously today if we viewed Grecian myth from a modern psychoanalytic lens. However, when placed in the context of the Grecian culture, we become aware of the importance it played in keeping the *polis* in order – allowing us to more easily understand the use of the psychoanalytic lens on the subject once its powerful significance is emphasised.

For Plato, it is important to discuss roasting otherwise we deny the savage history of humanity. For Athenaeus, it is knowing the spit came before the pot, and thus the cultural



evolution of humanity. For Aristotle, following the Titanic method is moving backward, and *subverts the cultural history where humanity learned to roast before boiling* (Detienne, 1979, p. 78).

In other words, the Titanic method is a deliberate attempt to reverse the flow of time and enforce an age of savagery via allelophagia. In the process, it also undoes the positive action of purification found in Hesiodic ritual, since it marks a movement toward civilisation and the capacity for morality. Only with a conscience will one seek out purifications for their misdeeds.

Allow me to elaborate, if it is the threat of allelophagia that separates god, humans, and animal, then gods and men have a wider gulf between them. Humans must summon the deathless gods using spices (flaming and incorruptible like the gods) to their rituals to feast on the scent of burning bones, fat, and spices, whereas men feed on cooked meat. Contrarily, the space between men and animals is far smaller – both mortal beings must feed to survive, and live amongst each other. Perhaps that is why Prometheus offered only domesticated animals as sacrifices, as a reminder of that separation, rather than already foreign wild beasts. Similarly, vegetarianism (like herbivores and sacrificial animals) risked ‘leading a bestial life’ (Porphyry, in Detienne, p. 56) by becoming like animals and allelophagic.

Prometheus establishes *polis* with the use of fire. First, he uses fire as the sacrificer that raises humans above animals via cooking animals. Second, he grants man the fire he used to cook sacrifices once Zeus withdraws man’s access to it (Hesiod, *Theogony*, lines 507-616). It is cooked food that enforces the *polis* hierarchy defined by Prometheus, but vegetarianism and raw meat (‘Man is not an animal that eats raw flesh’, Porphyry, in Detienne, p. 57) reject it.

Eating animals is allelophagic if men and animals exist on the same alimentary plane, without separation in bestiality, for ‘the son of Cronos has ordained this law for men, that fishes and beasts and winged fowls should devour one another, for right is not in them’ (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 1914, lines 276-8). Without sacrifice and cooking, there is no separation between humans and animal. Without a separation between humans and animal, all food is allelophagic, and thus bestial or primitive, and sends that back to the savage allelophagic times before they tasted cooked meat at the table of the Olympians. Committing allelophagia is sinful for men, and signifies the absence of civilisation or justice. Before Prometheus, no laws separated humans, god, or animal from each other, and once separated, established *polis*.

For the Greeks, it is cooking and Hesiodic sacrificial ritual that establishes the socio-political system of their culture – thus making religion inseparable from that socio-political structure. It is the primitive Aetolians who eat raw meat, the lawless barbarian Scyths who eat other men, these foreign, bestial, far-flung lands where Dionysos roams, forming a distinction between Greeks and non-Greeks (Detienne, 1979, p. 58).

Meat-eating and sacrifice at holy festivals was a city-wide communal event. It expiated their crimes, calmed the gods – but more tangibly, it fed entire cities, brought its people together, and established hierarchies by dividing the participants between the most privileged who sat at the sacrifice (priests and royalty), and those who were given the meat of the animals they supplied. To reject Hesiodic sacrifice was to reject the very tangible, real life results of sacrifice. What does this mean for this thesis? It means the royal family, the royal *oikos*, act as representative for the *polis* in these rituals, maintaining the status quo with strict ritual and sacrificial taboo. The violation of these taboos of sacrifice and cooking thus undermine the *polis*, invoking Dionysos and his era of *phusis*.

Two religious groups in Grecian history vocally rejected Hesiodic sacrifice, and both were cults of Dionysos: the Orphics, and the Dionysiacs.

The cults symbolically establish that the socio-political structure is alimentary, and allelophagia is the central element to rejecting it and its hierarchies.

Detienne elaborates (1979, pp. 62-3), if the above hierarchy exists as god above humans above animal, these cults have found a way of subverting the politico-religious structure via two symmetrical openings: one between humans and god; the other between humans and animal.

Orphics explore the former opening, attempting to transcend toward Dionysos by rejecting meat and living on a raw diet of vegetation to live a sinless life, expecting post-mortem apotheosis. The Dionysiacs and Maenads explore the latter, in ecstasy indulging in *omophagic* raw meat eating, descending toward the primitive animalism Dionysos resides in (Detienne, 1979, pp. 62-3).

By doing so, their oral indulgence and alimentary transgression destabilises the hierarchy in their community, thus bringing human, god, and animal into the same plane alongside each other rather than above or below – just as the primordial state of *phusis* Dionysos resides in and presides over is absent of a hierarchy between the three. The anabatic Orphics and katabatic Dionysiacs thus assault *polis* via the semiotics of sacrifice.

For the anabatic Orphics, allelophagia is not something practised by primitive foreigners, but takes place in the city-state, and is what ties the *polis* together. One of the most important Orphic teachings is to ‘abstain from murder’, including blood sacrifice and meat-eating. This

is due to them believing that indulging in any form of murder nurtures the Titanic aspect of humanity's nature (Detienne, 1979, p. 61).

This is inspired by the Orphic myth of the murder of Dionysos-Zagreus, boiled then roasted by the Titans. The Titanic method both marks a form of primitivity and a reversal of evolution (civilised boiling going backwards to primitive roasting). A sinful act that takes humanity away from the evolved gods and back to devolved animal/Titanic practice. Being made of the soot of the cannibal Titans renders humanity part-Titanic, resulting in them unconsciously repeating the murder in sacrifice, instead of glorifying the divine aspect in themselves by abstaining from meat (Detienne, 1979, p. 61).

By purifying oneself through vegetarianism, one bridges the gap between humans and god, eventually leading to an apotheosis after death (Graf and Johnston, 2007) – establishing no gap between humans and god. Similarly, by calling animal sacrifice 'murder', the Orphics insinuate that animals are seen as existing on the same alimentary plane as humans, they consider sacrifice a form of violent allelophagia – in this there is no separate one between humans and animal. In Dionysos' name, the Orphic cult removes the *polis* hierarchy established by Hesiod's Prometheus, where people either exist on the same plane as animals, or the same plane as gods. Violent allelophagia of the city-state stands across from the peaceful raw vegetarian allelophagia of the Orphics.

Detienne (1979, p. 62-3) explores the other symmetrical opening downwards from humans to animal, the katabatic Dionysiacs and Maenads indulge in ripping apart of live animals (*sparagmos*) and raw-meat eating (*omophagia*). Here, Maenads give succour to wild animals, whom they then tear apart and devour (Euripides, *The Bacchae*, lines 690-770). In ecstasy, they become like the animals they feed and hunt, as if suckling makes them like the animals,

and eating them raw like carnivores. Even if Maenads in practise did not perform *sparagmos* of live animals as in myth (as it is sometimes contested), there is evidence of the eating of raw meat (Henrichs, 1978). In this way, they become allelophagic, when they exist on the same plane as animals they are ‘cannibalistic’ – ‘for right is not in them’ (Hesiod, 1914, lines 276- 8). Women do not hold the *makhaira* sacrificial knife, and here Maenads resort to hands.

The eating of humans was not unheard of in reports of the time (whether or not they were sensationalised it is unknown), and Porphyry claims it was present amongst Dionysiacs since time immemorial in areas like Chios, Lesbos, or Tenedos, and according to his record of the Thracian Bassaroi Maenads devouring each other in ecstasy (Detienne, 1979, p. 63). We have seen in earlier cases like that of the Minyades and *The Bacchae* of Euripides how the eating of human flesh renders one *agos* (polluted), resulting in exile due to being tabooed by murder. In doing so, cannibalistic Dionysiacs have thus exiled themselves to the wild, the god who drove them to allelophagia demands they remain in his realm of *phusis* in the wilderness.

The Dionysiac cult demolishes entirely the Hesiodic hierarchy of *polis*. Here, Dionysos, instead of feasting on the scent of burning flesh and spices, gluts blood as the ‘Eater of Raw Flesh’ (*Omestes*). He charges amongst and inside his worshippers who have become animals themselves, possessed by god. They behave like animals, but perform miracles associated with the god. All three beings of god, human and animal exist on the same plane in the realm of *phusis*. It is an immediate return to a time before structured religion or civilisation, where even god becomes animal in human form, and humans become gods who acts like animals.

By undoing the politico-religious hierarchy set up in the society of *polis*, the Dionysos cults introduce their god into the city via the permeable boundary that is alimentary discourse between the physical and psychical. The outside breaks in, law is destabilised, and the

definition of humanity and its civilisation is called into question. This is accomplished by recreating allelophagic states where humanity either stands at equal plane with gods, or humans with animals – under the guidance of a being that equalises human, god, and animal.

This section has provided a foundation which will be built on for analysis in the following chapters. This understanding of Dionysos' association with *phusis* and its threat to *polis* and *polis* law will be understood from a psychoanalytic angle when placed in a sociocultural context to fulfil the aim of the thesis – that is, to provide an improved psychoanalytic reading of Dionysos to fulfil the methodological and political aims explored in the Introduction.

This analysis will begin with a literature review of pertinent psychoanalytic ideas, and the relationship between psychoanalysis and *cultus* scholarship.

## Chapter 3: Primary Psychoanalytic Concepts and the Field's Relationship with Mythology: A Review

So far, I have summarised as much of the relevant information regarding the Dionysos cult as necessary for this thesis. Amongst the data presented was Detienne's analysis and interpretation of the purpose of Grecian sacrifice and ritual in Hesiodic practice and Dionysiac practice. Dionysiac practice is unique in its goal: possession by the god via ecstasy and ingestion of the god manifesting in the sacrifice. An analysis of cultural attitudes to ingestion and body allowed us to understand how ingestion acted as a passage to communion with the divine, and the body and mind as being permeable, with the body and the baby being inherently Bacchic. As for the definition of Bacchic, when placed in a cultural context, the Bacchic is associated with *phusis*.

*Phusis* exists in opposition to *polis*, which emerged out of *phusis* through civilisation. *Phusis* is associated with the Dionysiac: it is symbolic for nature, infancy, primality, uncivilization and lawlessness. An undifferentiated space possessed by gods and animals, versus *polis* which houses humanity with its laws and duties. Dionysos, his worshippers, and characters adjacent to him appear in *phusis* as those who either belong to it by virtue of their being (e.g.: women, presented as a curse on man in Hesiod's writing), or those who reject *polis* in favour of *phusis*, with its freedom in exchange for danger and animalism – dangerous, since appearing in *phusis* already subjects one to the precarious and unpredictable nature of the wild and its ruthlessness. *Phusis* is presented as a space of Otherness and considered undesirable due to its association with the non-human, and the transgression of the animal/human/god threshold and hierarchy. The Dionysos cults used their approach to sacrifice as a way of defying and subverting the socio-political structure of the *polis*.

Chapter 2 also focused on the mythology of Dionysos. It explored the mythic and historical origins of Dionysos, that of him being a foreigner in myth, but in history being a Grecian deity since the twelfth or thirteenth century BCE. His existence as a god of simultaneous oppositions and transgressor of boundaries was explained, particularly his ambiguous nature and the ambivalence directed towards him as a god, who like nature and *phusis*, is giving and nurturing, while being violent, unpredictable and seemingly malevolent in his excesses. Dionysos as the traveller and foreigner, with his association with those outcast from *polis* is important to his nature as the epidemic god: the god who arrives in a city. He appears as a purifier, whether that purification is through introducing his cult or through punishing the *polis*' excesses. These excesses often appear in their denial of him, tyranny, or to claim those who have transgressed into *phusis*.

I wish to take a psychoanalytic lens to this information to the following ends: *Totem and Taboo* (1913) was a Freudian text that attempted to provide a theory of religion using psychoanalysis, following a trend started by several of Freud's disciples in the same area (something Freud initially avoided). However, there were several drawbacks to this text that made it a target for criticism by several scholars in fields from archaeology, to religious studies, to anthropology and others. First, it arguably provided a theory for psychoanalysis, not religion. Secondly, if it provided a theory of religion, it attempted to generalise a psychoanalytic concept across the globe, specifically that of the Oedipus complex in the Primal Horde scenario (which he treated as an actual event, or repeated event, but I treat as a notably masculinised *polis* phantasy).

I argue that the adequate approach to analysing religion using psychoanalysis is a responsible appreciation of placing both the myth and ritual in a social and political context



of the culture in question. The work of Detienne, Kerényi, Seaford and others has been useful here in finding the Dionysiac in the everyday of the Grecian: from shared mythemes in seemingly unrelated myths (*The Iliad*, *Oresteia*, Adonis, Atalanta, and others), to the merchant trade of spices, zoology, botany, medicine and anatomy, immigration laws, and political rights available to women, foreigners and those who did not conform to Grecian heteronormativity. Correspondingly, a psychoanalytic appreciation of a cult comes with the conditions that the interpretation can be made of only that cult with each study and must not be immediately generalised; there must also be an acknowledgment that the allegorical method is limited. The perception that religion is not something that can be accurately analysed by another discourse since it is a valid discourse in itself is, however, an idea that seems to rise to prominence in the mid to late twentieth century (e.g.: Blumenberg, 1977, p. 155; or see **Section 3.3.2.** for more). This is explored in this literature review. I wish to use Freud's ideas to take a second look at the Dionysos cult with the data collected to help understand the cult *within its social constricts*. This is particularly highlighted in Freud's assertion that Dionysos should be read as the son of the Primal Father instead of the Primal Father, which will be tackled. This approach points out the limitations of Freud's hypothesis while also finding the possible use of it.

This thesis also aims to bring out a primal level of ambiguity in the formation of the ego-subject (which provides it a sense of identity) in relation to the object and its correlates in society, such as civilization versus nature and wilderness. It will also examine the emergence of the superego in the process, which through its constraints, provides the ego a binding structure. It develops Freud's idea that the psyche is at first experienced in myth as a projection, then introjected as psychology. I ground my thesis in this area of psychoanalytic and mythological thinking and focus on Dionysos as the mythic match to this primal level of the psyche.

Dionysos in his ambivalence and itinerance, and his position as god of madness, acts as a harbinger for the return of the repressed. Psychoanalytically, *phusis* acts as a representation of the undifferentiated era of the psyche, as well as the repressed and denied, which is projected onto the Other and nature with humans' ambivalent relationship to each. In myth, Dionysos forces the self to witness the repressed Other in oneself. The thesis explores the hegemonic ego's self-definition from the id, thus creating the Other, which is mirrored by the *polis*' self-definition from *phusis*, and in the socio-political stratification of citizen and Other within *polis* – and how those processes are reinforced by religion, the performance of ritual, and myth. Dionysos figures in both processes, as the Other/*phusis* that can disrupt this process of boundary building, which is an inherently ambivalent act.

I argue that Dionysos is a mythic representation of the primal state of the psyche from which the ego must recognise itself, an ambivalent act since it gives Dionysos a threatening and ambiguous character of being both outside and within.

The impact of this work provides us with a more holistic approach to using depth psychology in relation to religion and *cultus* scholarship. It might be considered more demanding, but it is one that acknowledges the uniqueness of culture without imposition of the self-serving psychoanalytic aim,<sup>10</sup> which in *cultus* scholarship has, in the past, lent itself to arguably colonialist ends (in gross generalisations made of religions affected by European colonialism). Dionysos is a valuable god to study as one fascinatingly unique even in his own period. As a god of Otherness and ego-dissolution, of illusion, delusion and madness, he is almost too tempting to approach from a psychoanalytic angle. While doing so, we must keep in mind that *cultus* and psychoanalysis are both parallel discourses. This means with each successive interpretation we might be cycling

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<sup>10</sup> Such as the universal application of the Oedipal complex and penis envy as 'evidence' for psychoanalysis, as contested by Malinowski's study of Trobriand society (1927) and Horney's theory of Power Envy (1967).

closer to the truth, but each interpretation will still be a shadow of the truth suspended on the dust through which we study it <sup>11</sup> – an illusion the god of glammers would probably appreciate.

This literature review will analyse the pertinent psychoanalytic concepts of ambivalence, repression, splitting and projection, followed by an exposition and critique of *Totem and Taboo*. It will end with a reflection on the relationship between psychoanalysis and myth interpretation, from the allegorical approach and beyond. This provides the psychoanalytic foundation with which I will make my argument.

### 3.1. A Review of Primary Psychoanalytic Concepts

#### **Repression**

A concept to begin with that forms the foundation of Freud's psychoanalytic work, particularly in unconscious ego defences, is repression. 'The theory of repression is the cornerstone on which the whole structure of psycho-analysis rests' (Freud, 1914, p. 16). It involves the pushing of unpleasurable psychic material (desire, thought, memory, and other instinctual impulses) into the unconscious and made inaccessible until drawn into consciousness (via therapy) or imposed onto it (usually in the form a symptom), and makes an early appearance in Freud's work (Breuer and Freud, 1893).

It can stand alone as a defence, or as a mechanism necessary for the execution of other defences, such as projection or identification at the end of the Oedipus complex among others. In short, 'the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious' (Freud, 1915a, p. 147).

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<sup>11</sup> A shadow is still a *projection*.

It can also form the basis of identification and self-definition. For example, towards the end of the positive Oedipus complex where the son wishes to eliminate the father and pursue the mother, the son will likely be faced with castration anxiety. At the point, what Freud considers a ‘successful’ transition into the next sexual stage would be an identification with the father and repression of incestuous desire. First, a repression of incestuous desire involves the repression of said desire. Second, in order to identify with the father and pursue heterosexuality, the son will repress that which is societally associated with femininity in order to identify with masculinity.<sup>12</sup> These are two examples of repression that display the varieties in which it could work. On one hand, to avoid unpleasurable incestuous desire, and on the other, to define a manufactured boundary between what he is ‘allowed’ to identify with and what must not be identified with. Both repressions will still be present in the unconscious and evidence of unconscious bisexuality and incestuous desire (Freud, 1909).

This persistent unconscious presence of the repressed does make reappearances.

The return of the repressed is a process where the individual must face the repressed that is coming into consciousness, usually in a masked and thus ‘safer’ fashion.

The return occurs in different manifestations. For example, it can be that the repressed finds satisfaction in a substitute activity or wish (1939, p. 127), such as practices of totem animal sacrifices to indulge in the murder of the Primal Father that had been prohibited (Freud, 1913). It can manifest as a fear, such as animal phobia (Freud, 1915a, pp. 154-5), as in the case of ‘Little Hans’ repressed ambivalence to his father manifesting as a phobia of horses (Freud, 1909). The returning repressed in this manner is expressed in the sacramental sacrifice of Dionysos as discussed in chapter 6.

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<sup>12</sup> I stress ‘societally associated’ and ‘pursue heterosexuality’ since these concepts are not innate to the species. If the society, such as nineteenth-century Europe where these claims were made, places such a pressure on the individual to pursue these gendered expressions to avoid being marginalised, it is possible to see why a theorist like Freud would consider these the ‘natural’ course of sexual development. Today, we know this does not work. The pathologizing and marginalising of Queer gender and sexuality is explored in chapter 4.

Since this repressed material is indestructible and demands satisfaction in a substitute formation, the repressed can also be glimpsed consciously. This often delusional, hallucinatory or traumatic experience occurs due to the repression's return to consciousness follows the same associations with which it was repressed. 'In and behind the repressing force, what is repressed proves itself victor in the end' (Freud, 1907, p. 35), I follow this in chapter 4, where the phallus that the *polis* has been so determined to keep exclusive to a hegemonic group is unconsciously granted to marginalised individuals associated with the Dionysiac with their granted ability to threaten the boundaries of *polis* and *polis* identity. In chapter 5, this follows with Dionysos in mythology acting as the returning repressed, with his appearance igniting a series of delusions that draw the tragic figure's attention to their own Dionysiac repressions that only become clear in their madness.

In both psychoanalysis and in the Dionysiac, hostility to a loved object is often too traumatic to be tolerated, and is repressed, covered in the next section.

### **Subject's Ambivalence to Object**

A concept we must understand before continuing is the simplest but most pertinent, the subject/object dichotomy and the ambivalence in between.<sup>13</sup>

When I refer to the subject, I refer to the individual whose perspective and psychodynamics we are analysing. The ego seems to be an aspect of the psyche modified upon continued exposure to the external world and its objects, existing to relieve the subject in negotiation to the reality principle (Freud, 1923, p. 25). In early life, the ego is itself cathected with instinct, i.e., libido is focused around the ego through which pleasure is derived, making the source of pleasure internal and auto-erotic (in other words, the early ego is narcissistic) (Freud, 1915b, p. 134). The ego's

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<sup>13</sup> The primary object of interest in this thesis is the Other, which will be developed on in chapter 4.

relationship to the external world is passive in that it reacts to external stimuli, the ego-subject views the external-object as negligible unless it must react to it via muscular activity (Freud, 1915b, p. 132) – the ego-subject coincides with pleasure and loving whereas the external-object is with indifference, hating, or being loved (Freud, 1915b, p. 135).

With continued exposure to the external-objects and its obvious need for them to sustain itself, the ego-subject will come to recognise the external-objects as necessary for survival, and soon pleasure, as it continues to acquire them via introjection (a term borrowed from Ferenczi). For me, this is the ego-subject's first conscious experience of *phusis*, the external world of nature upon which the self is dependent to survive, regardless of the pleasurable or unpleasurable effects attached to it.

As the ego-subject begins to lose its narcissistic autonomy by engaging in introjection, the definition between internal and external grows vague. Upon this development, the external world must be divided into pleasurable objects which are internalised into itself, and unpleasurable objects which are removed from the self and externalised (see **Projection and Introjection** below). The narcissism gives way to the object stage, where a pleasurable object is sought out, but an unpleasurable one is repelled. Love is sourced in the erotic instinct toward finding pleasurable objects. Hate grows from the instincts of self-preservation, hate originates from the 'ego's struggle to preserve and protect itself' (Freud, 1915b, p. 138).

However, even the objects can be associated with love and hate simultaneously, providing a new challenge for the ego that demands to consume: ambivalence (Freud, 1915b, pp. 135-7).

Freud borrows this term from Bleuler, referring to an oscillation between love and hate (Freud, 1912, pp. 106-7). Freud finds it is most pronounced amongst neurotics – this powerful ambivalence causing this same neurotic conflict at the heart of obsessional neurosis and religion (Freud, 1913).

One of his highlight cases of ambivalence is that of ‘Little Hans’ (1909), where the boy’s phobia of horses was rooted in castration anxiety that occurred as a result of the Oedipus complex. Hans’ love for his father stood alongside his hate for his father’s perceived phallic dominance and fear of castration. This resulted in an ambivalent relationship to the phobic object (horses) rooted in an ambivalent relationship (to his father). Freud will soon (1926, p.102) come to add that the Oedipal conflict is rooted in this ambivalence. The phobia is a neurosis developed to deal with the conflict of ambivalence, by displacing hate from the object toward a substitute – rendering it phobic.

What Freud teaches us, is that ambivalence is rooted in the ego-subject’s struggle to preserve itself and its boundaries despite dependency on external objects, which is itself complicit to ingestion and expulsion/introjection and projection of objects both internal and external.

This relationship between internal and external objects is referred to today as ‘Object Relations’, and though it was a term used by Freud occasionally, it does not appear as a central thesis in his work. Since my thesis revolves primarily around Freudian ideas, I will be refraining from using this term as often, but it must be used in this literature review as we see how Freud’s ideas are developed in complex ways by Melanie Klein, to which we will return in a moment. Before we do so, let’s look at the ways in which Freud approached this process of introjection and projection.

### **Projection and Introjection**

In psychoanalysis, projection has been approached in various formats and portrays the psyche responding to various situations. In general, it can be defined as an unconscious defensive mechanism where psychic contents are imposed upon external objects, such as people or myths. Of the various ways in which psychological projection has been developed by Freud S., Freud A.

Klein, Jung, and others, this literature review will explore those most pertinent to the thesis (Freud) and the future work I wish to add to my work on Dionysos (Klein).

Focusing more on the Freudian interpretation of projection, the most common use of the term occurs as disowning projections, which is first recorded as a 'paranoic defence' in 1892, where a paranoic projects their initial self-reproach outside, claiming it was coming from the outside instead (pp. 208-9). Freud later expands the use of projection, but it retains an element of paranoia.

The earliest form of projection experienced by the psyche is as a defence against lack of satisfaction. When endogenous demands are too intense, they are projected onto an outside source in order to escape them. The once clearly delineated lines between internal (libidinous excitations) and external (the unpleasurable which can be defended against) begins to blur as maximising pleasure and minimising unpleasure is prioritised (Freud, 1920, p. 29).

Later, during ego-formation, projection and introjection are employed to once again strengthen the separation between the ego-subject and external-objects/world, as seen in the previous subsection.

Further examples of projection acting as a paranoic defence occur in the case in phobias (1915c, pp. 183-4), where psychical conflicts are repressed and projected out onto a substitute, to protect the conscious mind from the nature of the internal conflict. The above example of Little Hans and the Oedipus complex (1909) is a quintessential case of such a substitutive projection. The anxiety of the ambivalent relationship to his father, caused by Hans' desire for his father, desire to kill and usurp his father, and his fear of the father are projected out onto a suitable animal substitute: horses. This form of projection is of interest to this thesis with its relationship to that which exists outside the ego's self-definition and in the construction of mythology.



As a means of defence when engaging in repression, repressed content is expelled from the psyche as a way of defending itself against acknowledging its internal presence. This pollutes the object of projection, but preserves the ego-subject. What the ego-subject refuses to accept in themselves is repressed into the unconscious, split from the self, and projected outward. This is a consequence of ego-subjectivity and a daily practice, but in extreme cases results in obsessional neurosis (1913, 1915a) and in delusions upon the return of the repressed which marks the ego's fragility and change (Freud, 1892, p. 226).

When it comes to the construction of mythology, and religion as a form of obsessional neurosis, Freud states that the relationship between unconscious factors is projected into the 'construction of a supernatural reality, which is destined to be changed back once more by science into the psychology of the unconscious' (Freud, 1901, pp. 258-9). This is particularly developed in cases of superstition (1901) and animism (1913), where unconscious activity is given an almost omnipotent status, and is considered to possess the ability to either control the outside world (animism, where desire shapes reality), or occurrences in the outside world would control the individual's fate even though the source is unconscious (superstition). Similarly, religion displays this current and counter-current of the individual shaping reality through magic or prayer or ritual, as well as external forces acting as omens or warnings.

I assume that this conscious ignorance and unconscious knowledge of the motivation of accidental psychological events is one of the psychological roots of superstition. *Because* the superstitious person knows nothing of the motivation of his own chance actions, and because the fact of this motivation presses for a place in his field of recognition, he is forced to allocate it, by displacement, to the external world. If such a connection exists, it can hardly be limited to this single application. In point of fact I believe that a large part of the mythological view of the world, which extends a long way into the most modern religions, *is nothing but psychology projected into the external world.* The

obscure recognition (the endopsychic perception, as it were) of psychical factors and relations in the unconscious is mirrored—it is difficult to express it in other terms, and here the analogy with paranoia must come to our aid—in the construction of *a supernatural reality*, which is destined to be changed back once more by science into the *psychology of the unconscious*. One could venture to explain in this way the myths of paradise and the fall of man, of God, of good and evil, of immortality, and so on, and to transform *metaphysics* into *metapsychology*. The gap between the paranoiac's displacement and that of the superstitious person is less wide than it appears at first sight. When human beings began to think, they were, as is well known, forced to explain the external world anthropomorphically by means of a multitude of personalities in their own image; chance events, which they interpreted superstitiously, were thus actions and manifestations of persons. They behaved, therefore, just like paranoiacs, who draw conclusions from insignificant signs given them by other people, and just like all normal people, who quite rightly base their estimate of their neighbours' characters on their chance and unintentional actions.

- Freud, 1901, pp. 258-9.

This, Freud considered, draws the believer's attention to the fact that their reaction to an omen is in itself an awareness of unconscious phenomena, such as hesitation at the sight of ill omen is in fact, hesitation to unconscious content. This is because the understanding of the world around oneself is defined by ourselves and the society around us, modelling the foreign (such as natural forces) around ourselves. This form of projection involves the projection of psychology onto mythology, and the mythology's incorporation as psychology. A continuous consuming and regurgitating of unconscious psychical phenomena.

Where it is heavily implied in Freud, Klein would take it a step further and more explicitly present introjection and projection as necessary aspects of developmental stages through to adulthood.

Melanie Klein's work will highlight the importance of the mother or primary caregiver as the earliest and most important object to be introjected via feeding and communication (highlighting introjection's cannibalistic nature), and a primary target of ambivalence.

Freud suggests it briefly in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* in 1905:

The history of human civilization shows beyond any doubt that there is an intimate connection between cruelty and the sexual instinct; but nothing has been done towards explaining the connection, apart from laying emphasis on the aggressive factor in the libido. According to some authorities this aggressive element of the sexual instinct is in reality a relic of cannibalistic desires

- Freud, 1905, p. 159.

The first of these is the oral or, as it might be called, cannibalistic pregenital sexual organization. Here sexual activity has not yet been separated from the ingestion of food; nor are opposite currents within the activity differentiated. The object of both activities is the same; the sexual aim consists in the incorporation of the object—the prototype of a process which, in the form of identification, is later to play such an important psychological part. A relic of this constructed phase of organization, which is forced upon our notice by pathology, may be seen in thumb-sucking, in which the sexual activity, detached from the nutritive activity, has substituted for the extraneous object one situated in the subject's own body.

- Freud, 1905, p. 198.

In the latter quote, we see that early libidinal desire revolves around the incorporation of the foreign body, which is intrinsically cannibalistic, with sexual overtones characteristic of libidinal satisfaction. Incorporation of food to satisfy oral libidinous demands (the physical nature of food satisfying the psychic demands of hunger) and later other forms of physical incorporation or penetration, acts as a prototype the later more psychological nature of introjection. The early ego wishes to 'introject into itself everything that is good and to eject from itself everything that is bad' (Freud, 1925, p. 237) and seems to wish to identify with the aspects introjected it wishes to keep. What this does not account for is the presence of ambivalence to what is introjected, which Abraham and Klein explore.

Karl Abraham's essay, *A Short Study of the Development of the Libido* (1924, in 1994) looked at sexual/cannibalistic oral desires and incorporation, and their links to ambivalence and obsessional neurosis, mourning, and guilt at the loss of a loved object – which can be a person living or dead, or an unconscious attachment to them (themes discussed at length in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) with guilt, mourning and ambivalence to the murdered Primal Father, and soon to be discussed, Dionysos).

Abraham explains that a fundamental aspect of mourning is the introjection and incorporation of the lost object – a cannibalistic process where oral incorporation of the object results in it being set up in the ego: 'My loved object is not gone, for now I carry it within myself and can never lose it' (1924, in 1994, p. 80).

He does stress the distinction between the healthy mechanisms of mourning and the unconscious processes of persistent melancholia. For Abraham, the mechanisms of melancholia are held in a strongly ambivalent emotional position. This is where oral incorporation meets anal sadism.

Anal sadism appears in two forms that can exist simultaneously: the ability to symbolically withhold excrement – a process to hold fast onto the cannibalised object – or to expel it violently as a manner of demeaning it in resentment, before it's reincorporation (which he likens to necrophagia, phantasies of which arise alongside oral sadism and desire to bite loved objects) (1994, pp. 86, 89).

Abraham's text looks at a case study on guilt and mourning, where a long period of fasting is broken by a large meal consisting of primarily of meat, a man dreams of his dead wife being dissected like an animal at a butchers', then put back together and revived (Abraham, 1994, pp. 79-80) – imagery that separates the worship of Dionysos in Ancient Grecian culture from the rest of Hesiodic religion in the region at the time.

Ideas from this essay that Melanie Klein adopts include that at the primary oral phase of the libido, the individual is incapable of telling the difference between ego and object – incorporation involves a lack of differentiation. Abraham considers a secondary oral phase, one characterised by ambivalence, where sadism and biting enter the fray (1994, p. 90). Similarly, Klein agrees with Abraham's work that not only does oral sadism exist at the beginning of the infant's life (Klein, 1946, in 1997, p. 5), but that it can only be outgrown by the emergence of guilt, and still returned to in the future when provoked by anxiety (Klein, 1948, in 1997, p. 26).

Melanie Klein's theories in object relations revolve around the individual's relationship with whole objects (such as the mother and father), or part-objects (such as the breast), that appear externally and internally. Klein's work also defines phantasy more clearly and as central to object relations and development.

For Freud, phantasy can manifest either consciously (as daydreams) or unconsciously (unconscious wishes or fears), though often tending to wish-fulfilment and sexual desire, phantasy can be nightmarish, revolving around fears of destruction or castration. For Klein, where ‘fantasy’ was conscious, ‘phantasy’ was an unconscious activity that was often more aggressive, violent, or intimidating. They underlie all unconscious activity, including dreams, and manifest as all thought and activity, stimulated by the relationships between internal and external objects and underlie all thought, activity, dreams and wishes (Spillius, 2001, p. 361). According to Klein, phantasy is closely tied to the instinctual experience of an object, it is central to unconscious life at an instinctual level. The primitive anxieties experienced by the infant are universal amongst infants – orbiting around sustenance provided by the mother, in the form of nutrition, attention to their needs, and unconditional love. None of these can be provided immediately enough, or satisfactorily enough, leading to the above-mentioned anxieties that persist for the early years, and sometimes into adulthood.<sup>14</sup> Even if the phantasies or anxieties are abandoned, there is always the threat of transference reigniting them.

Where Freud’s primal relationship to the Father in the Oedipal crisis persists in the conflict with the Dionysiac in adulthood, Klein’s primal relationship to the Mother (or mother figure) in infancy can do the same – Dionysos forever challenging the individual’s perceived equanimity. Both are steeped in themes of envy, hunger, sexuality and cannibalism, with an increased focus on orality in Klein’s work – so much so that everyday unconscious processes

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<sup>14</sup> This reminds us of Riviere’s comment, ‘The phantasy-life of the individual is thus the form in which the real internal and external sensations and perceptions are interpreted and represented to himself in his mind under the influence of the pleasure-pain principle...this primitive and elementary function of his psyche - to misinterpret his perceptions for his own satisfaction - still retains the upper hand in the minds of the great majority of even civilised adults’ – Riviere, 1952, p.41. What we see here, and what chapter 6 and 7 argue, is that the misinterpretation of reality is a constant and necessary aspect of human nature that we retreat to and from with our ritual and myth.

belied more Dionysiac hungers. She draws the internal turmoil of Freud's inner world to the fore, demanding it be recognised as the chorus of the unconscious mind.

For Klein, after the initial trauma of birth and separation from the pre-natal unity with the mother (Klein, 1952a, in 1997, p. 61; 1957, in 1997, pp. 179, 188), the newborn infant is capable of phantasy, and already plagued by the life and death instincts (Klein, 1952b, in 1997, p. 58) – unlike Freud, who believed that the death instinct is not innate (Freud, 1925, in 1959, p. 129). It is due to the instincts and phantasy activity that the infant can establish object relations, through the processes of projections and introjection.

The first object relation is established by the infant projecting the libido and aggression out and imbuing the primal object with its qualities. Simultaneously, the object is introjected and incorporated (emotionally as feelings of love and worth, physically as milk and sustenance) with its own, and projected, qualities. These internalised objects will form the structure of the infant's internal world, and will be the basis of the ego and super-ego – the first of these objects being a part-object, the perceived breast. Over time, the objects become increasingly numerous, varied, and complex, characterised by phantasied, projected, and introjected good and bad qualities.

The relationship to the internal objects forms the basis of the super-ego in the early years of life, and like the ego's development, caused by this ego-object relationship and the projection and introjection processes. Klein's theory is one of constant interaction of opposite or contrasting forces, internal and external worlds, good and bad objects, to good and bad Mother as the good and bad breast, projection and introjection, frustration and gratification, envy and gratitude, life and death instincts – which she states is a 'wider view of early

unconscious processes than was implied in Freud's concept of the structure of the mind' (Klein, 1952b, in 1997, p. 59).

These phantasies and functions reflect the contrasting forces of the ambiguous Dionysiac, and develops on Freud's understanding of introjection, to help better understand the motivations and emotions around sacramental sacrifice and Freud's Primal Father. This thesis does indeed focus on Freud's psychoanalytic work, but Klein's ideas are integral to a future developed understanding of what will be discussed in Chapter 6.

The response to internalising the bad object/breast is to resort to splitting and projection. The internalised bad object creates a fear of the internal danger situation and splits the ego into creative and destructive internal objects that can further only be relieved by a reliance on projection (Klein, 1948, in 1997, p. 31), and soon resorting to oral-sadism (Klein, 1946, in 1997, pp. 5-6; 1957, in 1997, p. 191).

Nonetheless, by feeding, or 'cannibalising', the bad breast, the infant proceeds to *introject the bad breast as well as the good*. The internal anxiety increases as the infant phantasies a stronger presence of the bad breast and the infant's own cannibal impulses. It develops increasingly powerful talionic fears of being devoured and annihilated by the external objects it projects this anxiety onto (in later years manifesting as phobias and castration anxiety). This horror of being cannibalised has now turned the bad breast into not just frustrating breast, but the life-threatening, castrating, and 'vampiric' breast (Klein, 1952a, in 1997, p. 97) due to the presence of the internalised devouring mother (Klein, 1948, in 1997, pp. 29-30).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> One could add that the Freud's comments that *lex Talionis* is a primordial law (particularly in light of the fear of the Primal Father returning to dismember and devour his traitorous children) is a result of the infant's projection and introjection setting up that fear in the ego during the Paranoid-Schizoid position here.



But soon the infant begins to see the primal object less as the breast part-objects, and more as the whole object: the person the mother is (Klein, 1952a, in 1997, p. 71). With this, the power of destructive impulses decreases, but as the loved and hated internal and external objects begin to merge, a strong sense of confusion, ambivalence, and guilt over the destructive impulses plagues the child. The infant must cope with this sense of mourning by adequately setting up the primal object internally via introjection. This is a pattern also adopted in the mourning process, important to keep in mind when discussing ambivalence and consumption in this thesis, discussed in chapter 6 where sacrificial slaughter is accompanied by simultaneous celebration and mourning, associated with a cycle of introjection and projection of Dionysos (Klein, 1952a, in 1997, pp. 73-7). This ambivalence to introjecting Dionysos and his consequent projection is explored in Chapter 6.

The ego in infancy lacks cohesion, and it is the incorporation of external objects, and the integration of newly formed internal objects that form an ego that can use defences in a healthy manner to ensure self-preservation and healthy personality development – instead of resorting to paranoid-schizoid defences like splitting and projective identification that fragments the ego (Klein, 1946, in 1997, pp. 4, 19-20; Klein, 1960, in 1997, pp. 269-70). Nonetheless, projective identification (a paranoid-schizoid defence that utilises projection to instill an impulse or emotion in another, e.g., the primal object, which through non-verbal communication, is elicited as emotion or action from them) can be both damaging and toxic, as well positive in that it is considered the earliest form of empathy that also appears in adults (Segal H, 1973, p. 36).

Adulthood does not escape these defences, as Klein explains that individuals that are reminiscent of primal objects, or situations that evoke ambivalence or feelings of persecution can trigger persecutory or depressive anxiety, along with their symptoms and psychotic defences (Klein, 1959, in 1994, pp. 258, 262).

In both infancy and adulthood, the love and hate, envy and gratitude, seem to stem from a similar root: the acceptance and rejection of dependency of the individual on another. Dependency is a constant reminder of humiliating infantile helplessness, especially if that which one is dependent on is easy to reject or frightening in the case of the bad breast – regardless of how much the good breast provides. Life becomes a cycle of experiencing love and hate, and moving toward reparation (Klein, 1960, in 1994, p. 223).

It is these infantile phantasies and states of mind, non-verbal, existing based purely on the pain-pleasure principle that trigger aggressive or obsessive-compulsive acts (like Freud's taboos). From the phantasy's hallucinatory world where myths arise (Bion, 1963, p. 103), where projective identification lodges a part of the self in the object observed, and the wish to act on the internal objects is acted out on the identifiable external object. This tie is made, but where the projector believes they have separated their impulse from themselves, they have not. Segal H references Bion, stating: 'elements can only be expelled, and action is often a mode of expelling. It is also because the action never accomplishes its objects. It is a delusion to think that we can get rid of impulses or parts of the self by getting rid of them into an object' (Segal H, 1994, p. 399). A manner of finding threat and an excuse to lash out where there is neither.

With all this said, it is fair for the reader to ask why a substantial part of the literature review has been devoted to Klein.

For this thesis, which analyses the Dionysos cult in a psychoanalytic context, looking particularly at the ambivalence with which humans view the act of boundary building and self-definition, Klein's work, as well as those of Bion and Segal H, who developed on Klein's ideas by looking at the activity of psychotic defences in social groups, seems particularly useful. Klein and later, Irigaray's work on neutralising the gendered nature of the caregiver

and the phallus with the phallic mother and thus restructuring the nature of the Oedipus complex helps tackle of the socially regressive aspects of Freudian theory. Similarly, one could argue that Freud's perspectives on projection that I have utilised in this thesis seem to anticipate projective identification, and I agree to an extent, but do not feel that an unconscious participation in the projection is agreed to in this situation. There is also potential to develop on these ideas using Lacan.

Initially, this thesis was going to cover Freudian and Kleinian ideas, in practise however, this proved to be ambitious for the limited space available. To devote Kleinian ideas the time they are due to look at them in detail, a new thesis' worth of word count would be demanded. I wish to explore this line of enquiry in a future work. Thus, the purpose of this literature review is yes, to display the way these pertinent Freudian ideas develop in the field of object relational theory through Klein, Bion and others, but also to display the direction in which I aspire to see this developed. It is certainly the direction in which I'd like to develop my work in the future. I chose to focus on Freud's ideas in this thesis.

The reason for this is the idea of this thesis began with reading *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and realising that though the tools were available, I believe Freud misinterpreted the Dionysos cult. I'd also alter the attitude to view the Primal Horde hypothesis as a myth as well, a masculinised *polis* phantasy, much like a substantial amount of the early writing on the Oedipus complex. It is also a way of reclaiming Freud's hypothesis by critiquing it for not being scientific or socially responsible, but acknowledging it having some value (as a phantasy). This perspective gives us the ability to view this phantasy as helping explain the psychopathology behind those in power in Grecian society and the reasons for their social stratification that marginalised so many, enforced via Hesiodic religion ritual and contested by fringe religious ritual.

In analysing the Freudian topographical structure of the psyche and social stratification in Grecian society, with their own, exclusive, perspectives on building society, I wish to continue with a Freudian train of thought. This involves a chapter of presenting Dionysos as the Primal Father, unlike Freud who interpreted him as the son of the Primal Father who came to be deified (Freud, 1913, pp. 153-7). It also involves looking at psychical structure and defences developed by Freud in the socio-cultural context of the Grecians around a god whose *cultus* replicates those psychical concepts in Grecian *polis*.

These subjects are of primary concern to the thesis' goal. The following two sections will now examine the hypotheses posited in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), with a critique of the text. My argument that Dionysos is a projection of the Primal Father first demands I explain and critique the text which both presents the Primal Crime hypothesis and misinterprets Dionysos from a psychoanalytic standpoint.

## 3.2. *Totem and Taboo* (1913)

### 3.2.1. Exposition of Freud's '*Totem and Taboo*' (1913)

*Totem and Taboo* is a collection of four intentionally ordered essays (or chapters) printed over two of the first volumes of Freud's psychoanalytic journal, *Imago*, in 1913. Not only perceived as particularly important by its author to warrant them as opening essays to his journal, *Totem and Taboo* reflects Freud's recent forays into 'culturally applied psychoanalysis', following a work (*Leonardo da Vinci and A Memory of His Childhood*, 1910) he termed 'the only beautiful thing I have ever written' (1919, in Gay 1988, p. 268). From this I infer that Freud's move into this area was one of great personal importance and investment.

*Totem and Taboo*'s importance in the development of his ideas is also reflected in immediately following books that expand on self-opposing wills (such as the ambivalent desire to repeat traumatic events, or repetition compulsion, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1920) and the impulsive nature of group behaviour and their unconscious dynamics (in *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego*, 1921). He references *Totem and Taboo* in his 1923 text, *The Ego and the Id*, developing on the themes of identification and orality and the part they play in libidinal development and creation of the superego – which will be developed in the critical review of *Totem and Taboo*.

Quite frank about the inspirations for the book, Freud references Jung's most recent works that venture into social psychology (of 1912, 1913) (a notable fact considering Jung's defection from Freud's school of psychoanalysis only a year prior), and the similarity this work holds to Wundt's large texts (of 1906, 1912) that apply non-analytic psychology to the same subject.

As suggested by *Totem and Taboo*'s original subtitle: *Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, the text's goal was to apply psychoanalytic theory and case-study findings from neurotic patients to unexplained behaviour in social psychology. This original subtitle seems to have been informed by the same data and ideas in his paper *The Disposition of Obsessional Neurosis*, published the same year. His observations on the disorder are the driving force of *Totem and Taboo*.

Primarily, the development of totemism, taboo, exogamy, and many 'primitive' rituals, and how these behaviours and their unconscious roots have manifested themselves in modern day obsessive-neurotic behaviour and continued to exist in modern 'savage' tribes.

Freud analyses the self-enforcing rules of taboo by studying the cultures they are most prominent in, modern 'savage' tribes, and the two most common taboos found in the tribes that are enforced by totemism: taboos against eating of the totem animal, and incest.

'We find that they ('savages') set before themselves with the most scrupulous care and the most painful severity the aim of avoiding incestuous sexual relations. Indeed, their whole social organisation seems to serve that purpose or to have been brought into relation with its attainment.'

- Freud, 1913, p. 2.

Freud (1913) takes the almost universally recognised taboo against incest and examines the part it plays in societal structure. By acknowledging that animistic taboos of totemism exist as an ancient social structure to prevent incest by preventing heterosexual sex between members of the same totem clan, Freud's goal is to study the unconscious mechanisms involved in the internalisation of taboos by 'primitive' humanity, and attempt to apply it to decipher their roots, and the part they play in the modern day.

Said goal extends to an attempt to bridge a gap between the psychoanalysis, and anthropology, philology and folklore; but due to the short length of the work, cannot give the former a strong anthropological basis to stand on, or the latter a psychoanalytic background. Though Freud's acknowledgment of this disadvantage (Freud, 1913, p. vii) brings the nature of its research to attention, it also understands the importance in beginning a dialogue between the two, saying 'occasional cooperation between them could not fail to be of benefit to research' (Freud, 1913, p. viii).

Aside from his goals, Freud says his major achievements in the texts are twofold: Freud claims his analysis of this exhaustive list of taboos is an assured attempt at understanding their origin, but that there is only so much he (and psychoanalysis) can say about totemism at

the time (1913, p. viii). This is partly true, since his analysis finally culminates in a psychoanalytic thesis in the fourth essay, but it is not an analysis of anthropology through a psychoanalytic lens (this critique is developed later in the chapter).

Freud attributes these two separate levels of success to the familiarity of totemism and taboo in the modern day – that it is easier to observe taboo in modern European culture, unlike totemism, which he finds is most easily observable amongst modern ‘savage’ tribes that he assumes most closely reflect ancient primitives. Where he sees taboo playing a part in everyday family relations and attitudes to religious paraphernalia, totemism seems foreign to modern European culture, appearing in only the most disguised of forms. In other words, I believe Freud is making an effort to create dialogue between the disciplines of psychoanalysis and anthropology, but also show commonalities between ‘civilized’ Europe and ‘savage’ cultures. It’s an early attempt to bridge these distances, and even if it is unsound, the attempt is still significant.

This wide variety of topics demands a varied selection of sources. Though his sources vary from Reinach, to Spencer and Gillen, Lang, Durkheim, Keane, Spencer, Avebury – his primary sources can be divided by school and field.

Freud references Darwin, and consequently Atkinson in an attempt to set up a social and political family structure for primitive humanity, termed the ‘Primal Horde’.

He related this to works of ethnologists studying modern ‘savage’ tribal societies, whilst ignoring the variations for tribal structure, as pointed out by Malinowski (1927).

### **Hypotheses Introduced in *Totem and Taboo***

As aforementioned, Freud introduces ambivalence in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) by discussing incest and familial taboos. In the first essay, 'The Horror of Incest', he begins with exposition of anthropological work in the area of totemism and taboos against incest in 'savage' tribes; his explanation being that Australian tribes are the closest one can get to analysing primitive humanity (using Wundt and Frazer as primary texts).

He states that tribal religion is often totemic and with strict rules regarding sex, especially heterosexual sex between members of the same totem clan (accompanied by many rules of avoidance and strong punishments of the taboo is transgressed). By discussing the mother-in-law taboo (e.g. amongst the Zulu, 1913, p. 15), Freud explains ambivalence: a combination of affectionate and hostile emotion. He believes it is rooted in the mother-in-law's reaction formation against the attraction to the husband and his mother transference and attraction to her, resulting in fear of incest and ambivalence.

He uses this example to describe ambivalence as: 'composed of conflicting affectionate and hostile impulses' (Freud, 1913, p. 14), where the word 'impulses' emphasises the unconscious nature of the emotions involved.

The discussion of the importance of ambivalence in 'primitive' thought extends to essay two, which also delves into taboos and their transgression.

Freud argues that there is an unconscious desire to transgress these taboos, but coming in contact or invoking targets of envy or ambivalent emotion. For example, the positions of power held by chiefs and authority figures, or the states of helplessness experienced by newborns and women immediately after childbirth, are a source of envy, and the unconscious ambivalence felt to dead loved ones. Freud (1913, p. 60) claims that the greater the ambivalence, the stronger the fear of the taboo.



According to Freud (1913), tabooed objects (e.g. relic), persons (e.g. chief) or states (e.g. death) are beyond the distinctions of ‘sacred’ or ‘profane’, and aren’t necessarily one or the other. They are primarily ‘special’, ‘exceptional’, or ‘uncanny’, and around this nature taboo rules and prohibitions are set up, that are distinct from religious prohibitions and seem to predate religion according to Wundt (in Freud, 1913). Freud uses Thomas to explain separate classes of taboo: taboos that are inherent in a person, totem, or thing; those that are communicated either by exposure or imposition by a taboo individual; and those that are intermediate.

Transgressing taboos can result in ‘taboo sickness’ (sourced in guilt) that can only be cured by ritual and penance. For Freud, the enforcer of this taboo sickness is not an external force as perceived by the transgressing ‘savage’, but a psychical projection of the transgressor’s ambivalence (1913, p. 61) since it is distressing to experience. In other words, the taboo’s enforcer is not an external animate spirit, but an externalised projection of psychic conflict.

Freud (1913, p. 19) explains the mechanics of taboo transgression: what *makes* something taboo is its possession of a great deal of *mana* that can overwhelm that which comes in contact with it without prior preparation or sufficient deal of its own *mana*. This *mana* is what Wundt called ‘daemonic power’. In other words, this daemonic power was contagious, passing from the possessor (be it an authority, food or objects said authority has handled, a corpse and spirits, menstruating women – to those who come in contact with them, or invoke them, whether intentionally or not). The word ‘daemonic’ does not imply a power that is either ‘sacred’ or ‘profane’, but Wundt theorises that once the movement from animism to religion is made, mythology makes a distinction between lawful and unlawful, superior and

inferior, and daemonic power is then split into 'sacred' *or* 'profane'. For Freud, this adds a new dimension to the once morally ambiguous nature of taboo, where ambivalence was more profound due to the fear of the taboo sickness, as well as desire to transgress the prohibition (which is why the prohibition was placed).

This dual nature of sacred/profane leads to an extensive account of the applicability of the psychoanalytic concept of ambivalence to taboos by reading taboo sickness as neuroses. By seeing the prohibition and its transgression as the ambivalent 'desire to' and 'fear of' in neurosis, Freud mirrors primitive taboos to modern psychoanalytic concerns – especially the powerful taboos regarding incest and the totem. Comparing taboos to obsessional neurosis (for example: modern touching phobias marked by a conscious fear of, but unconscious need to, touch 'tabooed' phobic object), Freud (1913) marks five similarities between them, they are marked by great fear (and ambivalence) of transgressing prohibition, they lack assignable motive, they are maintained by an internal necessity, they are easily displaceable and infectious, they give rise to ceremonial acts.

Freud claims that the prohibition of the taboo is a conscious law, but the desire to transgress it is unconscious. He makes the assertion that if the oldest and most prominent taboos regard incest and the veneration of the totem, they must be the most powerful of unconscious desires with powerful ambivalent fixations. The punishments for the taboo, Freud claims, are paid dearly, and usually by whole communities for the sake of one transgressor – since the true motivator behind the application of the prohibition is the temptation to transgress spreading to the rest of the community if one transgressor is allowed to do so without punishment. The magical power attributed to the taboo is based on the capacity for arousing temptation, thus

when one transgressor is permitted to perform the prohibited act and indulge their unconscious desire, the temptation to transgress spreads to others.

Here Freud begins to develop on the envy and ambivalence regarding the enemy, the dead, and the king. This is of interest to my thesis since all three parts are played by Dionysos in his myths. Freud expands on an interesting choice of authority figure's taboos – the Flamen Dialis, the Roman high priest of Jupiter/Jupiter, who, among his rigid taboos, is given a lengthy list of avoidances of Dionysian epiphanies: he must never come in contact with wheaten flour, cannot touch or even name a goat, dog, raw meat, beans or ivy (1913, p. 46). This might have something to do with the perception of the king/deity as preserver, and his punishment if his work and acts are unpredictable, or uncertain, or fails to adhere to his taboos (probably a leftover from early-era despotism, 1913, p. 44) – he must always work in favour of his people, and always be predictable, unlike the ambiguous and tyrannical god Dionysos. The king's exaltation is then a bondage in the ceremonials he must be a part of, a counterpart of the obsessive act in neurosis, where the suppressed impulse, and the impulse that suppresses it, find common satisfaction. The act is (consciously) a protection against what is prohibited, but is (unconsciously) a repetition of it.

Freud claims 'a son's picture of his father is habitually clothed with excessive powers of this kind, and it is found that distrust of the father is intimately linked with admiration for him... he (man) is raising him (king, or persecutor) to the rank of the father,' (Freud, 1913, p. 50). When a boy is still in midst of the Oedipus Complex, that is to say during his rivalry with his father for his mother's affections, a son experiences powerful ambivalence toward his father: an affection and admiration for the man that cared for him, contending with a hatred for his rival and fear of the much stronger male who may hurt or castrate the son for desiring to usurp him. As a child, this unsettling ambivalence can be negotiated with by

projecting it outward, and these remnants remain as an adult by projecting it onto authority figures (Freud, 1913, pp. 50, 147). These fears are played out in unconscious phantasy.

Similarly, on protection from what is tabooed, ambivalence toward dead loved ones and enemies results in exaggeration of affection, and projection of hostility on part of the deceased, occurring both in 'savage' culture and neurotics (1913, p. 61). This ambivalence toward the spirits of the dead is fuelled further by the ambivalence to uncanny states such as death. The attempt to understand death may have given rise to the belief in spirits, which are dealt with via ritual.

Freud goes on to explain how projection led to the development of deities and religion (1913, p. 92) in essay 3. Freud uses Wundt and Tylor to assert that animism as a mode of thought is the foundation to the beginning of religion, and uses Frazer to assert that it runs on the use of magic. The animistic view of the universe held that each object possessed a soul or spirit that animates it, and so does the universe as a whole. Whereas 'souls' exist inside animate beings, 'spirits' are souls released through various methods, most commonly, through the uncanny state of death. Freud theorises (1913, p. 76) that the animistic worldview was an attempt to explain the uncanny and difficult to accept the fact of death. Death, which could be invoked by animistic magic or even simply by thought due to the immense overvaluation of psychical activity in animism, is explained below.

This pre-religion method of understanding the world by 'savages' practises much ritual magic or sorcery that involves communication with spirits. Magic that is either sympathetic (using fetishes or effigies of target), or using the target's name or possessions (1913, p. 81), therefore magic is about the use of association or contagion.

The belief in influencing the outside world by thought is essentially a narcissistic projection where the ‘primitive’ suffers an ‘omnipotence of thoughts’ (a term coined by an obsessional patient of Freud’s). An omnipotence of thoughts can be explained as an overvaluation of psychical acts where the structural conditions of the psyche are transposed onto the outside world; this omnipotence of thoughts is present in ‘primitive’ humanity, modern ‘savages’, and neurotics – by way of thoughts having efficacious control over the outside world. The ‘savage’ human and the neurotic are either inhibited at or regress to a psychical infantilism, resurrecting infantile narcissism and hallucinatory omnipotence, manifesting as the animist’s magical ability.<sup>16</sup>

Freud would argue that this ability to wield control over the outside world and the spirits that influence it is a symptom of said spirits existing as projections of internal psychical activity. He quotes Hume, ‘There is a natural tendency among mankind to conceive all beings like themselves, and to transfer to every object those qualities with which they are familiarly acquainted’ (in Freud, 1913, p. 77).

The unconscious processes that manifest as spirits projected into the outside world would evolve into being projections of deities. Communications with these projected forces would evolve from magic (controlling or negotiating with spirits), to ritual sacrifices (to gain a deity’s favour). Freud felt this was a result of humanity’s waning narcissism, and compared its chronological similarity to a child’s libidinal development (1913, pp. 88-9). In terms of libidinal development, the animistic worldview mirrors the infant’s narcissism and ‘omnipotence of thoughts’. The next stage, the religious worldview and development of gods mirrors the child’s directing sexual attraction to their parents, whose internalised images are projected onto deities (i.e. deities being stand-ins for one’s parents). Finally, the scientific

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<sup>16</sup> Freud refers to his earlier text, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) to explain how that auto-eroticism can return later in life since man never entirely escapes his narcissism

worldview mirrors the matured individual renouncing the pleasure principle and directs their desire to the external world. The pleasure principle and infantile narcissism is never entirely renounced, leaving leftovers of these projections even in the scientific age, with projections of unconscious and repressed activity still active.

For Freud, the animistic practice of cannibalism to integrate and introject an individual has evolved into the ability to influence the decisions of deities via sacrifice – even sacramental sacrifice of the deity itself. A parallel I draw to Ancient Grecian culture is that sacramental sacrifice was not practice outside the Dionysiac cult, where in Maenadic ritual, the essence of Dionysos enters the eaters and possesses them, unleashing the reported ‘Bacchic madness’ (Otto, 1965; Kerenyi, 1976; Detienne, 1979, 1989). Freud (1913, p. 82) explains how not only cannibalism magically provides the eater with the consumed’s abilities via association and consumption, but also how seriously this association via ingestion was taken, so much so that even pregnant women would avoid eating certain animals, lest the unborn child adopt the negative qualities associated with that animal (e.g. cowardice).<sup>17</sup>

Freud posits that sacrificial ritual and these projected deities are rooted in mankind’s ambivalence to them. The rituals of apology following the transgressive sacrifice of a totem (indulging in a breaking of a taboo, the taboo itself resulting from ambivalence), and the projections of internalised images of the parents, are weighted with unconscious ambivalent effect. In the following essay, Freud studies the importance of orality in the transgression of the inherently ambivalent totem-animal taboo, and attempts to hypothesise its root in parent-child relations (which he applies to the initial communities of mankind).

The above-mentioned connections between spirits and the animals they inhabit is the central focus of essay 4, beginning with the explaining that though the totem animal is

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<sup>17</sup> This would evolve to associations of character of foods with bodily results, as seen earlier, where the wilting nature of lettuce causes impotency in Ancient Greece.

revered and not killed in the wild, there are occasions where it is killed in a sacrificial setting. Freud (1913, p.104) informs the reader that cases of totem animal sacrifice often involves a caring and raising of the animal in captivity, and its killing being followed by rituals of apology and expiation (as seen in Dionysos calf sacrifices, Kerényi, 1976 – although this might've been more for the sacramental aspect of the sacrifice than for 'totemic' reasons in its strictest sense). Freud expands that this is primarily because (like the taboos applied to the dead), the totem animal is seen as a member and progenitor of the clan it represents – so killing it is tantamount to murdering a clan member or founder (as seen with imagery of the totem on the clansmen). And so it is followed by rituals of apology and expiation on the part of the entire clan, not just the clansman performing the sacrifice.

But then why the sacrifice in the first place? Freud theorises that one of the reasons is for the clansmen to strengthen their identification with the totem (1913, p. 117), as seen by the animistic cannibalism examples above. Freud also uses Wundt's findings to claim that being the 'father' of the tribe means the totem is the same species as the clansmen, and the taboos associated with the totem mean the clan are ambivalent toward it, wanting to both revere and harm it.

After looking at Frazer and Wundt, Freud concludes that one cannot quite tell whether the incest taboo led to totemism, or the totem taboo led to exogamy. Freud attempts to explain those developments citing Darwin and Atkinson, by theorising a consanguineous epic tragedy of the 'Primal Horde' (1913, pp. 125, 141).

The Horde mirrored gorilla society: a dominant male, with a collection of females, and immature males that live under him. It is important to remember that the sources he cites state that this is purely a hypothesis. The implications of this are that we must be careful since it is unsubstantiated. I cannot say whether Freud believed he was speaking hypothetically or not,

but we must keep it in mind as we read it. It is the same reason I choose to read the Primal Horde hypothesis as a phantasy. We have not watched humans in this Horde state, and cannot say it is how we would behave.

Freud's 'Primal Horde' refers to a speculative time in early human history, even before language, where humans travelled mainly in small packs numbering around 20. They mated freely with each other, and whenever they could, and incest would have been common due to a small breeding pool (although mother-son unions might have been rarer due to both parties being aware of their close sanguineous proximity). Much like contemporary non-human primates, there might have been a squabble over mates, and the strongest male took several of the females for himself: forbidding the other males of the clan from approaching the females, setting up the patriarchy.

Or at least, the above is a more open reading of Freud's (1913) hypothesis – where incest was rampant, and the father of the horde possessed all females for himself, persuading the younger males to either live in envy or search for other hordes.

Freud then theorises that myth and religion evolved from the cannibalistic brothers uniting to kill and devour the narcissistic and despotic Primal Father – a feat that demanded unity and strength in numbers – and by devouring this much envied and even admired figure, orally incorporate his strength and accomplish identification with him. For now they realised they were in his place, to forever combat against each other and youngsters for the females – this was the fruit from the tree of knowledge that made them like their father. In order to keep the intrafamilial squabbles over copulation to a minimum, closely-related women would be kept off limits, forming smaller tribes – in other words, incest is *not* prohibited for genetic



reason (prohibiting incest is not coded in the DNA; Twitchell, 1985): but because it is socially explosive for kinship stability.

On one hand, they loved and admired their father; on the other, loathed him for being an obstacle in their craving for power and gratification of their sexual desires. But like Dionysos and his ambiguous nature, they could not just kill the despotic ‘one half’ of the father, they had to eliminate all of him. Their love and desire to identify with him manifested itself as remorse.

The dead father had a stronger presence than the living one, for the living one could have still been hated, but hate with added guilt immortalised the dead Primal Father (Freud, 1913, p. 143). And though Freud did not really consider this scenario to have necessarily taken place (or so argues Twitchell, 1985 – but also because there has been no anthropological evidence to support the claim) we act to this day that it did, and it is reflected in myth and early religion. For example, the ‘universal fear of incest’ or pollution of the blood (‘in’ + ‘castus’ = ‘Not pure’) is a phylogenetic fear that has been passed down through the ages since the incident with the Horde, recalling patricide and cannibalism.

In order to avoid the fate of the Primal Father, he is then venerated as a totem, and the sacrificial meal ‘celebrates’ his ‘sacrifice’ for the people. The totem’s protection is an idealised image of the protective, caring father – after all, if the Primal Father cared for the clan the way the totem did, there would have been no ambivalence or need to kill him (Freud, 1913, p. 144). It displaces guilt from the adults (whilst simultaneously satisfying the tabooed need to kill and eat the totemic father), and makes sure the younger sons do not intend on re-enacting the grisly case (It teaches that incest might result in being cast out from a home group, because the rogue and independent males and females that have been cast out for

unwisely copulating will not make it into the evolutionary grid and will die out in the wild without the tribe).<sup>18</sup>

As shown above, society and societal boundaries are then defined by complicity in a common crime, religion based on the guilt attached to it, and morality and taboos based on demand of this societal structure and penance for this guilt. The guilt, and demand for penance for transgressing taboos (like killing the totem), exist as demanding unconscious emotions. Community structure thus reflects this unconscious emotion, as it translates into law, taboo, and religious ritual – it becomes a defining construct for boundaries, all in the name of alleviating communal guilt, as well as satisfying unconscious, undesirable wishes of violence against the father (and the said sense of boundary).

Just as the murder and cannibalism of the Primal Father would eventually be censored and mutate over time to become the totem religion it became, so the traumas of the generation that venerated the myth would find a cathartic release in acknowledging the symbolism of myth, leading them to venerate and retell it, making it a persistent tale to be told over millennia.

Freud (1913, p. 127) links this to modern psychoanalytic case studies by looking at boys (like Little Hans, and Ferenczi's Arpad) developing ambivalent attitudes to 'totemic' animals, developing as obsessions or phobias, but venerated animals either way. In both cases he finds a powerful fear of castration, and an equation of the animal to the boy's father – Freud asserts that this is another retelling of the Primal Father scenario and that 'religion, morals, society and art converge in the Oedipal complex' (1913, p.156).

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<sup>18</sup> Like in the myths of Adonis and Atalanta in the Dionysiac realm of the wild.

Freud assumes that since hunting pre-dates agriculture, blood sacrifice must be the earliest form of sacrifice (1913, p.133) (without taking into account the ‘gathering’ aspect of hunter-gatherers), and that the meat and wine sacrifice was literally the deity’s food, so burning the offered meat became commonplace (as seen in mainstream Greek ritual, Frazer, 1994). He expounds that sacrifices as group activity strengthen clan bonds, therefore kinship is defined by orality and ingestion of sacrificed meat, not by heritage. The meat shared by the clan would also be sharing the guilt of the sacrificial murder, like the sons of the Primal Father had done. According to Freud (1913, p. 140) the earliest example of this would have been clansmen taking the totem animal to rip apart and devour raw – I notice this is much like the Maenadic *sparagmos* (‘ripping apart’) and *omophagia* (‘eating raw’) ritual (Kerenyi, 1976). Freud (1913, p. 153) incorrectly attributes the *sparagmos* and *omophagia* to the Titans of Orphic myth who eat the infant Dionysos, when in fact, the Titans had a very careful, deliberate butchering and cooking method of the goat-bodied Dionysos that would inspire mainstream Greek butchery.

Therefore in the individual psychoanalytic cases observed by Freud, the basis of God is in the exaltation of the individual’s father, and macrocosmically, for cultures in the totemic animal – thus playing both the sacrifice, and the deity it is sacrificed to (Freud, 1913, p. 147) – just as sacramental sacrifice in Dionysiac cults. If the totem animal is the father-surrogate, then the evolution of anthropomorphic gods would be the father-surrogate taking human form, hinting at a change in the son’s attitude to the father. These various evolving emotions can be explored as longing, defiance, and guilt. This could be a result of an increase in longing for the father, as time between the Primal Crime and the civilisation increases and the further back in history the crime is. However, the desire to defy and replace the father are still unconsciously present, manifesting as myths of a youthful deity who can freely commit patricide and/or incest (Freud, 1913, p. 152). This does not allay a sense of guilt, and the

young god often faces a punishment for his defiance in the form of death or castration. The denial of the Primal Crime reaches its height with the god who kills his own sacred animal, which Freud (1913, p. 153) interprets as the son who is alone in killing the father, absolving his brothers of all guilt and original sin.

This self-sacrificing son god – be it the Christ or Dionysos – involves a usurping of the father (Freud, 1913, p. 154), and oral identification with the Son (an extension of the father, Christ of the Father, and Dionysos of Zeus – Kerényi, 1976 expands on Dionysos-as-extension of Zeus in chapter 3 of his text). In this there is an indulgence of punishing, killing, and usurping the father while still being absolved for the sin, since the son god sacrifices himself for it. However, via oral communion and/or ecstasy, the worshipper identifies with the patricidal and self-sacrificing son, so while the son god absolves the brothers for their sin of patricide, the worshipper also indulges in it by identifying with the murderous son god. There is added complication in Dionysos cults of Dionysos playing son god, as well as progenitor of mankind, which will be explored in the critique.

Freud (1913, p. 156) mentions Dionysos once more as the god of tragedy, as the ‘divine goat’, and ‘the lamentations of the goats who were his followers and who identified with him’ being the basis of Greek tragedy (from Greek ‘tragodia’ or ‘goat-song’), and communal viewings of tragedies are similar indulgences/atonements.

*Totem and Taboo* (1913) has been a fundamental text in introducing psychoanalysis to working with anthropology and religion. The Oedipus complex and neurosis form a basis in Freud’s approach to taboos and their transgression, and consequently to ambivalence in religion, orality and blood sacrifice, and the Primal Father – all ideas that will be held up to look at the fringe Dionysos cults of Ancient Grecian culture.

Before the hypotheses approached in *Totem and Taboo* are applied to Dionysos cults, the thesis will first critique the text based on theory and methodology.

### 3.2.2 A Critique of *Totem and Taboo* (1913)

Being important to this thesis, and the first major text to tackle anthropology and ritual using psychoanalysis, it is important to see where Freud's work can be improved given the years since its publishing.

When critiquing a text as speculative as Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913), there is no difficulty in finding a long list of scholars who have, as sociologist Alfred Kroeber phrased it, 'broken a butterfly on the wheel' (1939, p. 446). Though some concession is often made through acknowledging the wealth of anthropological information provided in the text, it is difficult to say if any anthropologists are willing to accept the proposal of the Primal Horde as a literal event. Even many psychoanalysts have withdrawn from the Lamarckism that holds the Primal Horde hypothesis together; except perhaps Roheim (1968), even then his faith in a literal reading of the Primal myth wavered as he aged.

Yet, much like the target of ambivalence and violence of the text, *Totem and Taboo* periodically reappears to be reassessed, broken on a wheel, and then laid to rest till the next writer decides to repeat the ritual. With modern psychology's current studies in transgenerational trauma (Fossion et al., 2003), epigenetics and the imprinting of trauma on the genome (Kellerman, 2013), the resurrection of the *Totem and Taboo* discussion is imminent.

The most glaring issue of the Primal Crime hypothesis, is the use of Darwin and Atkinson as a basis for the structure of early human society (Freud, 1913, pp. 125-6). Even Darwin and Atkinson's proposition that early human social structure was based on that of gorillas and other great apes was presented as a hypothesis – presented retrospectively, using Savage's recording of gorilla society. Freud does not acknowledge the purely hypothetical nature of the proposition, since we have no evidence to suggest that early hominids retained the social structure that would be adopted by modern day great apes.

Furthermore, more closely related to humans than the gorilla, great apes of the genus *Pan* would, and should, have been better examples to inspire the Primal Horde hypothesis. It must be acknowledged that the common chimpanzee, maintains a violent patriarchal structure similar to the gorilla (Sommer et al., 2011), and to the hypothesised Primal Horde. However, what it does not acknowledge are the bonobos. Further zoological research since the time of Darwin and Freud have provided great insight into the differences between these species, research that neither Darwin, nor Freud would have had access to.

Bonobos show a greater tendency toward matriarchal behaviour leading to non-lethal violence against males. A possible explanation being the use of non-discriminatory sexual activity as a form of bonding, conflict resolution and reconciliation. Also, quite unlike the Horde, bonobos practice female exogamy instead (Sommer et al., 2011).

What does this say about *Totem and Taboo*? For one, the great apes that inspired the Primal Horde hypothesis, do not all share the same social structure. Female coalition, freer sexual rules, both endogamy and female exogamy separate the bonobo from the common chimpanzee, gorilla, and hypothetical Horde. Primatology has moved on and that the reliance on gorillas doesn't account for the diversity of primate behaviour, i.e. it is less about whether

the Horde is an accurate description of early humans and more about Freud's meaning in deciding that it was. Freud's (1913, pp. 125-6) use of Darwin and Atkinson's hypotheses is based on supposition instead of evidence, and makes the Primal Horde societal structure questionable.

It also does not explain the continuity in this behaviour after the Primal Crime. Many have accused Freud of Lamarckism (Kroeber, 1920), that is, organisms can pass on characteristics and qualities that it developed during its lifetime to its descendants. This is a fair criticism, since Freud seems to rely rather heavily on biological and evolutionary backing in the text.

However, it must be acknowledged that though Darwin expressed a dislike of Lamarckianism (Ritvo, 1974, p. 184), Darwin's theories (much like Freud's) evolved during their lifetimes and were constantly under their own speculation. Eiseley (in Ritvo, 1965, p. 504) points out distinct quotes from Darwin's *Origin of Species* that display his own Lamarckian tendencies. Though certain works of Lamarck, Darwin, and Freud seem outdated now, in their lifetimes, Darwin and even Freud's work was up to date with their research.

I will say, however, that though the lines between Darwin and Lamarck were sometimes blurred, as Ritvo (1965) points out, Freud used approaches from both – seemingly insinuating that evolution of the psyche might not follow the same rules and the physical body.

The same way that Darwin's theory of natural selection was lacking without the later knowledge of heredity, Freud's work is lacking without the future developments in biology and psychoanalysis – i.e. they were contemporary for their time, but to the modern reader, need development. We must appreciate the amount of valuable research in psychoanalysis, biology and zoology available to us since Freud. As Ritvo points out,

The ideas now considered most basic to Darwin's theory have turned out to be basic to Freud's theory too. Aspects of Darwin's theories discarded with time may have seemed essential to Freud for his speculations in applied psychoanalysis but are *no loss to his scientific structure*.

- 1974, p. 180.

It is this that limits Freud, which is not as important whether he was justified in his use of Darwin.

The problem lies in how Freud never presented a genetic or biological explanation for the passing down of the emotional weight of the ambivalence to the Primal Father (love and hate), and to the Primal Crime (pride and remorse) to descendants that manifest in the unconscious and in religion.

Freud, instead, seems to present a cultural explanation:

An unconscious understanding ... of all the customs, ceremonies and dogmas left behind by the original relation to the father may have made it possible for later generations to take over their heritage of emotion

- Freud, 1913, p. 159.

In other words, it is culture, myth and ritual which passes on the unconscious material relating to the Primal Father. In a later work, he also posits that introjection of the parents and culture provides a psychical heritage of the superego (1923).

Conveniently, the nature of culture is to alter and adapt, and be inherited by future generations, in the process, creating myths.



The definition of myth, though, is difficult to pin down. Freud's approach to interpreting myth is a child of its time, as is the then definition of myth. Detienne posits in *The Creation of Mythology* (1981), that regarding popular European myth, between the creation of a Christian Europe, and the mid-eighteenth century, these tales of gods and heroes were recollected as fables, *fabulae*. Even for the Greeks, he argued, myth was no specific genre, instead was either religion, or (in the late fourth century) used by philosophers to illustrate the old versus new oral discourse in *mythos* versus *logos*. So, in the late nineteenth century, with a newfound interest in the cultural roots of Europe, the concept of 'myth' used by Freud and his disciples took discernible shape – tales of irrationality in European history that demanded explanation (Detienne, 1981, p. 16).

However, it introduces a problem in terms on the creation of myth – on one hand, for Freud, myth is a result of unconscious machinations (as seen in Freud's Oedipus complex hypothesis, that the myth of Oedipus is a result of the unconscious Oedipus complex, or myth and ritual are born from unconscious memory of the Primal Crime (Freud, 1913, pp. 151-2). On the other, the cultural passing down of the response to the Primal Crime does not involve an unconscious explanation, but purely a conscious cultural one, i.e. the initial response to the Crime adapts over time, but need not mean the worshippers carry the unconscious burden for the Crime which is the crux of his text. This does not rule out the possibility of both approaches coexisting simultaneously, but let us see how Freud tackled the contrasting approaches.

This paradox seems to have been inescapable to Freud during his lifetime, and his attitude to the critique altered over the years. He approaches it again a decade later in *The Ego and the Id* (1923), providing seemingly two forms of simultaneous inheritance.

First, a phylogenetic explanation for religion:

acquired phylogenetically out of the father-complex: religion and moral restraint through the process of mastering the Oedipus complex itself, and social feeling through the necessity for overcoming the rivalry that then remained between the members of the younger generation.

- Freud, 1923, p.36.

The second is socio-cultural:

As a child grows up, the role of father is carried on by teachers and others in authority; their injunctions and prohibitions remain powerful in the ego ideal and continue, in the form of conscience, to exercise the moral censorship. The tension between the demands of conscience and the actual performances of the ego is experienced as a sense of guilt.

- Freud, 1923, p.36.

But, his development for the structural organisation of the psyche opened up new avenues to explain this inheritance:

The experiences of the ego seem at first to be lost for inheritance; but, when they have been repeated often enough and with sufficient strength in many individuals in successive generations, they transform themselves, so to say, into experiences of the id, the impressions of which are preserved by heredity. Thus in the id, which is capable of being inherited, are harboured residues of the existences of countless egos.

- Freud, 1923, p. 37.

Now, Freud implies that the Primal Crime is a phase mankind went through, repeatedly engaging in it until it somehow became engraved in the id, functioning as some sort of cultural consciousness (or, cultural unconsciousness) – one that is collective. Is Freud repeating the same Lamarckian fallacy? Or is he assuming a socio-cultural explanation that intermingles with an unfounded quality of the unconscious mind hypothesis?

He comes to his conclusion in a later text on religion, *Moses and Monotheism*, where he insists that it is, indeed, phylogenetic:

An essential part of the construction is the hypothesis that the events I am about to describe [the rebellion against the primal father and its aftermath] occurred to all primitive men, that is, to all our ancestors. The story is told in enormously condensed form, as though it had happened on a single occasion, while in fact it covered thousands of years and was repeated countless times during that long period.

- Freud, 1939, p. 80.

In other words, Freud proposes that the repeated and widespread performance of the Crime may have had evolutionary roots and benefits, and elicited affect that was passed down phylogenetically.<sup>19</sup>

But before a modern reader or even his own contemporary can criticise Freud for this phylogenetic assumption, he counters the reader with an argument about *instinct* – that is, if animals can participate in innately pre-programmed behaviour, whether it is the cocooning of butterflies, the dancing-communication of bees, or the mother-son incest taboos of bonobos – are humans exempt of *instinctual* behaviour (Freud, 1939, p. 100)?

Freud leaves us with the same conundrum regarding the passing down of unconscious information and affect through the generations, but opens up an avenue of possibilities as to how it might take place. In other words, if there were an evolutionary benefit to participating in the Primal Crime (in this case, responding to autocracy, coming at the price of religion and societal guilt), it would be an evolutionary step forward for mankind to adopt it – *whether or*

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<sup>19</sup> This dual view could have been inspired by Otto Rank in 1909 (2004, p. 75, 84), where the dual opposing imagery of surrendering the infant to water is an image of hostility and exposure, as well as symbolic of birth. Kroeber (1939) will be discussed regarding his separation of historical and psychological truth. This dualism can be seen as simultaneously plausible and overdetermined and indecisive.

*not the Primal Crime literally took place.* The question would then be about the dominating primacy of which group among the Horde over the other, here it would be the sons – leading a new problematic hierarchy.

This eliminates the need to argue whether or not it is only conjecture that the sons would kill and devour the Primal Father. That criticism was made by sociologist Alfred L. Kroeber in 1920 (p. 50), which he would reconsider in 1939, by admitting that it is possible though the Primal Crime might not be a *historical* truth (or a falsifiable historical truth), it could very well be a *psychological* truth (Kroeber, 1939, pp. 446-7).<sup>20</sup>

If Freud had taken this approach, it is more likely he would have avoided the unlikely reconstructions of primordial human history, and instead found a way to explore the events that take place in the Primal Crime as metaphors for *psychological* content, that may or may not be acted out. This would have avoided the almost instantaneous attack on *Totem and Taboo* with the anthropological, ethnographical and archaeological evidence against it.

In this, we discover the mechanic for this thesis – the appreciation of *historical* truths, in the form of Grecian cultural data and Dionysos *cultus*, to find the possible *psychological* possibilities that underlie them, that were proposed and expanded on by psychoanalytic thinkers like Freud.

Accepting this dynamic, we find that, as Kroeber (1939, p. 447) points out, we are on better standing. That *Totem and Taboo* suggests, more realistically, that there are psychic processes that tend to be operative in many human institutions, whether they involve ambivalence to the Primal Father (or Primal Father-like figure), ambivalence to incest,

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<sup>20</sup> ‘If we omit the fatal concept of “event”, of an act as it happens in history, we have left over the concept of the psychologically potential. Psychological insight may legitimately hope to attain to the realization and definition of such a potentiality; and to this, Freud should have confined himself’ (Kroeber, 1939, p. 447).

consequentially the Oedipus Complex et al. Then repetitive, almost universal, taboos like incest will be provided a psychological explanation – that is, how *Totem and Taboo* presents us with the psychological substratum that underlies human personality and belief systems. This forms the basis of my approach that Primal Crime is a phantasy, and specifically one that forms the exclusionary and patriarchal structure of *polis*, motivated by defining itself against *phusis* and marginalised identities.

That perspective helps tackle a few other criticisms that can be levelled against *Totem and Taboo*. One being that Freud puts forward only the case of Little Hans and Ferenczi's Arpad (Freud, 1913, pp. 130-2) as evidence of Oedipal boys displacing ambivalence to their fathers onto 'totem' animals. On one hand, it fits the description of the son being descended from the totem animal, the jealousy for the mother and envy of the father, and the desire to overthrow him, followed by self-reproach and guilt associated with their affection for him. However, these are only two cases, and we do not see the boys engaging in any substitutional or reparatory behaviour as a reaction. Without going into the details and controversies already associated with the Little Hans case, one can ask in what percentage of boys this actually takes place – unless we argue that not all boys express ambivalent fascinations to totem animals consciously.

In Ancient Grecian culture, the uniqueness of the Dionysos cult is the presence of the sacramental sacrifice. Particularly as he-goats and bull-calves, which are looked after and even dressed up in human accoutrements before killing (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 88). By taking on the mantle of the progenitor who is murdered and eaten as a sacrifice by his progeny, Dionysos becomes the image, for this society, of the Primal Father and Crime. This asks then, if the Crime can be acted out in religion, does an Oedipal boy necessarily have to act it out

more externally with his own father the way Arpad and Little Hans did? Or could the unconscious conflict be satisfied via religious myth and cult actions? A variation on the question that this thesis seeks to answer.

Similarly, the sources of his ethnographical work are questionable. Kroeber (1920) refers to Freud's *vademecum*, '*The Golden Bough*' by Frazer, as 'dilettantish playing'. Much like *Totem and Taboo*, it is a collection of data, that though extensive, is collected intricately to solely prove the one specific point the writer intended on making, relying heavily on guesswork and reconstructions.

The use of Robertson Smith is paradoxical, since its ethnography is of Semitic cultures, whose blood sacrifice (as mentioned by Smith), seems to go only as far back as 2000 BCE and in only in their geographical sphere of influence – thus questioning its application to 'savage' tribes around the world. On one hand, it is not surprising Freud would make this choice, considering his ease at jumping from ethnographical data on Indigenous Australians to the Zulu in the same breath (1913, p. 14) – so using Semitic and Grecian ritual to further his point is of no trouble to him. However, this very criticism is exactly why this thesis relies on (not just mythic, but ritual and everyday) ethnographical data focusing solely on Dionysos, and his presence in Grecian culture.

It should also be noted that blood sacrifice in Semitic or Grecian ritual need not have totemic roots, since there is no evidence for this, which Freud seems to assume. However, it is precisely this critique that drives this thesis – why does mainstream Grecian religion lack a particular totemic nature, yet seem to exhibit something totemic in the Dionysos cults (I intentionally say 'something totemic' and not 'totemism' here)?

This leads to the final criticism that seems to have been overlooked in many reviews of *Totem and Taboo*: Freud's limited recounting of the murder of the Orphic Dionysos-Zagreus by the Titans (1913, pp. 153-4). It is only mentioned briefly, but its implications in his text are significant. Being a deity with an active cult stretching to over two millenia, there are several accounts on the murder of Dionysos-Zagreus at the hands of the Titans.

Each account varies, sometimes subtly (with the differences hinted at in the choice of terms describing the violence), and sometimes explicitly. Each variation can make distinct changes to Freud's use of the myth in *Totem and Taboo*, highlighting a lacklustre appreciation for the complexity of religion and culture, and emphasises the above criticism that Freud's attempt to draw from cultures worldwide weakens the ethnographic foundation for this text.

Also known as the 'Zagreus Myth' – owing to the 'First' incarnation of the god being named 'Zagreus' before his death and resurrection with the name 'Dionysos' (Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 5.75.4) – the most detailed versions of the myth are arguably by Olympiodorus (according to Edmunds III, 2009) in his sixth-century BCE *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo*, as well as the seventh-century BCE *Orphicorum Fragmenta*.

The older *Orphicorum Fragmenta* also outlines the cooking process used by the Titans to prepare Zagreus for feasting (as discussed in chapter 2). These two texts both outline the Titanic murder of Zagreus, and how the crime results in the creation of mankind from the remains the Titans and Zagreus – this anthropogony being the fulcrum of this thesis, and is not dealt with adequate rigour in *Totem and Taboo*.

Though Freud acknowledges the band of envious Titans and the murdered Zagreus, and hints at its similarities to his own Primal Crime hypothesis, he ignores the complexities of the anthropogony (1913, p. 153). He states that the Titans are the progenitors of mankind, but ignores the essence of Zagreus that the Titans had consumed as manifesting in the humans created:

Then Dionysos succeeds Zeus. Through the scheme of Hera, they say, his retainers, the Titans, tear him to pieces and eat his flesh. Zeus, angered by the deed, blasts them with his thunderbolts, and from the sublimate of the vapours that rise from them comes the matter from which men are created. Therefore we must not kill ourselves, not because, as the text appears to say, we are in the body as a kind of shackle, for that is obvious, and Socrates would not call this a mystery; but we must not kill ourselves because our bodies are Dionysiac; we are, in fact, a part of him, if indeed we come about from the sublimate of the Titans who ate his flesh.

- Olympiodorus, *Commentary on Plato's Phaedo I. 3-6*, in Edmunds III, 2009, p. 514.

Another critique of *Totem and Taboo's* handling of the Zagreus Myth is the lack of detail recounted in the method of the god's murder.

As we have seen in previous chapters of this thesis, such details can lead to widespread Dionysiac and Orphic cult practices and represent major socio-political movements that subvert the *polis* norm via religious praxis, which is a major theoretical basis to Freud's *Totem and Taboo* regarding societal rules intertwined with religious belief (of course, this is a simplification of his hypothesis).

First, is his comparison of the murder of Zagreus to the Bedouin camel sacrifice according to St. Nilus (1913, pp. 138, 154). Six of the seven major accounts of the Zagreus Myth, those by



Diodorus Siculus, Clement, Pseudo-Hyginus, Nonnus, the *Orphicorum Fragmenta*, and Olympiodorus, record a ‘dismemberment’ of the god. However, two of them (in more explicit terms) refer to an ‘infernal knife’ (Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 6. 155), or to cutting the infant god into separate pieces to cook. The *Orphicorum Fragmenta* (Kern, 1972, Fragment 35) more explicitly detail the cooking of the god after dismemberment, which heavily impacted the Orphic cult’s attitude to animal sacrifice, possibly influenced conventional Greek sacrifice, and the prevalence of the *sparagmos* ritual of the Maenads.

However, the comparison to St. Nilus is flawed with the Bedouin camel sacrifice being a hacking at the animal with swords without order, and without cooking involved – using the organised ritualistic Orphic Zagreus myth with its surgical cutting and cooking in comparison is thus baseless.

He similarly draws a comparison to the murder of Orpheus at the hands of Maenads in a *sparagmos* ritual (Freud, 1913, p. 154). Unlike the Zagreus myth and the Bedouin camel sacrifice, this murder does not include either weaponry, utensils or eating. In fact, Orpheus’ murder is either put up to jealousy of his adultery with the Maenads’ husbands, or their disdain of his renunciation of Dionysos as his patron god (Apollodorus, *The Library*, 1921, 1.3.2).

What this implies is Freud, though obviously wise in drawing a comparison to Dionysos, is lacking sufficient ethnographic and literary information (or appreciation) to use in such a daring and revolutionary text.

One must keep in mind that this is Freud’s mechanism to explain the movement from a ‘father-religion’ to a ‘son-religion’, however, he does not acknowledge Dionysos as the father of mankind, but instead as the son of Zeus (and consequentially, the Titans), which also inverts his structure of the Primal Horde.

It is also his mechanism to draw a comparison to the son god's fear of retribution, just as the sons of the Primal Horde fear retribution from their father for their Oedipal envy. In the modern Western nuclear family, this fear manifests as castration anxiety and the totemisation of the father (Freud, 1913, p. 153). However, Freud does not appreciate the importance of castration in the Zagreus myth – and how that castration led to the god's rebirth. And other than that rebirth, the god arrives simultaneously as supremely androgynous, and supremely phallic.

In order to critique Freud's ideas and place them in a more modern context, and to make my argument of Dionysos as an important psychoanalytic figure in myth, I will explore the relationship that psychoanalysis has maintained with the study of mythology.

### 3.3.1. Psychoanalysis and Mythology: The Allegorical Approach

After this critique of *Totem and Taboo*, I will move on to a brief history of the interpretation of myth, and how myth has been handled by depth psychologists. Psychoanalytic theorists will provide insight to the relationship between depth psychology and mythological analysis, and what might be lacking when cultural context and ritual is not taken into account.

These following sections will look at what I and Blumenberg (1990, pp. 57, 94) consider the two major approaches psychoanalysis has had to myth: myth as allegory, and myth as equitable discourse.

We will begin by looking at the allegorical approach that assumes myth as a metaphorical language that must be interpreted by a 'master discourse'. In psychoanalysis we see this in the many works of Freud (e.g.: 1913), Jung (e.g.: 1969), Rank (e.g.: 2004), and Abraham (e.g.: 2012) in the early twentieth century.

Over the next few decades of the mid-twentieth century, philosophers like Cassirer and Blumenberg put forward the ideas of the interpretation of myth being impossible due to the difficulty of language capturing reality, making interpretation inadequate. This led structuralist Levi-Strauss, and then psychoanalyst Lacan to argue that myth cannot be completely explained due to it being a discourse equitable to the discourse attempting to interpret it. In Lacan's case, psychoanalysis and myth sit side by side, without one being a 'master discourse' in a hierarchy. However, we will also see how Lacan fails to escape using the allegorical method himself.

The use of allegory in interpreting mythology may be a necessary and inescapable evil regardless of its shortcomings (that we will soon see), but this thesis asks, even allegorically, can myth be understood more clearly if interpreted alongside religious ritual in a cultural context?

We will now look at the various approaches used in psychoanalysis toward myth before attempting to interpret the mythology and ritual of the Dionysos cults in a socio-political context.

Freud's selectivity of myths and taboos in *Totem and Taboo* also owes to his overall approach to myth – which is clear in contrast to those of his students who shared a particular interest in mythology. 'The theory of the instincts is so to say our mythology. Instincts are mythical entities magnificent in their indefiniteness' (Freud, 1964, p. 95). A comment made toward the end of his life, Freud attempts to clarify his position on the relationship between mythology and psychoanalysis, one that asserts that – much like the founding father of modern mythic interpretation, Giambattista Vico (Trilling, 1964, pp. 52-3) – mythology is a metaphorical language of tropes very much embedded in reality and real occurrences that

have found voice through interpreting the irrational. Just as Freud uses psychoanalysis and mythology to further understand his analysands, mythology and its interpretation is used to further understand psychoanalysis itself. Of course, this then places psychoanalysis in two positions in its relationship to mythology: one functions as the lens through which myth can be read allegorically, and another where it stands as a parallel discourse to myth, both having an innate function (an idea that Freud would only warm up to later in life; see Blumenberg, 1990, ppp. 57, 94).

Harking back to the earlier discussion of the creation and continuity of myth referencing Freud's *Creative Writers and Day Dreaming* (1908), Freud remarks that myths are 'the distorted vestiges of the wish fantasies of whole nations — the age-long dreams of young humanity' (1908, p. 151).

According to Freud, the language of psychoanalysis is, therefore, the very same language of the unconscious – unconscious material finds its voice through dreams, phantasies and myth (occasionally madness, hysteria and delusions, as well).

Can you imagine what “endopsychic myths” are? The latest product of my mental labor. The dim inner perception of one's own psychic apparatus stimulates thought illusions, which of course are projected onto the outside and, characteristically, into the future and the beyond.

- Freud to Wilhelm Fleiss, in Masson, 1985, p. 286.

Thus, the enjoyment of myth comes from the viewers' catharsis of watching projected unconscious material enacted. Unconscious guilt is relieved when the protagonist of a tragedy is punished – whether guilt stems from Oedipal desire or from the Primal Crime.

Accepting that, we can see how Freud and some of his disciples varied in their approach to mythic interpretation. Though interpreting mythology was not Freud's primary focus, Freud often interpreted mythology using psychoanalysis to further support psychoanalysis in an era where myth and archaeology were in vogue (Armstrong, 2005). This helps explain his selectivity with mythology, whether it was Oedipus, or (flimsily) Dionysos

In contrast, some of his disciples, for example: Rank, Roheim, or Abraham, see the psychoanalytic interpretation of myth as a goal in itself – rather than using myth to repeatedly illustrate a Freudian concept the way their leader had done.

This is most evident in Freud's letters with Carl Jung in 1909 (Manheim and Hull tr., 1974, p. 279). After insistence to study mythology further from Jung, Freud replies, suggesting that the study was worth only to 'plant the flag of libido and repression in that field and return as a victorious conqueror to our medical motherland.' Of course, Jung defected, seeing psychoanalysis and analytic psychology as more expressions of mythology rather than a tool to understand it and decades later elaborated:

Not for a moment dare we to succumb to the illusion that an archetype can be finally explained and disposed of. Even the best attempts at explanation are only more or less successful translations into another metaphorical language (Indeed, language itself is only an image). The most we can do is to dream the myth onwards and to give it a modern dress.

- Jung & Kerenyi, 1969, p. 79.

In the aforementioned letter from Freud to Fleiss, Freud mentions that the one of the primary 'endopsychic myths' is the fantasy of immortality (1985, p. 286). 1909 was a triumphant year for the interpretation of mythology in psychoanalytic circles: Otto Rank published his seminal *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* at only 25 years of age, illustrating using

psychoanalysis the predominance of Hero Myths and their expression of mankind's unconscious desires and fears in the family romance and the driving force of myth: humanity's craving for immortality.

Many ideas in this text, connecting neurosis, ambivalence and the Oedipal crisis predate *Totem and Taboo* by four years – undoubtedly a major influence for *Totem and Taboo* whom Freud does not credit – for the interpretation is not used to prop up psychoanalysis. Similarly, we find in Rank's text the introduction of mythology presenting two separate planes of myth interpretation seen in the discussion of the trope where the infant Hero is surrendered to the water – on one hand a historical account of infanticide, and on the other, symbolic of the birth process (2004, pp. 75, 84).<sup>21</sup>

Dionysos shares many tropes with Heroes – varying from being the son of god, born from a virgin birth, abandoned as a child, his infernal descent and return to 'heaven' – however, he is mentioned only once in Rank's lengthy list of Hero Myths. In Rank's text, Dionysos appears referencing only one myth that was known solely in the town of Brasiaie, in Laconia, South Western Greece, as recorded by Pausanias in *Description of Greece* (1918, 3.24.3). In this myth, Dionysos and his dead mother Semele are locked in a chest and thrown into the sea, and wash up on the shore of Brasiaie, where the infant is taken in by his aunt Ino who happened to be in the town – Rank interprets this in line with other Hero Myths where the Hero is abandoned to water, and as representative of the birth trauma.

Ignoring the wealth of other Dionysos myths rich in tropes associated with the Hero is the reason that *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* will not play a part in the body of this thesis.

Also, the perplexing nature of a half-mortal deity being unique in being considered a god in his own right instead of a mortal hero sets him apart, and shines a light on his position

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<sup>21</sup> This coincides with *Totem and Taboo's* attempt at a historical truth (a falsifiable event) and psychological truth (a psychical event) existing simultaneously regardless of their seemingly contrasting nature.

in the Primal Horde hypothesis.

Also in 1909, Karl Abraham released *Dreams and Myths* (2012), a much more staunchly Freudian text compared to Rank's (2004). With a greater focus on language and philology (an appreciated move in regard to this thesis which takes philology into account for understanding the Dionysiac), Abraham's book primarily discusses the latent content in myth, and due to their similarity, dreams and myth can be explored through the same method of analysis. He explores how, and the degree to which, myth conceals repressed fantasies and dreams of entire cultures that even mask their contents to the cultures that birthed them. By censoring the repressed content that is projected outward as myth, the culture allows itself to enjoy the cathartic experience of the myth without becoming conscious of what they have repressed (in their psyches and in myth). Even in comparison to Freud, Rank, and Jung, Abraham seems to hold this idea in greatest regard. The incorporation of the importance of language in the unconscious echoes his adolescent studies in philology and etymology, according to Hilda Abraham (1974, p. 20).

He discusses that the unconscious has played a part in designing language in a manner that even language can be used to further distance a myth's (infantile and/or repressed) latent content from the culture that celebrates the tale in spite of their race's prehistoric wishes and complexes. It should be noted that Prometheus is a symbol of ambivalence and rebellion to paternal authority in his defiance of Zeus by stealing the Divine Fire from Olympus. (This defiant personality echoes Dionysos' own, and this is emphasised in both Prometheus and Dionysos' utilisation of a fennel reed; the former filling it with Divine Fire, the latter using it as the phallic thyrsos rod. Abraham (2012) notes a connection in the phallic symbolism of the two rods, but not that both use the same material of fennel reed.)

It should be noted that the text, using psychoanalytic interpretation, finds that the Greek origin of fire is an unconsciously censored allegory for sex and procreation, thus making the act of reproductive sex and the penis divine. This equation of fire and the penis was seen in the Dionysos cult and philology earlier in the thesis.

Abraham (2012) draws a connection between the Divine Fire and the nectar of immortality,<sup>22</sup> and their relationship with the very human and corporeal wine and seminal fluid, and that at its heart, the myths of Prometheus and Dionysos are a desire for mankind to be both descended from deities, as well as making their very achievable act of reproduction divine itself. He concludes by acknowledging Dionysos as representative of these themes as god of wine and nectar (Abraham, 2012, pp. 63-8), as we ourselves detailed in earlier chapters. Later, we will discuss how the appearance of a Titan (murderers of Dionysos, and predecessors of humanity), and Dionysos (victim of the Titans, and predecessor of humanity) relate to each other in the light of this text and *Totem and Taboo* (1913).

The contribution the text makes to psychoanalysis is how, like dreams, myths born at the earliest time of a culture's conception create multiple stratum of interpretation that masks the most desired (and sometimes shameful) wishes of a young 'race' inside the symbolism and deceptive philology of myth (Abraham, 2012, pp. 68-71). The very theme of masking and unmasking undesirable wishes is one used to the advantage of the god Dionysos in his myths, such as with Pentheus' latent incestuous and homosexual desire in Euripides' *The Bacchae*.

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<sup>22</sup> Abraham misses one more interesting point. He discusses at length the importance of the Ash tree's sap to make the nectar of immortality for Pramantha – his argued Sanskrit counterpart to Prometheus. He misses that the infant Zeus and Dionysos are fed 'melia', honey or sap, of both bees 'melissae', and the 'meli' tree – or the Mountain Ash tree.

Similarly, the Greek celebration of the resurrection of Dionysos, the *Anthesteria* is comes from the word 'anthos' (flowers) whose name comes from the Sanskrit 'andhas', which in one account is the fruit that makes the Sanskrit nectar of immortality, linking it to wine in Greece. (Spess, 2000, p. 37).



Freud explicitly references Jung's *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido*, later published under *Symbols of Transformation* (1956), as an inspiration for *Totem and Taboo* – more specifically, Jung's attempt to understand individual psychology further by using findings from social psychology (Freud, 1913, p. xiii). Here, Jung attempts to reverse the methodology of other psychoanalysts at the time who worked with myth, e.g., Abraham, by using myth and historical material to further understand the individual psyche (the case of Miss Miller), whereas his peers used information about the individual psyche gathered through psychoanalysis to further understand myth. As intriguing and ambitious as this task is, it is fundamentally flawed that any psychoanalytic interpretation of myth would be an interpretation whose foundation is psychoanalysis – i.e., gathered from the individual psyche.

Nonetheless, as a text it shows us the foundation for Jung's future theory of the collective unconscious (1966) and is a fascinating insight into how comparative psychoanalytic readings of mythology would eventually lead to that development. We see an inspiration from Abraham (2012) and Rank (2004), in that myths form a palatable narrative for the unconscious material of a civilisation, and how various civilisations share the same motifs, manifesting as heterogenous myths that hide the same psychoanalytic reading.

The text, to me, shows some of the most extravagant leaps, bounds, and false equivalencies that I critique psychoanalytic comparative mythology for. On one hand, it is testament to Jung's encyclopaedic knowledge of myth. On the other, it faces the same critiques I levy against *Totem and Taboo*, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, *Dreams and Myths*, and others.

This text foreshadows how much his ideas will diverge from Freud<sup>23</sup> with the coming schism, and it is for these reasons that Jung will not appear in the psychoanalytic material of

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<sup>23</sup> Ferenczi (2005) has written an extensive critique of the text, and how much its methodology diverges from the psychoanalytic material at the time.

this thesis. With my focus being a critique of *Totem and Taboo's* reading of Dionysos and of psychoanalytic comparative mythology at large, there is no space to discuss the matter of Jung's take on myth and Dionysos in particular – his work is entirely too divergent from Freud to give deserved space to in this work. Jung's interest in Dionysos is prominent in this text, but as we see in his 1910 (p.293) letter to Freud, his interest in Dionysos is heavily influenced by Nietzsche's philosophy, which I am trying to avoid in this text.

Later, for Bion, myths 'provide a succinct statement of psycho-analytic theories which are relevant in aiding the analyst both to perceive growth and to achieve interpretations that illuminate aspects of the patient's problems that belong to growth' (1963, p. 63). Myth and psychoanalysis both act as tools to elaborate upon one another, as 'the most constructive mode of representing these truths within the analytic session is in the form of myth. Myth enables us to communicate with one another about essential truths in a form that facilitates our ability to keep the various aspects in mind' (Charles, 2002, p.431).

Myth provides an opportunity for transformation in the analytic space, where a visceral and unconscious experience is portrayed in a manner open to interpretation (Bion, 1965, p. 4), giving coherence and context to that which lacks either (Bion, 1963, p. 103). Thus, a myth that appears across a culture is a representative of a common experience. In his essay on the complex psychoanalytic formula of the Grid, Bion (1977, p. 30) explains how we need more myths to display more unconscious functions and dynamics, and feels that myth can be used a model, and that psychoanalysis lacks models to view certain dilemmas like that of omnipotence versus helplessness. He gives a few examples of myths through the ages (that of Palinurus, Eden, and Babel) that present that conflict, and should be used and expanded on in the field.

A common strain in all these slightly varying psychoanalytic approaches, is the attempt to translate the irrational into rational, the *mythos* into *logos*. However, each seems to concede, with varying levels of explicitness, that the task may not be surmountable. Myth (and the unconscious) always holds something back, there being no certain key to translate all myth. Early psychoanalysis became another lens of interpreting allegory in a long line of allegorical approaches, from Vico's euhemerism to Frazer's vegetal cycles – however, it would eventually pave a way to looking at myth and psychoanalysis as separate discourses as well (as we will discuss).

The problematic aspect of allegorical interpretation used by the psychoanalysts is the same that faced Greek philosophers who adopted it in the Classical Era. Just as the psychoanalysts and mythologists attempted to explain the violent irrationality of myth, the philosophers did so as well: in a time when the gods with their perverse and ambiguous concepts of justice and joy (highlighted in Euripides' *The Bacchae*, where Dionysos' anger is accused of being exaggerated and unfair) began to alienate their worshippers,<sup>24</sup> the philosophers saved myths by finding the 'meaning' or 'reason' behind them (Brisson, 2004). The Christians adopted this, keeping the *fabulae* alive – when Dionysos announces he is the vine, Jesus announces he is the 'true vine' (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 257). When Dionysos references the Perfumed Panther, Jesus is likened to the Perfumed Panther who attracts worshippers to Paradise (Detienne, 1979, p. 38).

They all suffer the same drawback: 'The narrative is not allowed to exceed the argument, the medium is not allowed to exceed the message. Allegory is domesticated myth.' (Coupe, 1997, p. 105). The allegory exists to support the discourse that interprets it.

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<sup>24</sup> Which can be put into cultural context by the Classical Era immediately following the Greek Dark Age, rife with war, famine, and revolutions against the higher classes, particularly in Athens.

### 3.3.2. Lacan and Lévi-Strauss: Psychoanalysis and Myth as Simultaneous

#### Discourse

Allegory is a simplification of the Divine in mythology. Allegory ignores that two parts are played by the divine: an external controlling force, determining a character's movement and fate – as well as the divine as personifications of emotion or cosmological force. Dionysos can cause joy, create and dispel madness to his design in one interpretation – in another, he is the manifestation of those realities. Pentheus' arrogance, prejudice, and self-loathing led him to infiltrate the *orgia* in the guise of a woman, simultaneously he was driven mad by Dionysos to do so: he is both free, and controlled. Allegory does not account for the ambiguity of the nature of the gods as both anthropomorphic and as personifications of forces, or their ambiguity regarding their complex set of whims, justice and morality that might be seen as unpredictable to mankind.

This hierarchy can be dispelled if we look at philosophers like Cassirer (1977), who argues that *logos* was only possible to develop *because* of the existence of *mythos* – therefore making *mythos* a language in its own right; characterised by its use of mythic symbology and tropes. In *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1977) Cassirer explains that reality cannot be immediately grasped by humanity, but must be first translated into 'symbolic forms' of which mythical language is the most primitive and thus accessible, shaping human perception of reality and the self in the process – the language from which religion and art evolve (Cassirer, 1977, p. 155).

For Cassirer, there is no hidden meaning beneath the myth to explain reality, but reality (and even the self) is instead shaped by the language of myth, i.e.: whereas allegory sees myth as a secondary language to interpret, here it is its own form of discourse. Here, Cassirer

and Jung converge, in that all psychoanalysis can manage is translate myth from one metaphorical language (*mythos*) to another (psychoanalysis), in fact, *logos* is constructed by *mythos*' repetitive translation into more understandable forms.

Blumenberg (1997, pp.76-7) develops this point, in a way that is reminiscent of Abraham's (1909) claim that *mythos* can never be fully understood: the symbolic mediation between humanity and reality means there will never be a perfect translation from *mythos* to *logos*. Language is never completely accurate to perfectly depict the complexities of reality – its conveyance of the signified is always imperfect, and thus perverts the translation, regardless how accurate the translation from reality to perceived meaning may seem. Thus, all language retains a certain mythic, metaphorical character.

In other words, the translation between a mythological language and language of reality will be refracted and deformed by the time it is given voice for humanity's comprehension. A constant re-interpreting of myth is necessary, but there is no access to the meaning of myth, it develops as the interpretations change repeatedly. Consequentially, allegory is not sufficient (and therefore not a master discourse) to understand the unique language of myth, but can still play the part in a constant re-working and refining of myth to closer circle to its significance.

One would ask how Cassirer and Blumenberg apply to psychoanalysis – their work ties well with psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Here I will use Lacan's work to elaborate on the perspective that myth is a discourse unto itself and thus help us understand the traditional relationships between *cultus* studies/myth and psychoanalysis further – i.e., I will not use his theory as a psychoanalytic tool for this thesis.

Lacan was heavily inspired by the work of linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure's seminal work, published posthumously, *Course in General Linguistics* (1916, in 1966), put forward the science of semiology, or studying the life of signs in society. Lacan further develops on Saussure by dividing the signifier/signified relationship into three parts by considering the psychological image as separate to the word signifier; there are now three participants: the signified image (or mental conception of object or relationships), the signifier word (as symbols), and the object or concept in question (as referents).

For Lacan, our comprehension of reality and the unconscious is constructed by, and with, language. This is a heterogenous but interdependent building among three orders. These three orders are the Real, and those which attempt to grasp it: the Imaginary and the Symbolic (Sheridan, in Lacan, 1994, p. 279).

Language cannot capture the Real, since language creates definitions. In creating definitions to define (or signify) something, it separates the object from other objects, creating oppositions (hot versus cold, for example). Language thus creates a fissure in the Real by attempting to grasp it, but instead breaks and separates it into manageable signifiers.

By drawing boundaries between the individual and the Real, language therefore constructs the imagined self and reality (perceived to be the individual and the Real). We see here the theme of how boundaries construct spaces, not the content of the spaces itself: where language or symbolism is present, a line is drawn. This line denotes a space with definition, and all outside this definition are outside and opposed to this enclosed space.

The focus is on boundaries and language determining meaning for Lévi-Strauss. Lacan would continue in this vein in his own psychotherapeutic approach. Myth and its symbols

attempt to voice the ineffable, voice conflicts that cannot be resolved with accessible language, like the mysteries of the Dionysian realm's birth, sexuality, death, and rebirth.

Lacan references psychoanalysis and mythanalysis in the effectiveness of shamanism: how illnesses can be cured using narratives and symbols, therefore making both the illness and cure a matter of imagery (harking back to Jung and Cassirer) in a sort of *metanoia* – seeing the madness through, with the answer being in the illness. Something the Greeks would have been aware of with Dionysos appearing as both the cause (as Dionysos *Bakcheion*) and cure (as Dionysos *Lusios*) of madness (Detienne, 1989, pp. 24-6), who cured his own illness by seeking out the mad rites of his orgies (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 264).

Lacan's *The Neurotic's Individual Myth, or Poetry and Truth in Neurosis* (1979) evokes *Totem and Taboo* when explaining how neurosis is a result of unconscious conflict and its resulting ambivalence. Here, the ambivalence and conflict cannot be negated by discovering the meaning beneath, as in conventional early psychoanalysis – since the conflict and boundaries define the subject himself as an individual. But the observance and retelling of the 'individual myths' can shift perception of the neurosis at hand – however, the individual myth will always persist as a coping mechanism in future. So, the interpretation of the individual myth that Freud digs up to cure his patients, so similar to shaman mythic narratives, is less important to Lacan than the myth in itself, which modulates and alters itself to convey the true, indescribable conflict into comprehensible voice. Of course, this means Lacan does not entirely escape allegory, but like his patients' individual myths, it is a development from a previous form. 'The heart of the analytic experience is something which is properly speaking a myth' (Lacan, 1979, p. 291), teaching us more about modern perspectives on the relationship between psychoanalysis and myth, and how Freud's attitude to the personal mythic narrative carries on.

Finally, Lacan succeeds on placing psychoanalysis and mythology side by side as fraternal languages rather than as a hierarchy. Does this eliminate the need for the allegorical approach of Freud? No, even Lacan could not avoid it, and it might be an inescapable necessity of attempting to relate psychoanalysis and mythology – for every interpretation involves translation, perverting the ‘original meaning’. However, can myth be clarified further if paired with the interpretation of ritual in a cultural context? The following chapters aim to find out if placing myth in a socio-political context using that culture’s ritual might give us further insight into the myths surrounding Dionysos.

Lacan and Lévi-Strauss tell us, contrary to Freud and Rank, that as analogous languages, we might never find the ‘essential meaning’ of a myth – but we can circle closer with continually expanding examinations – the ineffable heart of the myth will always be out of reach as a conflict that even the interpreter represses and evades.

Taking this into consideration, I argue that both the languages of mythology and psychoanalysis will never meet a centre since they both erupt from the same source of the unconscious: myth as psychology projected and psychology as myth introjected. Myth arises from the source, and the psychic conflicts are enacted and reasoned with using the external acts of ritual – much like the individual myth and neurosis arises from the source, and brought into the new ritual of unpacking on the psychoanalytic couch (evoking the shaman narrative, where the answer is hidden behind symbols, but the symbols are more important than the unseen, ineffable symbolised that channels itself through the image). It is for this reason that I stress the importance of thorough background analysis of the cultural minutiae of mythic narratives in order to give our best chance at comprehending the myth and cult – because the purpose of the myth is already thoroughly concealed from us and we cannot rely on best guesses to prop up our analyses.



Keeping this in mind, as we approach the thesis' conclusion, we will see what Freud's work can provide us with a more detailed appreciation of the Dionysos cult. Does it help us see how ritual and couch circle toward the Dionysiac wilderness of the psyche?

The following chapter will turn to study of the ego and its subjectification via the processes of introjection and projection, and in the process, its division between *polis* and *phusis*, and consequenti oppression of marginalised identities.

## Chapter 4: Intrigue and Repulsion: Ambivalence and Projection on the Other

A vortex of summons and repulsion... [that] places the one haunted by it literally beside himself.<sup>25</sup>

– Kristeva, 1982, p. 1.

Face to face with this man who is ‘different from himself’, he needs to defend himself. In other words, to personify the Other. The Other will become the mainstay of his preoccupations and his desires.

- – Fanon, 1967, p. 170.

Allow me to restate the purpose of this thesis: the thesis explores the hegemonic subject’s self-definition from the id, thus creating the subject-object divide and Other, which is mirrored by the *polis*’ self-definition from *phusis*, and in the socio-political stratification of citizen and Other within *polis* – and how those processes are reinforced by religion, the performance of ritual, and myth. Dionysos figures in both processes, as the Other/*phusis* that can disrupt this process of boundary building, which is an inherently ambivalent act.

I argue that Dionysos is a mythic representation of the primal state of the psyche from which the ego must recognise itself, an ambivalent act since it gives Dionysos a threatening and ambiguous character of being both outside and within.

It develops Freud’s idea that the psyche is at first experienced in myth as a projection, then introjected as psychology (1901, pp. 258-9). I ground my thesis in this area of psychoanalytic and

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<sup>25</sup> *Ek-stasis*.

mythological thinking and focus on Dionysos as the mythic match to this primal level of the psyche.

This chapter will focus on explaining the concept of the Other, and how the Other's creation poses a psychological conflict to the citizen's ego, manifesting in the Ancient Greek *polis* psyche as Dionysos. Since this thesis explores the function of Dionysos in the hegemonic psyche in which they relate and oppress the Other, this chapter looks at how these Greceian Others – the foreign, feminine and Queer, are intrinsically linked to Dionysos, providing me with further evidence for this thesis and Dionysos' boundary-crossing abilities.

I argue that Dionysos is a mythic representation of the primal state of the psyche from which the ego must recognise itself, an ambivalent act since it gives Dionysos a threatening and ambiguous character of being both outside and within.

#### 4.1. The Building and Blurring of Boundaries: Dionysos and the Other

In the previous chapter I recapitulated different approaches to the concept of projection in psychoanalysis. The two major forms of projection we are concerned with in this chapter are first, the projection onto deities that grant them their qualities and give them shape, and second, 'disowning projections', where repressed material that one (or a culture, or a species) refuses to accept is projected.

The two major forms of Freudian projection we will keep in mind will be (a) the disowning projection (1958), and (b) in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) projection including the creation of a deity's personality. The totem father and animistic forces of nature are imbued with human qualities, with unconscious psychic material being projected onto them. One example that

was explored in the previous chapter was how the unconscious anger toward, and hatred of, a late loved one is projected onto them – imbuing their ‘ghost’ with vengeful qualities. The external world (be it real or supernatural) becomes a target of projections.

We see a similar idea regarding the role of projection in religion and the supernatural occurring in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (Freud, 1901, pp. 257-8):

In point of fact I believe that a large part of the mythological view of the world, which extends a long way into the most modern religions, is nothing but psychology projected into the external world.

The obscure recognition (the endopsychic perception, as it were) of psychical factors and relations in the unconscious is mirrored... in the construction of a supernatural reality, which is destined to be changed back once more by science into the psychology of the unconscious.

One could venture to explain in this way the myths of paradise and the fall of man, of God, of good and evil, of immortality, and so on, and to transform metaphysics into metapsychology.

It can thus be argued that the psychogenesis of a god demands projection of unconscious material.

This raises the question, what psychical material forms the make-up of the god Dionysos? Or, more accurately, what is projected to manifest the Grecian phenomenon of Dionysos?

A popular interpretation of Dionysos that I have adhered to and elaborated on in chapter 2 is Dionysos manifesting as simultaneous opposites, or, existing in the state of *phusis*: in the absence of opposites. Opposition demands definition of the two opposites, and

as argued earlier, Dionysos seems to exist in a spatio-temporal area before man defined *polis* against *phusis*.

In Corinth (as in Sikyon, Naxos, and Thebes), his multiplicity and ability to be simultaneous opposites is acknowledged. Openly in the *agora* there are two *xoana*: wooden statues painted gold except for the crimson faces. They look identical, but one is Dionysos Lysios, the other is Dionysos Bakcheios: the former relieving madness, the latter inflicting it. Pausanias says that the statues are carved from the treetop that Pentheus was perched on when observing the secret rituals of the Maenads in *The Bacchae* (Detienne, 1989, pp. 24-6).

No effort is made to differentiate the two from each other, Dionysos' two statues are identical, but possess the extremes of his powers regardless of his mask (Detienne, 1989, pp. 25-6). This ability allows him ambiguity, provoking ambivalence from the Grecian people. As the god of masks and mirrors, he is allowed to possess any quality they choose to project onto him, and is rarely fixed in identity or appearance.

Once these boundaries are drawn, however, Dionysos appears to straddle both. He is both alive and dead, mortal and immortal, citizen and foreigner, male and female, masculine and feminine, the present and the distant past. Dionysos' personality and morality is ambiguous as well, being both benefactor and seemingly undue punisher, as highlighted in the climax of *The Bacchae*. His morality is blurry and maintains the same animal savagery and capricious volatility of the wilderness he wandered in from. He draws in, he repels.

One must remember that these boundaries are man-made. Within the walls of *polis*, each detail of civic life is defined, divided, and socialised by taboos and rituals. Outside the walls, the wilderness still resides in the state of *phusis*, the wilderness still being perceived as home to the foreign and wild god. What we will explore in this chapter is how myth, ritual,

and theatre all betray a truth: Dionysos resides not just outside, but within. Within the *polis* walls, and within the individuals who inhabit it.

By defining oneself within the *polis*, one has already created an Other against itself. In other words, the Other is an object that is created in the process of establishing subjectivity as the subject with identity.

Being associated with the boundary-less nature of *phusis*, the opposing force of *polis*, Dionysos playing character of the uncanny Stranger becomes the Other par excellence, a force that contains the opposite of how Grecian culture has chosen to identify itself while containing within him the Grecian. The ability to straddle oppositions in the unrestrained land of *phusis* makes him a perfect target for what English and English (1958) termed ‘disowning projections’. Dionysos is imbued with the same capricious savagery and lack of restraint that pervades the id.

In this we find Dionysos’ mythic trope as arriving as the return of the repressed – revealing to his opponents and detractors the qualities they loathe about him in themselves.

Detienne explained how Greeks perceived the interpenetration of boundaries between in/*polis* and out/*phusis* results in ‘madness’ and self-destruction. So, when the Greeks see characters like Adonis or Atalanta defying these boundaries, they witness the consequences of humanity going against *polis* and reverting to *phusis*, and suffering for it. He also explained how blood sacrifice was used as a tool to reinforce present-day *polis*, to prevent a return to *phusis*, associated with the animal nature of humanity’s distant past, before *polis* and law.

Dionysos is himself exempt from the effects of boundary penetration, but humans are not – because unlike the Grecian individual, he is not bound by them in the first place. They have defined themselves in these boundaries, he has not. In arriving into the *polis* as

Dionysos is wont to do, he invites boundary-less *phusis* in with him, threatening the entire city by destabilizing its core identity.

In the following section I will explore three primary ways in which Dionysos penetrates the boundaries of Grecian identity – by introducing three qualities marginalised in *polis*, those Other to the hegemonic ego of the citizen, suffused with *phusis*: the foreigner, the feminine, and the Queer. In doing so, he reveals to the human participants of the myths how the Other lives in far closer proximity than they were willing to admit.

Dionysos is a god who comes from the outside, who belongs to the periphery but also, paradoxically, to the *agora*.

- Seaford, 1994, p. 246.

#### 4.1.1. Who is the Other?

The outsider typically is not a total stranger, but a familiar, yet deviant figure, and it is precisely this familiarity which threatens to upset the social order and the group's sense of inner cohesion and integrity.

- Zukier, 1996, p. 1117.

What is a stranger? One whom a Greek cannot dispose of, by classifying him for all time under the heading of other.

- Loraux, 2000, p. 64.

Let me first establish what I mean by 'the Other'.

When I discuss the Other in this thesis, it is in the way it is used in Critical and Post-Colonial theory. Ego emergence demands the creation of the subject-object divide, but I am curious about the object which is Othered. The Other, in summary, is believed to be unlike

the self, and exists outside the hegemony that stands at the apex of the community's power structure – legally and/or socially, they are Other. In the language of this thesis, it is the socio-political division between the citizen, who possesses *muthos*, versus the Other, who does not.

I will refer to the definitions of the *stranger* used by Simmel and Bauman, summarized well by Clarke and Moran (2003).

Simmel's Trader<sup>26</sup> is a potential wanderer, and is 'the person who comes today, and stays tomorrow' (Simmel, 1950, p. 402). The Trader is ambiguous, simultaneously like and unlike, near and distant, wandering and fixed. The Trader is considered an aberration, not quite inherent to the group. The Trader thus is geographically placed in the same space as the citizen, but not 'owner of either the physical or symbolic space' (Clarke and Moran, 2003, p. 167) they occupy. In the language of this thesis, physically, they are in *polis*, but symbolically, they are of *phusis*.

Bauman developed on Simmel (1950), with the Universal Stranger, particularly in the context of the World War II Holocaust.

The citizen and Stranger both "are subject to the same structures and ideas, they define good and bad, true and false, they stand in polarity creating an illusion of order and symmetry. The stranger violates this structure and order; in Bauman's words 'they (the stranger) bring the "outside" "inside" and poison the comfort of order with the suspicion of chaos'... the stranger undermines order by straddling the boundary, causing confusion and anxiety, and as such, becomes a target of hatred.' (Clarke and Moran, 2003, p. 168). The citizen must then *enforce* a polarizing distance, making the ambiguous a 'we' and 'they'.

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<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, the Dionysia seems to intentionally coincide with the sailing season and arrival of foreign merchants bringing foreign goods to Athens' *agora* – including the dietary staple, wheat.



When the tension between the citizen and Stranger becomes too strong, the citizen then attempts to either force the Stranger to integrate completely through a symbolic cannibalism, or expel them entirely.<sup>27</sup> I will elaborate on the ambiguous nature of the Stranger further in **section 4.2.**, under ‘**All Too Familiar**’.

Though Bauman does not use a psychoanalytic approach to the Stranger, Clarke and Moran (2003) find the Stranger to be a psychosocial figure in the community and its psyche.

More specifically, the Other is a receptacle for our disavowed projections *because of* their ambiguity, their *uncanniness*.

The stranger is a symbolic character, combining a real sociostructural base and psychic element. The stranger is a psychosocial character who causes chaos by being neither one of us, or one of them. The stranger is ambiguous. Whilst being a product of our own feeling of ambivalence, s/he plays on our fears and imagination. S/he is uncanny in the sense of being at once both estranged and wholly familiar. Strangers represent all our feelings of displacement and chaos. They represent a direct threat to our psychic stability — what appears repellently alien is in fact all too familiar — a manifestation, or reflection of our own phantasy which is violently forced into some other.

- Clarke and Moran, 2003, p. 173.

Freud (1919) discusses the uncanny as *das Unheimlich*, the is/is not - as opposed to *heimlich*: homely and familiar. Ironically,<sup>28</sup> *heimlich* is a contranym itself. By meaning both homely, familiar, but also concealed, hidden, which makes us question the difference between *heimlich* and *unheimlich*.<sup>29</sup> Where *heimlich* is either clearly familiar, or hidden, *unheimlich* is suffused with uncertainty – perhaps the difference lies in either the surety of knowing or

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<sup>27</sup> Almost like *omophagia* vs *pharmakos*.

<sup>28</sup> By this point in my thesis, I begin to fear that irony foreshadows Dionysos (foreshadows, or left in his wake because no one saw him pass by, perhaps).

<sup>29</sup> Like the statues of Dionysos wearing masks in the *agora* (once again, foreshadowed, or in his wake? Citizen or Other?).

ignorance, versus the perpetual gnawing fear of uncertainty (a feeling which is uncanny in itself).

we can understand why linguistic usage has extended *das Heimliche* [‘homely’] into its opposite, *das Unheimliche*; 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 of the uncanny as something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light.

- Freud, 1919, p. 241.

Thus, the stimulus that is uncanny, ignites an unconscious awareness of repressed material, resulting in fear of the uncanny stimulus. The fear of reprisal by the superego for our repressed will is then projected onto the uncanny Other who is thus denigrated. The boundaries enforced ease this terrifying uncertainty of familiarity under the unfamiliar.

I will return to the topic of projection in section 4.2. First, I will explain what is Other in the Grecian imagination, what they are Othered for, and the part played by Dionysos in this process.

### **Boundaries**

Dionysos: “Why? Do Gods not pass over walls too?”

- Lines 481-4, Euripides, *The Bacchae*. Buckley tr., 1850.

What is Other to the Greco-Roman?

Much of our recording of societal values comes from philosophers, historians, and playwrights. Unfortunately, due to the Greater Dionysia and the universities of the city, much of their work becomes Athenocentric. Therefore, there is far more material reflecting Athenian social perspectives rather than those of say, Macedonia.

It is thus important when acknowledging Grecian social structures to be aware of the possible Athenian influences on their authors.

The Other to the Grecian, as summarised by Benjamin (2004, pp. 4-5), ‘include women, slaves, children, the elderly, or disfigured people. It refers to any group that is not part of the establishment, but is placed on the margin or periphery of society, or does not belong to it at all... foreigners, strangers, and immigrant minorities’.

There is a division between these Others themselves, those who reside within *polis* taboos of Hesiodic ritual practice, and those who intentionally transgress them by participating in Dionysiac cult to question the socio-political stratifications that Other them. In the eyes of the citizen’s ego – the *polis*, hegemonic ego – they are all still associated with the Dionysiac, regardless of their participation in the cult. This however, does not mean that the Grecian Other exists under the protection of Dionysos, but instead it means that the citizen projects the Dionysiac upon the Other. This projection thus provides an illegitimate reason to oppress and subjugate the Other due to their association to *phusis* and disorder.

For example: a woman is still Other, whether or not she participates as a Maenad. She will always be associated with *phusis*. But in the Dionysos cult, she actively questions her Otherness by not participating in *polis* regulations and protesting the rules that Other her.

I will come to discuss the part played by these various figures in taboo-transgressing rituals in a later section, but first let’s explore the identities of the Other.

#### 4.1.2. Dionysos the Barbarian: Cultural Divisions and *Misobarbaron*

##### **Dionysos the Barbarian**

It is this peerless Dionysus, who is half human; in fact, on his mother's side he is not even Greek, but the grandson of a Syrophoenician

- Lucian, 'The Assembly of the Gods', in Benjamin, 2004, p. 144.

The above quote by Lucian of Samosata comes from a dialogue between Zeus and a character named Momus, who criticises the Olympian deities. Dionysos receives the most of this scorn, his drunkenness, effeminacy, and mingling with foreign and low-born stock of the 'shepherd class' being attributed to his Syrian-Phoenician heritage from Kadmos.

It is important to remember that Lucian of Samosata is Syrian himself, and this satirical work highlights the intense xenophobia of Grecian society – to where it extends to the gods' heritages as well, Dionysos becoming a target for the average Greco-Roman's ambivalence. Loraux explains the difference between *homophulos*, those born of the same stock and on Greek soil and thus allies and equals, and *allophulos*, those of foreign stock and thus hostile (an important distinction in Greek politics) (2000, p. 52) – however, Dionysos manages to be both. As the son of Zeus and grandson of Harmonia he is indeed Greek, but he is of mixed race, mixed heritage, and a person who left Greece, and thus returns a stranger.

Thus, the introduction of his cult in Triumph myths is perceived as *asebeia* (impiety). Another charge of *asebeia* can also be levelled against the incorrect performance of Hesiodic ritual or nonconformity of ritual performance to local tradition, thus breaking ritual taboos, which is considered sacrilege proper (Isocrates, Maecenas, in Versnel, 1990, pp. 123, 125). In classical and Hellenistic era Athens, two formal permits were necessary to introduce a foreign cult: the *polis* provided right to buy land, and permission to build a temple on it (Versnel, 1990, p. 122). Both these permits imply the cult should be introduced by a citizen.

Punishments for the unlicensed introduction of foreign cults or questioning Hesiodic practice were extreme, Socrates was executed for *asebeia* (Versnel, 1990, pp. 124, 127), and the hostility of Athenians to the new cults of Kybele (also Rhea-Kybele), Adonis, Sabazios and others was enough to be recorded (Versnel, 1990, pp. 102-31).<sup>30</sup> This implies that the Dionysos cult was considered so foreign to Greece that it could be accused of *asebeia*.

The introduction of foreign cult or questioning of Hesiodic cult was perceived as sedition to the *polis* and punishable by death.<sup>31</sup> It is this that makes the practice of the Dionysos cult politically subversive, Plato condemns private cult as socially disintegrative (Seaford, 1996, p. 51). For all purposes, the practice of the foreign cult is *asebeia*, but the state condemning it is condemning an Olympian – which is *asebeia* as well, even if he was foreign.

It was not simple enough to call people of other lands foreigners. It is key to understanding the hatred of the foreigner by knowing the common word for them was ‘barbarian’. And it is further complicated by understanding that one need not be a foreigner to be a barbarian. Plato states:

So firmly-rooted and so sound is the noble and liberal character of our city, and endowed also with such a hatred of the barbarian, because we are pure-blooded Greeks, unadulterated by barbarian stock. For there cohabit with us none of the type of Pelops, or Kadmus, or Aegyptus or Danaus, and numerous others of the kind, who are naturally

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<sup>30</sup> A legend that Versnel and others (Versnel, 1990, p.105-7) theorise to be inspired by real events occurring at the time of the great plague in Athens of 430-439 BCE states that the plague followed the formal execution of a foreign man initiating women into the cult of Kybele. Kybele is also identified to be Dionysos’ great-grandmother and cured his madness in an ecstatic ritual that would inspire his own Mysteries, she even provided him with the recognizable Maenadic dress and instruments (Apollodorus, *The Library*, 3.5.1; Eurpides, *The Bacchae*, lines 55-63, 73-87; these are the earlier examples, Nonnus, Strabo and others come later).

<sup>31</sup> However, not all cases of *asebeia* end with execution, as in the cases of Ninus, Phrone, Demades or Aristotle, who argued their way out of an execution (Versnel, 1990, p. 129). These trials are reminiscent of trial of Dionysos and the extended dialogues between him and Pentheus in *The Bacchae*. Phrone’s being a woman and *hetaera*, other her the way Dionysos is othered.

barbarians though nominally Greeks; but our people are pure Greeks and not a barbarian blend; whence it comes that our city is imbued with a whole-hearted hatred of alien races.

- Plato, 1925b, lines 245 c-d.

Here we find the introduction of the word ‘*misobarbaron*’, translated as ‘hatred of the barbarian’, a frank admission lacking any diplomacy around the emotion. It also clarifies that ‘barbarian’ literally means one who does not speak Greek (Loroux, 2000, p. 48), but implies foreigner, immigrant, tourist, and those of mixed heritage, ethnicity, and race. We also find the notable inclusion of Kadmos, reminding us of Dionysos’ mixed ethnicity. Kadmos is called ‘*meixobarbaroi*’, or ‘semi-barbarian’. We can infer from Plato’s quote that Dionysos and his Theban royal family of Kadmeides are ‘naturally barbarian though nominally Greek’, and thus, ‘alien’.

It is for this reason I will continue to speak of Dionysos as a barbarian, which acts as a convenient term for those whose heritage and birth makes them alien to Greek nationality.

With modern eyes, Kadmos is undisputedly Greek. He is the founder of one of Greece’s strongest cities, capital of the city-state of Boeotia, and a cultural hero for founding the nation’s alphabet (Herodotus, *The Histories* 5.58). Regarding heritage, his Syrophenician bloodline is mixed with the Spartoi, autochthonic Greek warriors born of the Ismenian dragon’s teeth in Thebes (Apollodorus, *The Library* 3.4). But no amount of academic, cultural, or political excellence won him the title of Greek in Ancient Greece for as long as the Kadmeides were part Syrophenician. This establishes that even as the founder of the Greek alphabet, he is called a non-Greek speaker, showing us how much more complex the Grecian idea of ‘barbarian’ is. Loroux draws attention to how Socrates criticises these arbitrary and xenophobic categories by drawing attention to how much of the Greek language is ‘Barbarian’ and thus there is always ‘something of the Barbarian in the Greek, and that this

Barbarian kernel will always remain obscure, compact, unintelligible’ (Loraux, 2000, p. 47) – like Dionysos that hides at the heart the Greek psyche.

An example is to look at the *metics*, Ancient Greek tax-paying immigrants who won a semblance of residency for possessing professional skills or trade (as implied by the term *metic*) – and yet lacked access to all the rights of citizenship available to able-bodied, heterosexual, male ‘pure-blood’ Greeks (Roeck, 2014).<sup>32</sup> Achilles complains bitterly that Agamemnon has ‘treated him like a *metanastes*’, a word for migrant and refugee (Loraux, 2000, p. 55). Also, be aware of Perikles introducing a fifth-century law that forbade citizenry to anyone not born to two Athenian parents (Seaford, 1994, p. 208).

It is important to note then, how Dionysos once again straddles distinct opposites here: he is thoroughly Greek and thoroughly barbarian in multiple ways. On one hand, descended from Zeus and the Olympians, defining characters of Greek culture, on the other, descended from a human Syrophoenician immigrant. His human family, as well is a mix of barbarian, and the Spartoi – Rosivach (1987, p. 300) notes how autochthony makes even the lowest class of Greek higher than any barbarian, since true Greeks would spring from the land. Regarding his birth, we must consider that Dionysos is born in Greece, but is hidden away in Nysa, a foreign land that is ever shifting, and unlike other geographical locations in Greek mythology, never placed on a map. Born on Greek soil, but raised on foreign land, Dionysos must arrive to Greece as a barbarian citizen, or a citizen made barbarian. The deep Grecian patriotism and xenophobia is then challenged by the arrival of this god who is most-like, and most-unlike them.

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<sup>32</sup> In the *Eumenides* by Aeschylus, Athena calls the maddening Erinyes ‘*metics*’ when they develop the capacity to protect as well as punish. They also wear purple robes, like the human *metics* in Dionysiac festivals. This can be read as the skilled *metics* swearing allegiance to the *polis* (Versnel, in Seaford, 1996, p. 51).

### **The Moving Mountain**

Hermes' stealing Dionysos away to Mount Nysa has resulted in many historians attempting to place it on a map. No conclusion was ever reached, and speculations varied as far North as the Black Sea, as far East as the Himalayas, as far West as Libya, and as far South as Ethiopia (Kerenyi, 1976).

Nysa is probably the closest we can get to establishing the god's homeland, and it firmly places his home outside Greece and Italy, wherever Nysa may be. This seems intentional, to insist on the god's foreignness, creating a fantastical image of a mountain inhabited by (to the Greeks) exotic animals and spices, trees that dripped with honey and perfumed resin, nymphs, Kouretes, sileni, satyrs, centaurs, all with an affinity for manic and ecstatic ritual.

Regardless of Nysa's mythical location, what many modern Classicists can attest to is the importance and dramatic nature of Dionysos' arrival to the Aegean in his myths. Never settling in Greece, it is traditional for Dionysos to return to foreign lands before once again visiting Grecian cities as is customary in his *epidemia*. In establishing Greece as a tourist destination for himself and his retinue, his nature as *xenos*, or 'alien' is emphasized (Detienne, 1989, p. 9).

The arrival of this alien is much like victorious enemy army, to quote Otto (1965, pp. 78-9):

he appears among men like a storm, he staggers them, and he tames their opposition with a whip of madness. All tradition, all order must be shattered... The cult forms give us the clearest evidence of the violence with which he forces his way in – a violence which affects the myth so passionately... whose appearance is far more urgent, far more compelling than that of any other god.



There are many sources that stress the importance of the *epidemia*, and I will direct the reader to chapters 1 and 2 for more sources and I will only summarise them here.

In chapter 2 I also elaborated upon the three categories Detienne (1989) divided these epidemics into. The first is arrival via an ambassador like Patras, or Phanes the Apparitor, both bearing *xoana* of the god, statues or masks with abilities to either cure madness, or drive men insane.<sup>33</sup> The second is arrival via viticulture and the vine, such as the vine was given to Ikarion by Dionysos at the outskirts Athens, making a wine that led drunken dinner guests to kill Ikarion. The third is much more decisive, arriving himself to spread his cult – resistance to him results in the usual mad and violent tropes of the Triumph myths.

What it establishes, is that his cult is introduced to Grecian cities where he and his cult were not known. The arrival is characterised by confusion and the ability to sway sanity in one direction or another, be it by his own presence, his statues, or his viticultural gifts.

Establishing the *historical* arrival of his cult in the Aegean has been similarly difficult. Arguably, Kerényi (1976) has formed one of the lengthiest arguments for its presence in Minoan Crete instead of the various lands it legendarily came from (Thrace, Phrygia, and Lydia being the most commonly believed regions in the ancient world). It must be kept in mind that Kerényi (1976) had access to incredibly recent archaeological discoveries of Cretan Linear B tablets in the 1960s that place the existence of a deity named *Di-Wo-Nu-So-Jo* in Knossos and Pylos as early as the Late Minoan Period, nearly a millennium before Euripides' *The Bacchae*. Other tablets in either region of the Minoan Period found the names of Pentheus, Iakchos, and a word that could be root for either Silenus or the star Sirius, both associated with Dionysos. In case of any doubt, much of Minoan culture has infused itself

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<sup>33</sup> An interesting name quoted by Pausanias 2.7.6 – the name Phanes will appear in chapter 6 as being an important title connecting Dionysos to the cosmogony as the first being in creation, or might simply establish this character as literally a 'phanes', or 'one who brings to light'. It is entirely possible that like the plot of *The Bacchae* and many others, this character was meant to be Dionysos in human guise.

into Dionysiac cult: from the bull dancers, *labrys* axes, the Labyrinth, and of course the Mistress of the Labyrinth, Ariadne herself – all found in the Palace of Knossos. It might shed some light on the many statues of golden ships and dolphins at both Pylos and Knossos, associated with Dionysos *Pelagios*. It could be theorised that Greek historians and the writers before the 1960s were mistaken in assuming the cult came from Turkey or Bulgaria, when in fact it came from a place closer to home. Nonetheless, Minoans were not Greek, and were still entirely foreign to the Mycaenean Greeks. Dionysos and his cult was still a barbarian – just from an island in the Mediterranean.

### **Foreign God and Foreign Culture**

Dionysus: “All the barbarians celebrate these rites.”

Pentheus: “Yes, for they are far more foolish than Hellenes.”

Dionysus: “In this at any rate they are wiser; but their laws are different.”

- Lines 481-4, Euripides, *The Bacchae*. Buckley tr., 1850.

The foreign god who arrives like a conqueror is feared to bring with him a culture foreign to the Greeks, considered inferior and ‘foolish’.

Isaac (2004) presents an extensive account on Greek *misobarbaron* and the part it played in the development of modern racism. Of importance is Herodotus’ theory of climatic determinism, where a people’s moral and physical qualities and worth are defined by the climate they live in – and that the Greeks are lucky to have a favourable climate (Isaac, 2004, pp. 58-62).

Aristotle develops on this theory by explaining that it is not just climate, but people’s diet and manner of eating (Aristotle, 1944). He establishes this argument by applying

observations of the eating habits and temperaments of non-human animals to separate groups of people. Aristotle argues against the nomadic lifestyle:

Among wild animals some are nomadic and others solitary, according to whichever habit is advantageous for their supply of food, because some of them are carnivorous, others graminivorous, and others eat all kinds of food; so that nature has differentiated their modes of life to suit their facilities and their predilection for those articles of food. And as different kinds of animals by nature relish different sorts of food, and not each kind the same, even within the classes of carnivorous and graminivorous animals their modes of life differ from one another. And similarly, in the human race also, for there are wide differences of life among mankind. The idlest men are nomads (for to procure food from domesticated animals involves no toil or industry, but as it is necessary for the herds to move from place to place because of the pastures, the people themselves are forced to follow along with them, as though they were farming a live farm).

- Section 1256a, Aristotle, *Politics*. Rackham tr., 1944.

What Aristotle's theory has in common with Herodotus' is asking how much work is demanded of the people in question in preparing their food. Here, the nomad is considered lazy and thus inferior for not learning cultivation. By not mastering cultivation, nomads still wander *phusis*, lost to a distant past that through industry and diet, defines their stature, personal, and moral worth.

Here I'd like to draw attention to data in chapter 1, and the popular Ancient Greek zoological theory of the panther's eating habits – also perpetuated by Aristotle in *Problemata* (1927). By eating spices, it makes itself irresistible to herbivorous animals, causing them to seek it out, and leap into its maw. Dionysos, also referred to as the Perfumed Panther, can be seen to act similarly. A nomad, Dionysos would possess the qualities of nomads claimed by

Aristotle in *Politics* (1944), and behind him, a train of more nomadic worshippers and exotic animals that were entranced by him and the same spices worn by panthers: styrax resin and cinnamon.

Dionysos, like panthers, abused the use of seduction in ways Greeks were not meant to. Like nomads and barbarians, his moral qualities are inferior to a Greeks, lost in the mists of a primitive past.

The use of spices in ancient sorcery to seduce and entrap men, the abuse of these substances that possess divine qualities, imported from hot foreign lands, populated by people decadent in their exposure to heat and these mysterious substances that waft in the air. Dionysos' ability to turn women into Maenads can be perceived as a similar enchantment. His arrival in a city bring with it an epidemic that pulls the foreign in, the women now possessed and becoming like Dionysos, like the dissolute women from foreign lands he brings with him, their infection threatening the moral superiority of Greek men.

And some of you hunt throughout the city for this effeminate stranger, who introduces a new disease to women and pollutes our beds.

- Lines 352-4, Euripides, *The Bacchae*. Buckley tr., 1850.

Though Greek women were already difficult in the eyes of Greek men, and were to be kept under control by fathers and husbands, foreign women were allowed by their cultures to revel in their corruption. Where in Greece spices were used to anoint the marriage bed and bind Greek women to their husbands, the barbarian Circe performs incredible feats of sorcery. Pottery, like Figure 1, suggest Circe worked with, or was tutored by, Dionysos in the art of sorcery.

Aunt of Dionysiac Ariadne, Medea, and Asterion the Minotaur, Circe – Maenad-like – soothed wild predators: “mountain wolves and lions, whom Circe herself had bewitched; for she gave them evil drugs” (Homer, 1900, lines 212-14). In the food and wine served to the Greek men, the witch exiled to the Eastern Mediterranean island of Aeaea for killing her husband, prince of Colchis, had mixed ‘baneful drugs, that they might utterly forget their native land’ (Homer, 1900, lines 235-236). The parricidal, regicidal, foreign and exiled princess who in these qualities is ever Dionysiac, takes Greek men away from their home into the animalistic East, and drags them to *phusis* by turning them into animals.

Not unlike her aunt Circe, powerful, parricidal, regicidal, foreign Medea knew the use of natural potions, driving Talos to madness and suicide before dismembering her own brother (Apollodorus, 1921, 1.9).

It is her husband, Jason, that reminds us in no uncertain terms (with what could easily be the moral of a morally ambiguous play):

But now when you were married to me and had borne me children, you killed them because of sex and the marriage-bed. No Greek woman would have dared to do this, yet I married you in preference to them, and a hateful and destructive match it has proved. You are a she-lion, not a woman, with a nature more savage than Scylla the Tuscan monster.

- Lines 352-4, Euripides, *Medea*. Kovacs tr., 1994.

Jason must be corrected here – many Greek women dared to do what Medea had done. And many would testify to vengeance, jinxing, dismemberment, and parricide, once the alien god brought *phusis* into the *polis* walls.



Figure 1: Dionysos and Circe transforming men into animals, Red-figure Krater, dated 475-425 BCE, Syracuse, Sicily, Museo Arch. Regionale Paolo Orsi, Vase 207104

#### 4.1.3. All Endowed, the Great Calamity; femininity and misogyny

##### These Monstrous Women

Women awaken Dionysos and bring him up. Women accompany him wherever he is.

Women await him and are the first ones to be overcome by his madness.

- Otto (1965, in Kerényi, 1976; p. 132).

DIONYSUS: 'But, you women who have left Tmolus, the bulwark of Lydia, my sacred band, whom I have brought from among the barbarians as assistants and companions to me, take your drums, native instruments of the city of the Phrygians, the invention of mother Rhea and myself, and going about this palace of Pentheus beat them, so that Kadmos' city may see. I myself will go to the folds of Kithairon, where the Bacchae are, to share in their dances.'

- Lines 55-63, Euripides, *The Bacchae*. Buckley tr., 1850.

Accepting Hesiod as the primary influence on Greek religious praxis, his *Works and Days* (Evelyn-White tr., 1914) tells us of the nature of woman. Woman did not come into creation with man, but was created long after. The golden age of man before her was one without toil or illness or death, but upon Prometheus' deceit of the Olympians by providing man with the better part of the sacrifice, the means with which to cook the sacrifice – fire – was taken from them. Stealing the divine fire inside a fennel stalk<sup>34</sup> and giving it to men led Zeus to bind Prometheus in Tartaros, and taunt him to witness the fall of man: 'I will give men as the price for fire an evil thing (μέγα πῆμα) in which they may all be glad of heart while they embrace their own destruction.' (Hesiod, 1914, lines 55-8).

The μέγα πῆμα, more accurately 'great calamity', given to mankind and the cause of their destruction is Pandora – the 'All Endowed' first woman. It is emphasised that Pandora's design is Zeus' own, and he has the gods provide the elements that build her – the description of her creation is methodical, mechanical, weapon-like (Hesiod, 1914, lines 59-82). She is built to be 'beautiful' and dressed in finery, but 'modest'. Implying she is both desirable, yet approachable, perhaps even controllable. Athena gifts her with a skill for weaving, establishing woman's role in the home. Then Aphrodite and Hermes bestow in her the most worrying qualities. Aphrodite fills her with 'cruel longing and cares that weary the limbs', and Hermes with 'a shameless mind and a deceitful nature' and 'contrived within her lies and crafty words' – her name is not ironic when her nature is this ambiguous.

Gifted by the gods with a jar she is told not to open, the affliction by Aphrodite in the form of curiosity gets the better of Pandora as she opens the jar to release the evils of the world – a final gift in the jar, hope, does not escape the prison. A later verse (Hesiod, 1914, lines 95-6) tells us it is both the evils contained in the jar and 'her thought' that cause sorrow

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<sup>34</sup> Dionysos and the Maenads use the fennel stalk to make the *thyrsos*, a Dionysiac phallic symbol. It is possible that this references the 'divine fire' and generative abilities being carried by humans in the form of Dionysos. This is never clarified in ancient text as far as I am aware.

for men, and the misery caused is what makes men age and die young. For the Greek, woman is the antithesis of man, *polis*, civilization, morality, and life. In fact, as Loraux highlights, the construction of Pandora renders her and all women an entirely different race from the race of men (1993, pp. 72-110). Not only are women thus a distinct species from men, it also places those who queer gender in a liminal space outside the two.

If, as established earlier, the socio-political stratification of Grecian *polis* is deeply interwoven with religion – particularly with the works of Hesiod – it comes as no surprise that this fear and hatred of the feminine is extended to women in Ancient Greece.

### **Women in Power**

In real life, ancient women had no formal political rights, they had precious little economic or social independence and in some cities, such as Athens, respectable married women were almost never seen outside the home.

But Athenian drama in particular, and the Greek imagination more generally, has offered our imaginations a whole series of unforgettable women. Names like Medea, Klytaimestra, or Antigone among many others can still ring a loud bell for us.

They are not, however, role models for anybody. Far from it. For the most part if you look harder at their stories, they are portrayed as abusers of power, not as users of it. They take it when they take it illegitimately and that power grab, in that sense, leads to chaos, to the fracture of the state, it leads to death and destruction.

These are monstrous hybrids, and not really women in the Greek sense of the word at all. And the unflinching logic in their stories is that they must be disempowered, and put back in their place.



In fact, it's the mess that women make of power in Greek myth and storytelling that actually justifies their exclusion from it in real life, and justifies the role of men...

The only good Amazon – was a dead one.

- Mary Beard, transcribed from *Women in Power*, 2017

I would develop on a point being made here by Beard (2017). Regarding women in power as 'not really women in the Greek sense of the word at all', I would clarify that they exhibit the extremes of what the Greeks perceived as feminine. Hungry, violent, lustful, possessed by desire and passion, lacking the temperance and rationality of men. It is these perceived qualities that Greek (and later Roman) men denounced and used as an excuse to keep women out of speaking in public spaces and thus politics. Yet, it is this oppression that keeps the feminine other *inside* the house, keeping the threat of usurpation and rule by women close and constant (Zeitlin, 1985, pp. 72-3)

What is being subverted though, is what was expected of *Greek* women. Greek women, who (like Jason's accusation of Medea) were capable of restraint and temperance when placed under the watchful eye of man.

When Beard (2017) cites Klytaimestra as being called *androboulon* in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (Smyth tr., 1926), one should read the whole verse. It states: 'woman in passionate heart and man in strength of purpose' (Aeschylus, 1926, lines 10-11). What is said here is that she still is possessed by the Pandorean spirit of passionate woman, but has developed a sense of authority once she is made acting governor of Mycenae. This suits more the foreign women whom men could not control, or whose cultures simply lacked the finesse and civilization of the Greeks to keep in check.

Klytimestra emphasises the extremes of femininity and masculinity, and the lack of restraint of her femininity makes her reign poisonous, suffused with parricide and implied incest.

Aristotle has accused women of unrestraint, and in *Nicomachean Ethics* (Rackham tr., 1934) establishes the consequences of unrestraint. It is the quality of satyrs and non-men (barbarian men in this were non-men as well), possessed by ‘certain savage tribes on the coasts of the Black Sea, who are alleged to delight in raw meat or in human flesh, and others among whom each in turn provides a child for the common banquet’ (Aristotle, 1934, section 1148b).

By their very nature, women were inferior to men, and possessed the natural instinct to be destructive, power-hungry, and cannibalistic.

### **A Slave to Slaves?**

Go, then, within the house and busy yourself with your daily duties, your loom, your distaff, and the ordering of your servants; for speech is man's matter, and mine above all others - for it is I who am master here.

- Scroll 1, line 7, Homer, *The Odyssey*, Butler tr., 1900.

This is how Telemachus, still a young boy, tells his grieving mother to keep silent when she asks the bard to not sing songs of men who did not make it home from the Trojan War, since her own husband Odysseus had not returned. Telemachus has her return to the loom, her inheritance from Pandora, as he confidently establishes himself as undisputed head of the household, and denies his mother's suitors access to her – firmly seating himself as master.

His mother retires to her room to grieve and weave, accepting that μῦθος was a man's matter. Here, μῦθος does not mean *muthos* as in myth, but in terms of political and public speech, a right that defines Greek manhood and citizenship.

This privilege presents itself in a concerning manner in *The Bacchae*, when urged to be calm in allowing his mother and aunts to participate in the Bacchanal, Pentheus says 'Doing what? Being a slave to my slaves?' (Euripides, 1850, line 803). This is sometimes translated as 'subject to my subjects', but we must be clear that 'δουλεύοντα δουλείαις ἐμαῖς' directly references servants or slaves.

The behaviour and, to us, outlandish audacity of Telemachus and Pentheus is not unusual when placed in the context of Greek law. Both, though teenage boys, are given position of *kyrios* – 'legal master' – of the women in the household. The culture demanding *kyrios* existed long before being formalised into law by Demosthenes, becoming a legal necessity for all women living in an *oikos* (Seaford, 1994, p. 208). Wives, daughters, and unmarried women were legally obliged to 'belong' to the male head of the *oikos* who acted as *kyrios*. Most often, when married, a daughter's *kyrios* changed from her father to her husband. However, in Pentheus and Telemachus' cases, we see an interesting irony: the two preternaturally assume position as *kyrios* though the Agave's father and Penelope's husband are still alive. But since both are absent, precocious sons quickly ascend to their place. The Oedipal elements here are not lost on the tales' readers (which we will return to in chapter 6).

The messenger in *The Bacchae* is afraid of telling Pentheus what he witnessed the Maenads doing on the mountainside. What is often translated as simply the messenger being afraid of his temper, in Greek, appears as an accusation of Pentheus' 'βασιλικὸν λῖαν' (Euripides, line 671) – 'excessive kingliness'. This supreme adherence to *polis* power and self-aggrandisement

prevents Pentheus from accepting the divinity that draws his ‘slaves’ out to the mountains, disobeying him. The *oikos* that defines a woman’s Pandorean confinement to the loom is undone, to spite (and in spite of) man’s clinging to a patriarchal power structure defined by the gods of Hesiod.

### **Pandora on the Mountains**

Chapter 2 went into further detail exploring the significance of the ritual practices of Maenads and Bacchantes, such as the *hierosgamos* at Lenaia, the swaddling of Dionysos in the *liknon*, and of course, the *sparagmos* and *omophagia*. Here I will revisit some briefly to highlight the anti-*polis* qualities in them.

After establishing the firm boundaries between the binary genders of male and female in the Greek *polis*, designed by divine ordination to allow men to keep women ‘under control’ and thus ‘civilised’, men are placed in battle and temple and throne, women at the loom.

Women taken from the loom into the transgressive and boundariless space of *phusis* no longer adhere to those rules, like Atalanta. The sacrifice of Pentheus at the hand of his mother and aunts witnesses an inversion of gender in the sacrifice. The sacrifice itself blurs into a battleground rather than a sacrifice, and the women take on cultural significations appropriated to masculinity. This comes in the form of ululation. For men, ululation is restricted to the cry of *alalai*, made in battle. For women, it is *ololuge*, cried out in mourning (Seaford, 1994, p. 290).

Prevented from the sacrificial space, and prohibited by wielding the sacrificial *makhaira*, Maenads subvert the *polis* sacrificial and gender laws by using their fingernails and teeth, and crying out a war cry. Inversion and a suffusion in *phusis* is complete with

ecstatic parricide and cannibalism, divinely sanctioned to women who have blurred lines between male, female, god, human, and animal.

The similar rejection of *polis* occurs in the various forms of marriage ritual in Dionysiac cult (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 307-12, 357-62). Prior to marriage to the governing archon of Athens, his wife, the Archon Basillina must be accompanied by sixteen *gerairai*, Dionysiac priestesses, to a hidden temple outside Athens in a swamp. Here, she is wedded to the god, Dionysos the Liminal, before she is to her husband. The emphasis being the god of the swamps outside the city (in *phusis*) take precedence over the *polis*. Similarly, there is much evidence suggesting that an initiation ritual into the Dionysiac Mysteries was a simulated marriage ritual to the god – establishing ‘home’ as the mountainside, not the *polis*. Not unlike Ariadne’s marriage to Dionysos instead of Theseus.

Another subversion of womanhood in the *polis* takes place with the swaddling of the infant Dionysos in the *liknon* basket in ritual, where an image of him is cared for by Bacchantes. In myth, he takes precedence over the children she eats. Her family is in Dionysos, her home outside the city, away from men.

In these practices she undoes the *oikos* – the enclosure of women - and thus men’s control of *polis*. To quote Seaford (1994, p. 259): ‘Maenadism...is antithetical...to the civilized state... to the whole process through which girls become the wives of citizens. Maenadism symbolically reverses the process by which the *polis* reproduces itself’.

Maenadism and the Dionysiac cult are threats to marriage and family, and consequentially, threats to the entire political structure of *polis*. By marrying the Archon Basillina, the woman of the royal *oikos* that acts as a stand in for the city at sacrifices, he claims the city and its women. Where the gods created woman as capricious and flawed, to be

‘tamed’ by men in marriage, Dionysos undoes the marriage and provides a space outside the walls of *polis* where she has no voice.

In this space of *phusis*, she performs rituals to the god, drinks wine, carries spears and tooth and claw, ecstatic and murderous in her *alalai* battle cry that is no longer only the property of men.

In this transgressive space, where she commands her fellow Maenads to hunt and performs her own sacrifices on her own behalf to her own god, she possesses *muthos*.

I would argue here that it is not femininity being subverted here, but the Greek *polis* femininity that is to be instilled in a creature built lawless, to be tamed by men. In a society whose foundation is built on the repression of femininity, the Dionysiac emphasis on ‘natural’ and unrestrained femininity of Hesiod – violent, passionate, and sensory – was a subversion of Greek femininity, not femininity itself. Maenads here mirror the unmarried Amazons, Medea, Circe, Atalanta, the Sphinx who was once a Maenad herself, and of course, the Maenad Alkmeonis, who wrecks Hera’s temple with her *thyrsos*, as a testament to her hatred of marriage. Maenads become what Pandora aspired to be.

This femininity is phallic, abandons its place and turns on their husbands, subverting the patriarchal structure of the *polis*. Thuone, leader of Maenads and goddess of the Bacchic madness, like other Maenads is called ‘enflamed’ (*thuone*) and is represented by a phallic symbol (Csapo, 1997, p. 286). And as phallic as the Maenads become in their adoption of norms only attributed to men, so Dionysos embraces his androgyny and unrestrained femininity while maintaining his phallic nature.

Where foreignness and womanhood prevented one from becoming citizen of the *polis*, sexual orientation and gender presentation were equally closely monitored. This roots in Aristides’ observation that ‘the Dionysiac places women in the ranks of women no less than

it causes women to act like men' centuries earlier (in Csapo, 1997, p. 263). Diversion from culturally acceptable forms of masculinity, femininity and heterosexuality resulted in rejection from *polis*. In the climax of *The Bacchae*, wandering into the wilderness of *physis*, Pentheus disguises himself as a woman – in this guise his mother does not see her son, or any man or woman, she sees something that does not belong to the *polis* at all: a mountain lion.

#### 4.1.4. Liminal Animals; Dionysos and Queer Antiquity

##### Liminal Animals

Dionysos: “[B]e seen by me, wearing the clothing of a woman, of an inspired maenad... In appearance you are like one of Kadmos' daughters... Now you see what you should see... You will surely consider me the best of your friends... The state of mind you had before was unsound, but now you think as you ought.”

- Lines 914-39, Euripides, *The Bacchae*. Buckley tr., 1850.

Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. If this is true, it seems, there is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an effect and consequence of the imitation itself.

- Butler, in Ablove et al., 1993, p. 313.

The terror possessing the Greek populace regarding transgressions of sex, gender and violence has been portrayed in the effeminate hunter-seducer in Dionysos and Adonis, and

the masculine virgin-huntress in Atalanta. They no longer belong to either Greek conception of gender, and their sexuality is their own, defying gender binaries and thus definition in terms of sexual orientation. Their rejection of the dominant models of Greek gender dynamics and sexual expression returns them to the hunting ground of *phusis*, the hunting ground of Dionysos (Detienne, 1979).

This hunting behaviour sections a liminal space that opens up to subversion of consumption and sacrifice, and in turn sexuality and gender: All spaces Dionysos usurps and perverts. These mythic operators form a semiotic relationship, that through exegesis and structural understanding, provide a framework through which readers can decipher the world in which Dionysos works, and the portals he opens to those like Adonis and Atalanta – and consequentially, the members of his controversial cults who use these semiotics to their advantage to defy the socio-political powers of Greece that use texts and religion as their lawmakers.

As with Adonis and Atalanta, Pentheus enters *phusis* in his voyaging to Mount Kithairon to spy on the Maenads, at the same time he is penetrated by it, the *phusis* in himself recognised. Androgynous, in drag, barriers begin to break down – between the city and the forest, male and female, masculine and feminine, mother and son, human and animal. In rejecting *polis*, he rejects his position as king, citizen and wielder of the much envied and defining privilege of masculine citizenry – *muthos*.

Worse so in the eyes of the audience is his voluntary rejection of *polis* (which one should keep in mind is a result of his attempt to attack and dismantle *phusis* in spying on the Maenadic *orgia*). In the Hesiodic hierarchy of god, human, animal, he is ‘lower’ than human – symbolised in his mother seeing a lion instead of her son. This evokes Atalanta’s metamorphosis to a lion, as well as Dionysos’ affinity for big cats. They also symbolise



qualities Dionysos remarks about in Pentheus – the male lion’s bloodthirst and pride, and their inability to copulate in Pentheus’ repulsion of sex and sensuality.

Meanwhile, Dionysos arrives as a willing participant in the state of *phusis*, as a foreigner, a leader of free women, and in androgynous guise. His myth and cult is rich with tales of his rejection of *polis* gender expression, gender roles, and sexual practices while maintaining his position as deity, heir to Zeus’ throne and successful military leader.

In 692 CE, the Church of Constantinople felt it necessary to implement a law simultaneously banning (their binary interpretation of) cross-dressing and 'shouting out the name of the execrable Dionysos' (The Quinsext Council, Percival tr., 1955, p. 393). Both Dionysos and Pentheus here appear in *phusis* dressed like women, but in very different circumstances. The former embraces it as home, the latter is seduced into wandering in by the former. In both instances, the lines that define the Hesiodic hierarchy of god, human, and animal are blurred by rejecting the *polis* gender binaries.

A god is a man in woman’s clothing and man in woman’s clothing is an animal.

### **Dionysos Androgynos**

While there is no critical consensus on the definitional limits of queer--indeterminacy being one of its widely promoted charms--its general outlines are frequently sketched and debated. Broadly speaking, queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatise incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender and sexual desire. Resisting that model of stability--which claims heterosexuality as its origin, when it is more properly its effect--queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire. Institutionally, queer has been associated most prominently with lesbian and gay subjects, but its analytic framework also includes such topics as cross-

dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity and gender-corrective surgery. Whether as transvestite performance or academic deconstruction, queer locates and exploits the incoherencies in those three terms which stabilise heterosexuality. Demonstrating the impossibility of any “natural” sexuality, it calls into question even such apparently unproblematic terms as “man” and “woman”.

- Jagose, 1997, p. 3.

In Dionysiac myth, the wilderness, prehistory, and the non-spatial, non-temporal realm of *phusis* are sites that possess and are possessed by Queerness. Arguably, the Greek *polis* rises out of *phusis*' Queerness characterised by the Dionysiac absence of definition (and consequentially), division and boundary built by socio-cultural laws dictated by males possessing *muthos*.

Dionysos' fluid transition between genders and species is mirrored in Pentheus. Pentheus' presentation as female makes him a lion, in this the rejection of *polis* values regarding gender removes him from humanity – not unlike Dionysos' retinue. Dionysos' retinue is populated by liminal beings: satyrs, sileni, centaurs. By association, Maenads (who blur the line between 'male' and 'female') become similarly liminal, and this is evoked in their title as 'bee women'. This would also insinuate Dionysos is the queen bee around which the Maenads and Nysa revolve – reminding us again of his epithets *Androgynos* (Androgynous), *Anandros* (Unmanly), and *Pseudanor* (False Man).

This blurring seems to take places with those around him frequently, even before his birth, Zeus must gestate and then birth Dionysos via castration. Here both Zeus and Semele play the part of the one who inseminates and the one who gestates as the foetus is passed

from one ‘mother’ to another.<sup>35</sup> This takes place before his being raised as a girl to hide him from Hera, suggesting the environment of Queerness that surrounds him is innate to his character.

In the eyes of the *polis* though, it is because *phusis* follows Dionysos where he goes. His presence devalues and breaks down boundaries that define gender and sex in *polis*. The laws take the Queerness of the natural world and attempt to limit it, and by delimiting, Othering. The Queer is the Other to *polis*, as is the woman and the foreigner.

The quality shared by all, and even by the retinue of satyrs and other liminal creatures, is their ‘unrestraint’.

### Akrateis

Aristotle (1934, 1148a) tells us about ‘unrestraint’, or *akrateis* in *Nicomachean Ethics*. It occurs in men possessing ‘softness’ and a compulsion to seek ‘extremes of pleasures’ in full knowledge of their effect on his masculinity and moral fortitude.

Among these ‘extremes of pleasures’ in Ancient Greece, homosexual activity among adult men or queering gender expectation was enough to remove citizenship from an individual. This extended to pederasty if penetrative sex took place, since the *erastes* would be accused of attempting to ‘feminise’ his *eromenos*. Later, in the Roman era, penetrative sex among men becomes more acceptable, if the penetrated partner is of a lower social class, i.e. a slave. The affairs of the bed were affairs of the state, the private becoming public – ‘when one played the role of subordinate partner in the game of pleasure relations, one could not be truly dominant in the game of civic and political activity’ (Foucault, 1992, p. 220).

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<sup>35</sup> Zeus’ castration and Semele-Thyone’s resurrection using a penis-shaped statue emphasises the non-gendered nature of the phallus and their Queered parenthood.

The participation in penetrative sex in a pederastic relationship, or any homosexual activity amongst adult men, was enough to strip either of *muthos* in the political/*polis* sphere. Like women, animals, and liminal beings, they are exiled to *phusis* for their ‘unrestraint’.

So, we must draw attention to Dionysos’ sexual activity. A few sources direct us to a figure named Prosymnus/Polymnus/Hypolipnus/Coroebus who lived at the Alcyonian lake, a region that would later become site to the resurrection of Dionysos and his ascent from Hades.

Sources primarily tell us Hypolipnus brought Dionysos to the bottomless lake that would lead him to Hades to find Semele, in exchange for sex – the implication of penetration appears in calling Hypolipnus a ‘shameless man’. Pausanias (1918, 2.37.5-6) tells us that it was Polymnus, and that following the event the nocturnal rites that take place in honour of the descent cannot be divulged. It is Clement of Alexandria (1919, 2.30) who tells us that Dionysos carved the fig-wood penis revered in his Mysteries to fulfil his deal with now-dead Prosymnus upon the man’s tomb. Being a former *mustes* in the Mysteries of Dionysos who converted to Christianity, is most likely that Clement had used the implied meaning of the myth as a way to shock and criticise the Olympian religion at a time of great tension between polytheism and Christianity. Other writers who have related a similar story with Dionysos fulfilling his oath using a fig-wood carving are Nonnus, Arnobius, Tzetzes, and Anonymous, this act is repeatedly alluded to by male participants in ritual *komoι* (Csapo, 1997). Csapo (1997) also makes a case for this Queer sexual activity portrayed in *komoι* and Dionysiac artwork removes the binaries of active/passive, dominant/submissive, masculine/feminine from the penetrative homosexual act.

A few more myths relate Dionysos to Queer male sexual activity. Aesop's Fable #517 (2002) claims that Queerness was the result of Dionysos getting Prometheus drunk while he fixed genitalia onto humans, with some women getting male genitalia and vice versa.

Seaford (1994) repeatedly points out that Dionysos' appearance in Homer is minimal, but I notice that in relation to his sanctifying Queer relationships, in this case that of Achilles and Patroclus, his appearances are instrumental. Many debates as to the nature of the relationship between the two have taken place, but Ancient Greek statesman and orator Aeschines (in Michelakis, 2007, p. 51) clearly states that the general Classical Greek opinion of the relationship was romantic and sexual, reflected in the works of influential thinkers like Aeschylus, Plato, and Plutarch (amongst others). Alexander the Great's comparison of himself and Hephaestion to Achilles and Patroclus might also suggest the latter couple were the similar age and not a pederastic couple (Arrian, 1976).

These appearances of Dionysos begin with Achilles' mother, Thetis. Her ability to change shape quickly and skilfully is reminiscent of Dionysos, as well as her name that might translate to 'nurse'. A young Dionysos flees to Thetis' protection when he and his Maenads are hunted by Lykourgos in *The Iliad* (1924, book 6, lines 130-40).

*The Odyssey* mentions a golden amphora urn that Dionysos gifts to Thetis on her wedding day (Homer, 1919, book 24, lines 74-6), that appears on the François Vase (Figure 2, third row). Here he is characteristically the only god that faces the viewer, carrying a large amphora on his back in the wedding procession.

It is in this gold amphora that Patroclus pleads Achilles to mingle their ashes in, which he explicitly states was a gift from Dionysos (Homer, 1919, book 24, lines 74-6; 1924, book 23, lines 83-92). It is worth noting that, for a deity who is rarely mentioned in Homer, this incident appears in both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.



Figure 2: Dionysos presenting the golden urn on third row, François Vase, Krater, dated 600-550 BCE, Florence, Museo Archeologico Etrusco, Vase 300000

Earlier in the thesis I mentioned how Dionysos seems to possess a certain amount of forethought and seems to actively participate in several events that lead to a conclusion that is unmistakably Dionysiac – whereas he himself is not present at the climax. We see this in the gifting of the amphora (his affection for Thetis, his gift, his invocation by Patroclus, yet not being present at the ash-mixing that marks their relationship), a vessel for wine becomes a

vessel for ashes. From this angle, his relationship to Achilles and Patroclus is surprisingly paternal, and one he rarely has outside his protectiveness of Maenads or Ampelos, his *eromenos*. In comparing himself and Hephaestion to Achilles and Patroclus, Alexander emphasises his own public association to Dionysos via his travels to India, establishing Dionysos as the patron of Alexandria (Arrian, 1976), and his mother's very politically visible and controversial Maenadism (and admirable strength of character) (Carney, 2006).

This extension of myth to practice occurs in ritual as well, and Dionysiac myth to Dionysiac ritual.

In Dionysiac ritual, we find the presence of both transvestism and Queer sexual behaviour.

Much like Pentheus' commenting on Dionysos' feminine appearance in *The Bacchae*, we find the presence of male youths in female dress in multiple rituals to Dionysos (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 145, 150, 170, 335).<sup>36</sup>

In the Roman era, Livy (1936, book 39, chapters 13-20) records the Senate meeting that banned the Bacchanal in Italy, in particular the reports of the chief witnesses and couple Publius Aebutius and Hispala Faecenia. The hearing of 186 BCE resulted in the issuing of the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus* that banned the Bacchanal, initiations, ritual meetings or temples to Bakkhos unless strictly controlled by the Senate. The result was a high number of self-exiles, suicides, and executions that surpassed imprisonments (1936, book 39, chapters 17-18).

Of particular interest to the Senate was Faecenia's claim that '[t]here were more lustful practices among men with one another than among women. If any of them were disinclined to endure abuse or reluctant to commit crime, they were sacrificed as victims' and that youths

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<sup>36</sup> I cannot comment on whether, with Dionysos as god of theatre, this had influenced the choice to have female characters played by men in women's clothing; but the possibility is present.

were often targets for initiation (1936, book 39, chapter 13), possibly owing to their more androgynous resemblance to Dionysos. Evidence for human sacrifice was not put forward.

The focus of the sexual activity of the men participating continues to their androgyny – whether in their appearance or ‘unrestrained’ behaviour:

As regards their number, if I shall say that there are many thousands of them, it cannot but be that you are terrified, unless I shall at once add to that who and of what sort they are. First, then, a great part of them are women, and they are the source of this mischief; then there are men very like the women, debauched and debauchers, fanatical, with senses dulled by wakefulness, wine, noise and shouts at night.

- 1936, book 39, chapter 15.

This effeminacy extends to their capability of threatening the state. The very *polis* was under threat from the secret and infiltrating presence of the Dionysiacs that have been equated to a ‘foreign cult’ because ‘nothing was so potent in destroying religion as where sacrifices were performed, not by native, but by foreign, ritual’ (1936, book 39, chapter 16). The language of the witnesses is unmistakably marked with a moral outrage that may have easily been influenced by the language used by mythic characters like Lykourgos and Pentheus in the Triumph myths:

Yet it would be less serious if their wrongdoing had merely made them effeminate —that was in great measure their personal dishonour... never has there been so much evil in the state nor affecting so many people in so many ways. Whatever villainy there has been in recent years due to lust, whatever to fraud, whatever to crime, I tell you, has arisen from this one cult. Not yet have they revealed all the crimes to which they have conspired. Their impious compact still limits itself to private crimes, since as yet it does not have strength enough to crush the state. Daily the evil grows and creeps abroad...If lust, if madness has carried off anyone into that whirlpool, let each consider that such a person



belongs, not to himself, but to those with whom he has conspired to every wickedness and wrong.

- Livy, 1936, book 39, chapters 16.

### **Transgression and the True Phallus**

The body gathers round the phallus like society round the chief

- Hocquenghem, 1993, p. 96.

The law requires conformity to its own notion of 'nature'. It gains its legitimacy through the binary and asymmetrical naturalization of bodies in which the phallus, though clearly not identical to the penis, deploys the penis as its naturalized instrument and sign

- Butler, 1990, p. 135.

If *muthos* is the result of phallic power, the *polis* suffers a double delusion: that the penis is the same as the phallus, and thus the penis possesses *muthos*.

In penetrative sex between men, the imagined phallic potency of the penis becomes a force destructive to *polis* by participating in an act believed to belong to the realm of *phusis*: the 'vaginisation of the anus' (Kemp, 2013, p. 69). The penetrator is *unrestrained* and uses his phallic strength to vaginise a man that could have been an upstanding wielder of *muthos* – they are symbolic animals, or symbolic liminal beings. The penetrated is *unrestrained* and is willing to abandon his *muthos* and phallic-ness in pursuit of 'feminine' or servile pleasures – they are symbolic women, or symbolic slaves.

The anus is thus excluded altogether from the male libidinal economy, such that its erotic use immediately carries with it the threat of castration

- Kemp, 2013, p. 5.

The male-body-as-*polis* and the phallic-penis-as-chief births the idea that the male body (and male mind) is meant to be impenetrable – like the walls of *polis*. If the individual male is impenetrable and *muthos* noble, then the collective is, and thus the *polis*. The *polis* rests on the impenetrability of those who wield *muthos* against those who seek to usurp it for themselves (the foreigner, the woman, the Queer male).

Theweleit (1987) discusses the delusional need for the boy's body to be hardened to the impenetrable body of a soldier that is forbidden to know any pleasure or feeling outside that which penetrates by necessity: to reproduce or kill. Pederastic relationships in Greece involving a man taking a boy to the woods (in some cases kidnapped without consent) to teach him to hunt and fight sought the goal to harden him into a man. His parting gift would be weaponry and a soldier's girdle, with which the boy will go into battle.

He is taken by an older man to made impenetrable, his body a hermetic vessel for *muthos* and forbidden transgression of either value or body lest the penetration allow the *muthos* to escape from him. He is drawn away from his mother, her femininity being associated with the seductive lawlessness of *phusis* (a sadistic masculine phantasy that wishes to associate the feminine with lawlessness and the *akrateis*), and nurtured into *polis* where he seeks no comfort outside his own ability to control and penetrate.<sup>37</sup> Here he completes his identification with the masculinity and impenetrable *polis* embodied by his father and *eromenos*, which some would argue is an expression of the inverse Oedipal attraction as well. It fulfils his desire to have the father and identify with him (and thus *polis*), removed from the mother and made impenetrable. As Zeitlin points out that in *Seven Against Thebes*, a man is a sword and armour, but a woman's realm is her bodiliness (1985, p. 70).

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<sup>37</sup> The man must be carved out of his mother the way the *polis* must be carved out of the *phusis* it originates from.

Foucault explains that Grecian culture ‘always conceived in terms of the model act of penetration, assuming a polarity that opposed activity and passivity’ (1992, p. 215), thus the citizen male must always, in matter of bed and state, be active and penetrative, never passive and penetrated. To be passive was to be politically uninvolved/without *muthos* like the Other. This is explicitly highlighted in Caeneus’ wish to change from female to male, in which they develop impenetrable skin, in order to never suffer rape again as they did in a female body, as if a male body could not be raped or penetrated (Ovid, 2000, Book 12, lines 184-209).

However, this impenetrability (of body and *polis*) stands opposed to security, for its existence rests entirely on the terror of penetration, and worse, the enjoyment of such transgression. Before Pandora, men are without sickness or death (Hesiod, 1914, lines 95-6), but her weariness of the limbs penetrates the walls of the male body, spreading fatigue and mortality to them. Where’s a man’s body is built to be impenetrable, a Maenad’s hands ‘open it up’ (Zeitlin, 1985, p. 71). Women, like Dionysos, who in their femininity possess knowledge of the vulnerability of the human body and its porous boundaries, possess the key to undoing it.

The Other in Dionysos – the foreigners with their weakness, the women with their sensuality, and the Queer males with their bestiality – must (ironically) be maintained as threats in order for the body (and thus, *polis*) to remain secure. In this, *they* are gifted the phallic power of penetrability, by the same men who seek so dearly to keep it for themselves.

And thus, the conceit that the penis is the phallus breaks down, along with the walls of body and *polis*. Dionysos’ *cultus* maintained that he was the manifestation of the phallus, that is only symbolised by the penis, but not the penis itself. However, it can also be argued that the penis as phallus image is only informed by the culture that buys into this patriarchal phantasy, since the phallus as umbilical cord can be argued as well, in Semele’s impregnation

of Zeus, Dionysos' connection with worshippers, and snake or vine imagery, since the phallus has no image outside phantasy which is informed by a masculine society. His mother Semele-Thuone is resurrected by him using a penis-shaped statue, casually called the phallus (Csapo, 1997, p. 286), emphasising the non-gendered nature of phallic abilities being projected onto the penis-image. The penis is only a signifier for the signified phallus. We can read it as the Bacchic worshippers buying into the male phantasy of penis as phallus, while acknowledging that the penis-phallus was *not* limited to men, honouring the Queering of the body in the Dionysiac.

His imagery as a large phallus of either wood or stone exists in conjunction with his imagery as a feminine immigrant with no desire to keep his sexuality in line with that of the *polis*. The Other possesses the phallus, by virtue that the *polis* seeks to withhold it from them. The god of irony never announces his punchline.

### *Fallere φαλλός*

[P]sychic penetrability is fantasised as sexual penetrability... [it] may change him into a woman

- Bersani, 1977, p. 12.

[W]hen a name comes, it immediately says more than the name: the other of the name and quite simply the other, whose irruption the name announces

- Derrida, 1993, p. 89.

The foreigner is stabbed in war, the woman in consummation, and the Queer male in vaginisation, this ability to withstand penetration symbolizing not only permeability, but the 'permeability between the feminine and masculine' (Miller, in Kemp, 2013, p. 73). This extends to the permeability between foreign and home, animal and human. The more

demanding the need for opposition, the more threatening and intolerable the possibility of ambiguity (Kemp, 2013, p. 77).

Thus the ‘seizing’ of phallic power by the Other (which we have established is a delusion since the *polis* has already unconsciously granted this power to the Other) was also possible in the realm of *phusis* and the Dionysiac, contaminating the *polis* when he appears. Such contamination is literalised in the priapism that afflicts Athens when Dionysos wanders the streets as a naked androgyne, a curse for rejecting the large phallic statue brought by his Eleutherian cult to the city (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 164). If indeed this ability to penetrate, transgress and contaminate is one granted by an unconscious acknowledgement of that easy permeability between opposites, then unconsciously the qualities of the Other are *already* present in the subject.

This permeability suggests fragility of *identity*, not of morality as suggested by *polis* laws. Identity is carved by self-definition and self-delusionary practices, and when Dionysos questions the worth of penis-as-phallus (or simply the worth of the penis), a domino effect leads ultimately to the questioning of self-identity.

Once again, Pentheus is the quintessential example of this – the paragon of masculine impenetrability and symbol of the *polis* ends manic, dressed in women’s clothes, running to the *orgia* in the mountains, being literally and symbolically ripped apart by women and *phusis*.

This discussion of terrible ambiguity, fragility of identity, and the phallus’ nature is notably psychoanalytic and reminiscent of Freud’s writing on gender, and we should make a return to psychoanalytic theory on the subject.

Humanity’s tendency to form divisions and identities against the natural law is often a focus of Freud’s work:

We are accustomed to say that every human being displays both male and female instinctual impulses, needs and attributes; but though anatomy, it is true, can point out the characteristic of maleness and femaleness, psychology cannot. For psychology the contrast between the sexes fades away into one between activity and passivity, in which we far too readily identify activity with maleness and passivity with femaleness, a view which is by no means universally confirmed in the animal kingdom.

- Freud, 1930, Strachey tr., 1961, p. 105 footnote 3.

For Freud the contrasting of male and female (or active and passive) exists out of bounds with the natural (dis)order. In the *polis* system (like the purpose of Hesiodic ritual), this contrasting seeks to distance oneself from the absence of division of *phusis* – a propelling away from human animality. However, one must acknowledge that though he seems to be aware of the paradoxical nature of the sex and gender binary system among humans, Freud does often turn to using the active/passive binary himself. I interpret this as Freud considering the binary division of gender unnatural, but it is a paradigm and misconception humanity has heavily invested itself in.

The perception of difference based on appearance and the process of projection that result from the boundaries are found in the activity of viewing the Other.

## 4.2. Projection, Ambivalence, and fear of Permeability: Repressed Manifest

### Display, Determination and the Gaze In Between

If its beam is hard and active, it is phallic... But the functions of the eye may also be receptive, melting or passive; even the male eye... What is crucial is the eye's capacity for transformation; it is simultaneously able to perform both functions... In conjunction with the gaze of another, it does both – it penetrates the other eye and receives its gaze.

- Theweleit, 1987, p. 134.

ὄρων ὄρωντα

- Euripides, *The Bacchae*, 1913, line 470.

Earlier in the thesis, the significance of Dionysos' gaze and the enigmatic phrase '*horon horonta*' were mentioned. His madness and ability to penetrate the minds and personalities of his opposition is communicated through his gaze either directly or via reflections.

Dionysos' uniqueness in Greek artwork in being a figure that turns to face the viewer is a privilege shared only by Medusa at such a frequency,<sup>38</sup> and their similarities were discussed: the viewer enters a silent discourse with these figures across several millennia.<sup>39</sup> In their forward-facing modes, both Dionysos and Medusa have beards, wide grins, manic eyes, frantic hair and often snakes wound in them, like Maenads. Whereas Medusa's gaze acts as an apatropaic, petrifying the evil eye, the secret of Dionysos' gaze that appears on pottery was never divulged.

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<sup>38</sup> Other rare instances of frontal gazes in artwork are the sphinx (a former Maenad), the siren (former handmaidens of Dionysos' mother, Persephone), the owl, snake, lion and panther. All have the power to mesmerise and transfix with their 'steely gaze' (glaukotes), and the latter three explicitly associated with Dionysos. Among other frontal gazers are his worshippers and apostles, satyrs, actors, drunks, Maenads, ecstasies, and pipers (Csapo, 1997, p. 256-7).

<sup>39</sup> A space of *phusis*.

Both grotesques are ‘a vortex of summons and repulsion’ (Kristeva, 1982, p. 1), Medusa’s is more clearly one intended as a warning apotropaic. Dionysos’ however appears on objects like kylices, drinking cups (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Chalkidian black-figure eye-cup with mask of Dionysos, dated 520-510 BCE, Staatliche Antikensammlungen, Munich

His appearance on such everyday objects is strangely threatening, but also paradoxical by nature of them being everyday objects. One gains a bit more insight once the drinker drinks from these cups – Figure 4 shows us how the cup would look when one drinks from it.





Figure 4: Chalkidian black-figure kylix with eyes of Dionysos, dated 530 BCE, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City.

I noticed that the drinker's eyes are replaced by Dionysos', the vines his beard. In ingesting the god, one becomes him, contaminated, and communicates that with the drinkers surrounding them. Dionysos' gaze in *The Bacchae* (1913) silently reveals the rites of the Mysteries (line 470), and communicates madness (lines 912-25), unlike many other Greek deities, the frequency of his frontal-gaze invites the viewer into intercourse in a realm that exists outside time and space, its communication immediate. The François Vase (Figure 2) is an example of how the viewer is made voyeur: the viewer simply inspects the gods-in-linear procession to Thetis' wedding, until 'caught' by Dionysos gazing back out at them. The viewer is placed in the position of recognising themselves not as an inspector of art, but a sacrilegious voyeur of divine activity, across millennia of real and mythical time by one

cunning and knowing meeting of gazes – that brings the mythical events of Homer to the very tangible here and now.

In discussion of the gaze, one is reminded of Freud's commentary on Medusa, 'The terror of Medusa is thus a terror of castration that is linked to the sight of something,' (1922, p. 273). For Freud, Medusa's petrifying gaze is symbolic for catching sight of (or caught in the sight of) the vulva, igniting castration anxiety. Dionysos' gaze is petrifying in its phallic and penetrative qualities, it is no less castrating in its hunger to violate, infiltrate, and contaminate – castrating at a primal, phallic level.

Man's position in this silent discourse and intercourse is thus in a state of flux, an eye that is sexually ambiguous, both active and passive, a reminder of the fragility of *polis*' paradigmatic boundaries. *Horon horonta* – I saw Him and He saw me / I saw Him seeing me / Seeing me just as I saw Him / Seeing me *just* as I saw Him – (Euripides, 1913, line 470) once again reminds us of the penetrating and receptive qualities of the eye, of its perceived penetrating ability to be turned back on itself by Dionysos.

It is based on the meeting of two gazes in which (as in the interplay of reflecting mirrors), by the grace of Dionysus, a total reversibility is established between the devotee who sees and the god who is seen, where each one is, in relation to the other, at once the one who sees and the one who makes himself seen.

- Vernant, 1990, p. 393.

The repeated portrayal of the Other in Greek media as denigrated perpetuates a cultural format that designs artwork that is built to be viewed by citizen and *polis* – their meaning determined by that of the citizen viewer. The media created by artist and meaning determined by viewer is bound by the gaze in between to reflect the nature of social structures and *polis* society around them.

How am I looking at her/him? How is s/he looking at me? could be asked with equal validity. The gaze is imbued with fantasy, projection, desire, contempt and idealisation. It is never singular or neutral. Unconscious processes are in play when naming and looking.

- Treacher, 2000, p. 121.

The viewer's (male) gaze in art mimics the *polis'* (projective) gaze – until Dionysos inverts it.

### **Projection and the Other**

The mojo and the genetic regression, the hyper-sexuality and the rage: these qualities are thrust and airbrushed onto the Bacchic body of the Other, as we fantasize our repression of them in ourselves, the unquiet threat of psychosomatic greening; a silk garrote, an onanistic envy of the Other's capacity for release; a monumental iconography of the hermetical black box of the brain. While we might be tempted to reduce these types to the pat dichotomies of comedy and tragedy, this course will examine the ways in which there is but one mask, a Janus-faced cleavage of thou art and thus am I, our goat-sung desires adrift in the wilderness, our tell-tale passions pulsing beneath the gladiolas in a mildewed hatbox (the act of masking triumphal and deadly), trembling the bulb on its stem.

- Pardlo, 2016, p. 29.

As the characters of Tragedy at the Dionysia become the masks they wear, their nature defined by the meaning projected onto the false faces by the audience, similarly the stage is set for the dominant hegemonic gaze in *polis* to define the Other. Data in chapter 2 showed how it is not just ingestion (chapter 6) that allows one to be penetrated by Dionysos and *phusis*, but also behaviour, establishing that the Bacchic body is one that is easily devolved into and always ready to appear. The perceptive *polis* citizen must be wary for these rituals breaking out of bounds.

To assume that the assessment of the Other is the result of projection is to first accept that the presence of the Other in oneself; that the hegemony's accusations of the Other's character reflects the *polis*' citizen subject. The gaze, thus, is merely the avenue for projection.

This reflection seems half-acknowledged by the *polis* citizen, he is aware that even if he is male, heterosexual, of Greek birth, he can still be Othered by his actions, by any 'unrestraint' – for *muthos* must be kept safe (and restrained) in the prison of his body.<sup>40</sup>

I will return to the pattern of ego emergence from the unconscious discussed in the chapter 3 literature review, and present it in the context of this thesis. Freud's *Instinct and Their Vicissitudes* (1915b) explains the ambivalence that pervades ego emergence against the antithesis ego, i.e. subject versus object (pp. 131-3), driven by the difficulty at comprehending the relationship between external stimuli, and the instinctual stimuli to which it is defenseless.

But with time and the need to self-preserve, the satisfaction from auto-erotic narcissism wanes under the weight of the need to self-preserve by acquiring objects from the external world and the painful anxieties of the inner world (pp. 134-5). It thus introjects the pleasurable external objects, and projects the painful internal objects outward (p. 136). Strengthening the binary between ego-subject and external-object. Thus, the psyche performs a splitting: to project out the painful objects, and those anxieties associated with them. This results in repulsion (and underlying ambivalence) to the object which is Othered.

Thomas Ogden (1992) states that splitting is a 'boundary-creating mode of thought' (Ogden, 1992, p. 48). The citizen casts the Other in position of the part of the self that has been split from oneself, cut off, removed, once again betraying the nature of the Other: part

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<sup>40</sup> The naming of Dionysos as Liberator (Liber, Eleutherios, Lusios) gains a new dimension here.

of oneself that is hated. This both temporarily and superficially calms dissonance of possessing these qualities, but also reassures the boundary that separates ego as its own identity, helping calm primitive anxieties regarding separation.

The Other of Grecian myth, and primarily Dionysos, perform the art of horror and desire. The internal psychic conflicts that are disowned and projected onto the Grecian Other are ejected from the conception of the self. It is thrown a place of *phusis*.

If projection is a process, then the Other is in a constant state of being constructed and projected upon as an object that is part of the subject but denied. It must exist in opposition to the ego. Dionysos reveals undesired truth to the subject by destabilizing the processes of projection.

In doing so, Dionysos reinstates his identity as boundary-breaker. The Othering above all displays events of boundary breaking, molding and contouring. Citizen becomes Foreigner and Foreigner becomes royalty. Male becomes Female, Female becomes Male, both become animal and god. Outside the *polis* and the *oikos*/family, kinship and defined identities that exist in relation to other identities are subverted, Agave goes from mother and queen, to Maenad and huntress to filicidal woman, mother of no child and exile. Pentheus goes from son and king, to man in a wig, to woman, to disembodied lion head, to symbol of his mother's taboo.

The god of theatre<sup>41</sup> makes all identity performative.

### **Into the Mirror**

White people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle.

Swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready

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<sup>41</sup> And psychic theatre.

for their sweet white blood... The screaming baboon lived under their own white skin;  
the red gums were their own.

- Morrison, 1987, pp. 198-9.

In myth and theatre we see characters like Pentheus and Lykourgos attacking Dionysos and his *thiasos* due to their foreignness, subversive femininity, and Queer character.

In ritual, we witness worshippers adopting these qualities, displaying alliance with Dionysos in *phusis*, in opposition to the *polis* – here religion is used as vehicle for socio-political subversion.

Religion acting, not in service of warfare as it would in politics, but as warfare itself against dominant political stances, is what makes the Dionysos cult unique in its time and place. It questions the possession of *muthos* by the hegemony succinctly.

Plutarch's record of *The Women of Phocis* (1931) details how the women of Amphissa protect the Bacchantes of Phocis as they wake after an ecstasy in the *agora* of Amphissa. Though the cities of Phocis and Amphissa are at war, the women of Amphissa show no hostility to the Bacchantes of Phocis, and vice versa. In fact, the women of Amphissa protect and care for the women of Phocis in their post-ecstatic state, left vulnerable in the town *agora*.

The painting by Alma-Tadema (Figure 5), *The Women of Amphissa*, shows the Amphissan women dressed conservatively as expected of Grecian women, in contrast to Phocis' Bacchantes. Regardless of their cultural differences, the women of Amphissa form a cordon with their bodies and shrouds to protect the Bacchantes.



Figure 5: *The Women of Amphissa*, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, 1887, The Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts.

Similarity in their Otherness and solidarity in marginalization, prided by the Dionysiacs in the *agora* of Amphissa, here transcends the political power of soldiers and politicians – wielders of *muthos*.

The outsider, in transgressing the group's cultural imperatives, may expose them [the cultural norms and taboos] as contingent or relative conventions that need not command absolute loyalty

- Zukier, 1996, p. 1117.

The powerful political commentary on Otherness and semiotic warfare present in the Dionysos cults are deeply connected to the question of identity and the fragility of its boundaries. The formation of identity and the transgression of boundaries both undoubtedly have psychic correlates, or effects. This asks the question, what does one gain by extending

the discussion into the terrain of psychological mechanisms, or effects, or sources? What can psychoanalysis tell us about these subjects in the Grecian phenomenon of the Dionysos cult?

In the formation of the concept of, say, Grecian masculinity, all that is aligned with it must be repressed. The identity of 'male' must involve identifying with the father and *erastes* while repressing identification with and desire for the mother. Along with that identification with the perceived feminine, the culturally assigned traits to that femininity must be repressed as well, traits often considered *akrateis* – the same with the development of Greek citizenship and heterosexual masculinity. When boundaries are drawn, defined identities exist in relation to other opposing identities. Or, more specifically, conscious identity/ego exists above repressed, opposing qualities.

To avoid the *unheimlich* uncertainties of ambiguity and ambivalence, and also to avoid the stigmas associated with marginalised identities, budding citizens of Greece would avoid the anxieties of said uncertainties and stigmas by repressing associated characteristics. Repression of personality traits thus occurs in two fashions: one as a mechanism that defines identity (repression of traits mutually exclusive to ego/identity); and one to overcome internal antagonism that comes with acknowledging ambiguity and confusion.

External oppositions – the foreign, the feminine, the Queer, the animal, boundary-less nature – are then debased and are targets of oppression.

Over the course of the chapter the qualities associated with marginalised groups that overlapped with Dionysos were explored. I will go on to say that these id-like qualities were in fact, projections by citizens onto them. These qualities fit under the umbrella term of *akrateis*, unrestraint associated with sensuality and gluttony, abuse of sexuality and seduction, cunning and ambition, desire for power and violence – all qualities that when



associated with the citizen rarely amount to the same rejection or repulsion. Kidnap, rape, assault, murder, ambition is all present and even applauded among *muthos* wielding citizens in Grecian myth, yet these qualities are demonised and blindly applied to entire populations that cannot wield *muthos* in the *polis*.

It seems to be the ability to blur and break boundaries among these marginalised groups that makes them abject, the ability to wield penetration and penetrability by the Dionysiac Other might hold key to their oppression – specifically their *unrestraint* in being contained, their inability to *be* restrained. We did discuss how Greek masculinity was one that had to be moulded and beaten into impenetrable shape.

It is this liminality of the Grecian Other and Dionysos himself that makes them dangerous to the citizen, they are of *phusis* but exist in *polis*. Clarke and Moran summarise the concept of the stranger in Simmel,

‘Simmel's stranger is best described with one word — ambiguity. The stranger has a position that we find hard to put our finger on; it has something to do with a vague spatiality, of certain measures of nearness and distance. But at the same time, the stranger presents in some sense a unity for Simmel between ‘wandering’ and ‘fixation’. The uncertainty associated with the potential for wandering leaves us in an ambiguous state of mind: is s/he one of us or one of them?’

- 2003, p. 166.

### **All Too Familiar**

[W]hat appears repellently alien is in fact all too familiar

- Horkheimer and Adorno, 1994, p. 182.

So, we must then explore the possibility that it is these qualities that have been repressed and rendered abject by the citizen that are projected onto the Other. What is accomplished by this projection?

As explained earlier, it allows for a smoother and firmer definition of citizen identity. With the Other being another, the ego has a defined boundary to exist within. It allays the fear of ambiguity and blurring by building said boundaries. It appeals to the prideful ego's sense of self-sufficiency by convincing itself that it is a lone, self-identified agent. Perhaps on an unconscious level this mirrors the ego's fear that it might not be master in its own house (Freud, 1917, p. 143) alongside the two other agents of the psyche. This is reflected in my position that Dionysos is also an expression of the id. After all, the Dionysiac qualities of the Other that excuse their oppression are notably id-like, they are unrestrained, tabooed, selfish, and unbound. The Greek citizen's identity must also arise from the population in the way *polis* arises from *phusis* and ego from id.

The targets also provide scapegoats for citizen anxiety. The *pharmakos* ritual acts as purifier for the city, at the cost of a human life, a human life that is considered taboo. With a lack of restraint, those who are most likely to have participated in an anti-*polis* act would have selected to be stoned to death or exiled into the wilderness (into *phusis*). *Pharmakon* means both poison and remedy, killer and vivifier, and in ritual marks the person who appears to be of *polis* but does not deserve to be in it – much like the Others in Dionysos. They must be either killed (often by stoning) or ejected to the wild.

These scapegoats bring society together to purify their city much like how Dionysos draws his Maenads or a population to one victim. We see Maenads hunting Pentheus and a city population hunting Lykourgos. Dionysos himself is often painted as *pharmakon*. Characters like Pentheus and Lykourgos paint him as the cause of the city's troubles, the

effeminate foreigner who takes women away from their homes, but by the end of the tale, the reader or viewer comes to realise it is the king's disrespect that brings *miasma* to their *polis*.

Here the *pharmakon* takes on a sacrificial tone where dismemberment is usually the result instead of stoning or exile. The god who is dismembered by Maenads causes the dismemberment of his enemies. This reminds us of the blurred boundaries between the projector and enforcer of *polis* law, and the recipient of projections and enforcer of *phusis* will. The perceived distinction between the two is flimsy and confused, and one often only enforced by the tabooed sufferer.

This becomes clearer in plays like Sophocles' *Antigone* (1891, lines 1140-5), where Dionysos is summoned to travel to Thebes from foreign lands and purify the *polis* of its *nosos* ('*Pandamos polis epi nosos*') and liberate the female protagonist from the grip of the despot, Creon. Once again, the blame for the *polis* troubles is the easily identified Other – Antigone – when it was the centre of *polis* and the royal *oikos*, the king himself.

Here we find Dionysos turning the tables, warping positions and blurring boundaries once more. Though a foreigner, he wields the ability to decide on a *pharmakon*. Though Other, he wields the ability to bring down kings. Though a conventional target of the *pharmakos* himself, he can select a citizen to take his place. He questions the safety and privilege that comes with wielding *muthos*, and makes it a liability. This *pharmakon* has the ability to send others to execution in his place. The Stranger who transgresses the boundaries of in and out, god, human, and animal, also possesses the ability to take kings out to *phusis* with him, exposing the fragility of man-made identities and hierarchies that are defended as if decreed from on high (which, as far as Hesiod and Pandora are concerned, were).

These anxieties also point to the possibility of the projections involved – if the barrier between king and *pharmakon*, citizen and Other, subject and abject object is so porous, I

argue that it is because the demonization of the marginalised Other and Dionysos is the result of denial and projection. '[S]trangeness means that he, who is also far, is actually near' (Simmel, 1950, p. 402).

I will press that the language of strangeness evokes the language around Dionysos and around the blurred boundaries in the mechanisms of projection.

[S]trangers are not unfamiliar people, but they cross, or break the dividing line of dualism, they are neither "us" nor "them". There is a clear definition of the social and physical boundaries between "us" and "them", "friends" and "enemies". Both are subject to the same structures and ideas, they define good and bad, true and false, they stand in polarity creating an illusion of order and symmetry. The stranger violates this structure and order; in Bauman's words 'they (the stranger) bring the "outside" "inside" and poison the comfort of order with the suspicion of chaos' (Bauman, 1991, p. 56). The stranger is someone we know things about, who sits in 'our' world uninvited. The stranger has the characteristics of an enemy, but unlike the enemy, is not kept at a safe distance. Neither 'us' nor 'them', friend nor foe, the stranger undermines order by straddling the boundary, causing confusion and anxiety, and as such, becomes a target of hatred.

- Clarke and Moran, 2003, p. 168.

Not only do we see Dionysos' Greek/Not-Greek birth here, but also Livy's records of the men who secretly plot against the state in a pansexual Bacchanal, there is Pandora who was created as 'The Great Calamity' (Hesiod, 1914, lines 55-8) against mankind, the Maenad who kills her king.

For Bauman (1973), these strangers are simultaneously of home, and not of home, breaching the inside and out – polluting the inside and unseating the central symbols of the inside and *polis* – the kings. An attempt at classification must be forced upon them because as

heralds of *phusis* they *reject* classification. With classification there can be an attempt at control, for without control the boundaries between me and not-me can collapse. Suddenly the Strangers that inspire fear by their defiance of certainties the ego possesses become a very present and immediate threat. They become a class of their own that must be contained – however, do Gods not climb over walls? (Euripides, *The Bacchae*. Buckley tr., 1850, lines 481-4)

The petit-bourgeois may try to bring into relief the alienness of the Other; he may as well set himself to work at the other end, attempt to bring out his own identity by reinforcing it with abundantly redundant warning signs. Whatever way is chosen, both intentions and results are strikingly similar: a neat and clear-cut demarcation of the “we-they” watershed, enhancing the postulated and visible opposition between “we”, the universal, and “they”, the odd, the repellent, the unassimilable.

- Bauman, 1973, p. 124.

I will alter Clarke’s (2001, p. 560) commentary<sup>42</sup> for the purpose of this thesis: the Other is a denigrating phantasy constructed in the process of ego-building/subjectification, projected out through fear, recognised in others as familiar, experienced by us as uncanny, manifesting as Bauman’s Stranger. The Other blurs the boundaries because the boundaries are indeed, blurred. The citizen blurred them in projection.<sup>43</sup>

Clarke and Moran (2003, p. 173) would argue that this results in a very tangible socio-political environment:

The stranger is a symbolic character, combining a real sociostructural base and psychic element. The stranger is a psychosocial character who causes chaos by being neither one

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<sup>42</sup> ‘The racial “Other” is constructed in phantasy through ignorance, projected into others through fear, recognised in others as familiar, and experienced by us as uncanny’ (Clarke, 2001, p. 560).

<sup>43</sup> Sequel: The God of Irony Strikes Back.

of us, nor one of them. The stranger is ambiguous. Whilst being a product of our own feeling of ambivalence, s/he plays on our fears and imagination. S/he is uncanny in the sense of being at once both estranged and wholly familiar. Strangers represent all our feelings of displacement and chaos. They represent a direct threat to our psychic stability — what appears repellently alien is in fact all too familiar — a manifestation, or reflection of our own phantasy which is violently forced into some other.

It is with this in mind I look toward the classification of the Other in the Grecian *polis*. The mechanisms of denial, repression, and projection take on an even more menacing tone when it comes to defining populations.

Coined by Erikson, pseudospeciation<sup>44</sup> was used to explain the behaviour seen both in atrocities like the Holocaust to other forms of widespread institutionalised oppression:

Pseudo-Speciation... a term I have used to indicate that humanity is universally inclined to differentiate within itself a variety of sub-species—nations, races, classes, etc.

- Erikson, 1980, pp. 213-23.

He elaborated further, explaining:

[T]hroughout development, a series of "others" will be encountered beginning with the fraternal and sororal others who are first and most ambivalently shared in childhood. Later, when identity is better defined, friends and comrades emerge. And then there is that territorial Other, the "Neighbor," who occupies his own (but often, alas, too close) territory. When he becomes the inimical Other, he can turn into a totally estranged Other, almost a member of another species: and, indeed, I have come to call this process pseudospeciation.

- Erikson, 1984, pp. 160-1.

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<sup>44</sup> 'Pseudospeciation' and 'pseudo-speciation' are used interchangeably by Erikson.

This helps explain not only how easily the Other in Ancient Grecian culture was oppressed and controlled, but also provides a possible explanation for the fear associated with them. Foreigners, women, and the Queer were all associated with the downfall of Grecian civilization in some shape or form: they were not morally equipped to wield *muthos*, and if they seized it, would take *polis* down with them. It possibly explains their association with animality and liminal beings – quite literally becoming associated with other non-human species.

This ambivalence expressed as hatred possibly lead to an unconscious fear of talionic retribution. The infantile unconscious fear of talion characteristic to man may have led to a citizen's fear of reprisal from the Other in return. The law similarly could indicate a fear of reprisal from Dionysos, who stands for the Other – this reprisal and talionic justice being most characteristic of the Triumph myths. The reaction to this unconscious fear could be expressed as an intensification of that hatred and continued projection. Finally, one must acknowledge that the unconscious is aware of the denial, repression, and projection, and therefore aware of the parts of oneself that are shared by the citizen with the Other. It is thus possible that the threat of the self turning against itself in Dionysiac myth is an expression of a fear of the same in the unconscious mind. A fear that the citizen will exact talionic law against themselves for Othering and oppressing the Other since their oppression is rooted in self-loathing and fear of oneself.

If we entertain the hate involved in ambivalence, we must also consider the presence of love and desire, 'Freud is right in identifying the unacceptable thing as being originally a wish —a desire —which becomes aggressive only through a reversal' (Benton, 1995, p. 909).

Dionysos' androgyny invokes a cross-sexual eroticism, and the attraction to the Other does so as well. The novelty of the foreigner, the heterosexual desire of the woman, and homosexual desire of the man regardless of the toxicity culturally associated with all three

intensifies the ambivalence and thus hatred to each – negated and projected aspect of the fantasy (the fantasy being both terror and wish).

### **Devour the Beloved**

Dionysos as quintessential Other invokes the same fantasy, with the added threat of cannibalism. In myth, not only do Dionysos and his followers devour the citizen, he can persuade the citizen to do the same. Dionysos-as-sacrifice in ritual makes him the target of cannibalism as well.

The desire/fear of being cannibalised is both a terror and a wish to be reintegrated into the All of *phusis*. On the other hand, the desire to dismember Dionysos is a wish to define, separate, and control *phusis* – the object of building *polis* and controlling the Other.

Clarke and Moran (2003, pp. 169-70) tells us about Bauman's Stranger and the eating of the Other:

'In a general critique of the modern nation-state's social engineering efforts, he has referred to two ways that modern states have attempted to deal with strangers. One he calls an *anthropophagic* process of "annihilating ... strangers by devouring them and then metabolically transforming [them] into a tissue indistinguishable from one's own" ... This, he argues, is driven by a paranoid fear of the danger of strangers; in modernity, the presence of strangers evokes fears about the breakdown of societal order, and the onset of chaos. Thinking about this psychoanalytically we can see ... the fear of disintegration and chaos inside fuels paranoid phantasies about disintegration in the external world.'

The *polis* once again becomes an expression of the citizen's ego, and *phusis* as id. *Phusis* and the Other must be dissected, dismembered, consumed and assimilated to benefit existing in



*polis* else they pose a threat. As customary with unconscious adherence to law of talion, the Other poses the threat of reabsorbing *polis/ego/subjectivity* into the indistinct.

Dionysos is thus a figure through which anxieties, conflicts, and even repressed wishes concerning boundaries (and the absence of boundaries) can be expressed. By dismembering and eating Dionysos, he is a figure that must be dismembered to preserve identity and subjectivity. By being the ones dismembered and eaten *by* Dionysos, he is also a symbol of a repressed desire to be reabsorbed and disseminated – and a possible unconscious Oedipal desire. *Phusis* is not just a state of lawless wilderness, but also a place where the absence of boundaries brought Bacchantes closer to the wholeness of the Divine.

The discussion of Strangeness, pseudospeciation and Oedipal crises must raise questions regarding kinship and civilization.

### **Kin and Kine**

I, wretched, hold the head of Pentheus

- Line 1284, Euripides, *The Bacchae*. Buckley tr., 1850.

In the previous sections I have elaborated upon how the defining of identities and subjectivity can be cause for alienation and violence. Similarly, the creation of those binaries demand forming family groups that must be protected – the irony of plays like *The Bacchae* or *Oedipus Rex* is how those laws are easily broken, unveiling an underlying wish for violence on not just the Other, but even on kin.

The moment the laws of kinship, *oikos* and likeness are questioned, violence is visited on those like ourselves.

In her 2017 talk, *Kinship Trouble in the Bacchae*, Butler explains that the identities of Pentheus and Agave are warped, and so too is their kinship in the family *oikos*, resulting in a huntress killing a lion. In Sophocles' *Oedipus* (1887), Oedipus leaves the house of Polybus and Merope because he believes the prophecy that he will kill his father, but continues to kill his biological father Laius. Of course, one must ask who Oedipus' parents 'really' are – those who birthed him and attempted infanticide, or those who saved and raised him? Similarly, if he was so persuaded by the prophecy, one would think he would avoid any kind of murder, in case his 'father' was not his 'father' (again, who is his father? Where is this kinship?). Similarly, for *The Iliad's* Lykourgos, he isn't dismembering his son, but chopping up ivy. The ego drew boundaries of like and unlike to understand and define itself, particularly in relation to external figures, these boundaries also protect kin from violence. But when Dionysos throws these boundaries into disarray, kin and non-kin become confused – the boundaries that define the ego fall apart.

Boundaries that were drawn to prevent violence have been undone in the ego's determination to preserve them, and the intensity of the resistance to acknowledging one's own repressed qualities lead to violence against oneself and one another. The boundaries built to keep Dionysos and the definition-less, identity-less, kin-less, boundary-less *phusis* out were destroyed by the same force that built it.

This implies that the barriers and relationships built by subjectification and resulting kinship that come as a result of building conscious identity from the unconscious primal state and its reinforcement through ritual and taboo are the only barriers to parricide and incest. This is the central idea of Freud's, *Totem and Taboo* (1913) which we will explore in chapter 6.

The passion associated with kinship that binds the *oikos* and *polis* – love, hate, pride, lust, ambivalence – are the ones that break kinship when the laws of kinship are questioned (when mothers become huntresses and sons become animals). Dionysos as the id and its drives unleashes the repressed psychic passion and desire for intense action toward a target when the repressed is bottled and then released violently. Who is the animal? The violent huntress and mad god, or the lion-Pentheus? The once clear binaries, relationships, and images, become kaleidoscopic and ambiguous.

The taboo-bound and boundary-reinforcing Hesiodic ritual binds the *polis* and *oikos*, it defines socio-political boundaries (as seen in chapter 2) between classes, genders, etc. Dionysiac ritual undermines it by taking worshippers away from *polis* and grip of both the royal *oikos* and household *oikos*.

In other words, the socio-political boundaries reinforced by Hesiodic ritual and tragedy repeatedly place the royal *oikos* at the centre of the city, acting as a representative to the gods. With Dionysiac ritual subverting that, could that help us explain the repeated targeting of royalty by Dionysos in tragedy and myth? What significance does *phusis* have in its antagonism to the royal house?

### **Safety in Numbers**

This chapter has established a clear divide between the members of the royal *oikos* and the cultists of Dionysos. Royalty must embody the values of *polis*, whereas Dionysos' followers are those Othered and marginalised.

In myth and theatre, we see characters like Pentheus and Lykourgos attacking Dionysos and his *thiasos* due to their foreignness, subversive femininity, and Queer character.

Thus, in tragedy, by allying themselves with Dionysos, the cultists avoid his scorn. In this, they also manifest him inside themselves, *phusis* is expressed in them as they immerse themselves in *phusis*.

However, royalty must continually be the force opposed to *phusis*. As *polis*, they face a Dionysos that antagonises their values and what he perceives as conceit.

This divide appears in ritual as well.

Though the Dionysiacs dismember and eat Dionysos in animal form, they do not face retribution; instead they are rewarded with ecstasy. This can be more complicated in *polis*, where sacrifices come with many taboos. Notably, the celebration of the Agrionia comes with a form of retribution toward the royal *oikos*. The Minyades, cursed by Dionysos for not joining the Mysteries, have their female descendants named the 'Destructive Ones'. After the sacrifice to Dionysos at the Agrionia, the royal descendants of the Minyades are chased by the priest with a sword till they reach the seashore. Anyone caught is killed.

In Dionysiac ritual, we witness cultists displaying alliance with Dionysos in *phusis*, in opposition to the *polis*. This is accomplished by their marginalised nature, and their inversion of *polis*-enforced Hesiodic ritual. Here, religion is used as a vehicle for socio-political subversion.

In all three cases, myth, ritual and theatre, the individual facing Dionysos must confront the *phusis* opposition that is reviled by their *polis* sensibility. An opposition which should be accepted before either moving on or death.

Once again, we must attempt to understand the psychic significance of these differences.

If we accept the psychoanalytic assumption that ritual is an enactment of the psyche working to resolve unconscious anxiety as posited in the introduction, the question we should ask is: how does Mystery ritual manage to negotiate the anxiety that non-initiates in tragedy cannot?

The data we have suggests that the set of qualities projected onto the Other, and thus Dionysos, are ones that defy boundaries, and are therefore experienced as ambiguous and uncanny. A primal layer of the psyche (that is, *phusis*) is projected for which those boundaries are not certain, but the conscious mind might read them as ambiguous, confusing or threatening. This has provided us evidence for this thesis' argument that the Other is associated with the spatio-temporal realm of *phusis* and thus, for the *polis*, warrants their oppression, as stated in the aims of this thesis. This uneasy relationship with the Other and *phusis* being so near leads to a complicated ritual relationship to Dionysos.

It can be suggested that individuals of *polis* must confront the marginalised and reviled qualities they are prejudiced against that they have externalised and projected onto Dionysos. This exists in contrast to his cultists who have allied themselves with him, using religion as vehicle for socio-political subversion.

Confronting the aforementioned opposition for the initiate takes place in the form of Mystery initiation, which shares many similarities with both death and marriage ritual. The confrontation for the disbeliever, death, is another consequence in tragedy of not allying oneself with Dionysos. Similarly, in tragedy, marriage is often subverted into mourning, and Maenads often show a distaste to marrying men (even though, marriage symbolism is invoked in Mystery initiation). The repeated intersections of death, grieving, marriage, and initiation in relation to Dionysos should be able to shed light on his interaction with humanity.

The following chapter will attempt to interpret what these rituals and their coalescence is meant to accomplish, psychically. Dionysos acting as a manifestation of the rejected, the projected, and the repressed, means that initiation/marriage versus death are two approaches to negotiating the anxiety his presence provokes.

## Chapter 5: Negotiating with Dionysos: Manoeuvring

### Psychical Conflict

Being a figure that blurs boundaries, Dionysos is closely affiliated with the blurring of ritual boundaries and breaking of ritual taboo – broken intentionally or not. These taboos, like other major taboos, such as incest, are implied to have been introduced with the creation of *polis*. Therefore, their breaking implies the presence of *phusis* in a *polis* space. That is, the presence of Dionysos and the Dionysiac.

This chapter follows from chapter 4 which studied individuals who blur the space between *phusis* and *polis*, but chapter 5 will identify and explore incidences of the Dionysiac around *ritual* blurring and taboo breaking, and their consequences. This occurs in either Mystery or Maenadic ritual, where the breaking is intentional and subversive, or in tragic mythical instances often associated with the destruction of a royal *oikos*.

I will also explain the consequences of facing the repressed Dionysiac from a psychoanalytic perspective. How can we interpret the response of those in its presence psychoanalytically? **Section 5.2.** will explore the reactions of those in this position to support the argument that Dionysos is a manifestation of repressed and projected *phusis* content.

In the scope of the thesis, this chapter expands our understanding of the *polis* versus *phusis* conflict as the ego-subject versus Other-object/id conflict to determine identity against the absence of identity. The ambivalence at the Hesiodic ritual taboos reflects the ambivalence at the psychical boundaries that separate consciousness from the well of the unconscious and its

repressed contents – this chapter therefore explores the mythic and ritual intentional and unintentional exposure to those conflicts that break the boundaries into consciousness.

### 5.1. The Breaking of Ritual Taboos and Transgression in Dionysiac Ritual

#### Cake or Death?

To understand the psychic equivalent of the blurring of *phusis* and *polis*, we must understand the ritual and mythic equivalent of their blurring and its consequence. If Hesiodic ritual and their various taboos are meant to strengthen the boundaries between the two and enforce *polis*, the perversion or merger of these rituals weakens the boundaries and provides a transgressive space for *phusis* to flower. So, we must first set out the *cultus* material before considering the psychic consequence.

To accomplish the above, let's consider the importance of mimicking death and marriage in the Mystery cult.

Whereas in chapter 6 we will see how the subversion of sacrifice and eating acts as a political statement in allyship with Dionysos, in this section we will see how the symbolism of death, marriage, and subversion of ritual ceremonies allow a negotiation with Dionysiac anxieties regarding ambiguity, ambivalence, foreignness, and projection.

We have four extensive cases about corrupted ritual that we can look to for information: Seaford (1994, 1996) makes a case about the perversion and blurring of wedding and death rituals; and Zeitlin (1965) who looks at the merger of sacrifice with various rituals. Finally, Kerenyi (1976) looks to Dionysiac ritual behaviour.



Seaford and Zeitlin look more to literary works (epics and tragedies), such as *The Iliad*, *Antigone*, *Oresteia*, and *The Bacchae* for these perversions and mergers, whereas Kerényi (1976) looks more to Mystery and *polis* ritual. Seaford draws on Kerényi's exploration of the subject (particularly the latter's work on wedding ritual in the Mysteries) to help understand the blurring of ritual boundaries and breaking of taboos in tragedy. Particularly since these tragedies lead to Dionysiac metaphors, similes, and themes like kin-killing and cannibalism. Commentary on sacrifice in *Oresteia* will be provided by Zeitlin's analysis of 'sacrifice corrupted' (1965, p. 464).

The acts in these rituals occur in reports of initiation rituals reported by Kerényi (1976). Initiations into Dionysiac Mysteries often draw on the initiates fear of a very real death mid-ritual, and often conclude with a *hierosgamos*. A rebirth and apotheosis as a result of death and marriage to the divinity – not entirely unlike the apotheoses of Semele/Thuone and Ariadne/Libera.

This section will recap the findings of Kerényi (1976) from an earlier section, as well as elaborate on the hypotheses presented by Seaford (1994, 1996) and Zeitlin (1965). This is because their compilation of material on corrupted ritual is extremely detailed and particularly valuable to understanding this thesis.

I will then make the case that blurring of ritual boundaries occurs once again in Dionysos' presence, and that one method of facing the anxiety he provokes is by allyship to him. This allyship manifesting as a rebirth and marriage into a new form of consciousness and worldview.

After exploring the Mystery and Maenadic approach to confrontation with Dionysos and its psychoanalytic significance, we will explore the other approach: resistance to the god and the

death of the target in tragic literature.

Before I provide Seaford's material, however, I must provide a critique. Though their material is extremely thorough and well-studied, Seaford (1994) provides us with the perspective that Dionysiac *cultus* aims to reinforce *polis* values and claims that Dionysiac myths and the violence they portray are a prelude to the reinstatement of *polis* and a cult aetiology rather than a periodical and constant form of ritualistic subversion, as asserted by myself, Detienne (1979, 1989), Detienne and Vernant (1989), Otto (1965), and other Classical scholars.

Nonetheless, I find the compilation of information on ritual perversion and taboo-breaking particularly detailed and useful for this thesis' purpose, even though Seaford claims the result of these transgressions is the strengthening of *polis* values with Dionysos as a civic god rather than a *phusis* deity. Also, this reading can also be explained away by considering the difficult and violent relationship between Greco-Roman *polis* and the cult (see, the control and banning of the Bacchanal in Livy, 1936; see, how Olympia's bacchantism worked against her in her trial and execution in Carney, 2006; and other *asebeia* trials), and the efforts made by *polis* to assimilate and integrate the cult into *polis* life. It is also odd since Seaford (1994, p. 357) explicitly states that Maenadism negates marriage and thus the household, yet does not expand that reading to its logical conclusion: that in destroying the *oikos* it attacks the *polis*.

Seaford (1994) looks to Andromache<sup>45</sup> of *The Iliad* often to find a concurrence of Dionysiac symbolism and transgression of wedding and funerary rituals – drawn to his attention by two

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<sup>45</sup> *Andro-Machia*, for man and war, could refer to a war between men, or against men.

comparisons of Andromache to a Maenad. It is notable in Homer's epics that it is exceedingly rare for him to use 'Dionysiac' verbs like *mainesthai* ('to rage, be manic') and its cognates outside the context of war (Seaford, 1994, p. 331). There are only five 'idiosyncratic' uses of these terms in *The Iliad*, one, for example, is to describe Achilles' emotional state as he kills Hector (Trojan husband of Andromache, and murderer of Patroclus), which leads him to pervert a typically royal public funerary ritual – a 'procession' of the prince's body around the city, dragged by chariot. It bypasses all necessary prayers, taboos, and dressings, the corpse is disrespected and mutilated, and dragged around the outside of the city walls (in a Dionysiac space outside *polis*) instead of carried within.

The poem ends with this transgression being rectified as Achilles returns the corpse to Hector's father Priam for funeral. Upon the death of the soldier, Priam realises he and Troy will not survive the siege, and that his corpse will be defiled by dogs 'in a frenzy' (*alussontes*). Both these incidents involve the destruction of the royal *oikos* (Seaford, 1994, p. 332).

The last three cases of frenzy distinctly reference Dionysos: Dionysos maddens King Lykourgos, who kills his son, and twice Andromache is called a Maenad (Seaford, 1994, p. 331). First in book 6, she runs from the palace to the city walls in concern for Hector. He reaches the palace in her absence, asking her maids after her, whether she was at her sister-in-law's home, or had gone to the Temple of Athena to pray for their soldiers like all the other wives. This draws attention to the strangeness of her behaviour (Seaford, 1994, p. 332). This shares many similarities to the traditional Maenadic run from the hearth – she has, Maenad-like, confused the woman's space in home with the man's public space, and rushed from hearth to the violence of the world outside the *polis* walls. I notice that, like Penelope in *Odyssey* (Homer, 1900, scroll 1, line 7), Andromache's claim of *muthos*, courage and sound military advice is met with admonishment to return to the loom.

The second comparison to a Maenad is in book 22, Andromache runs from palace to city walls again, to find Hector dead. She then throws off her veil over her head, the same bridal veil from Aphrodite she wore as Hector led her into the house of Eëtion. His leading her home, lifting her veil at the wedding has been reversed into an act of grieving. To the house of Hades, veil thrown off. Seaford (1994, p. 334, footnote 18) theorises this might be symbolic of marriage itself, with the death of maiden reborn into wife.

It seems intentional, then, that Homer has Andromache and her maids weaving a robe and preparing a bath for Hector just before she receives the news of his death – seemingly conventional wifely activities that are also customary in the dressing and bathing of a corpse. Yet, once she reaches the corpse at the city walls, she laments and announces that his corpse will be eaten by dogs and worms anyway, so will burn his garments since he will not lie in clothes made by other women – another subversion of ritual (Seaford, 1994, p. 339).

The wedding blessing for their son to be like their father dooms him to his father's violent death and the broken taboos of a defiled corpse. The royal *oikos* is broken, a self-destruction, as is typical at the tragic concurrence of death, marriage, and Maenadism. The same happens for Euadne of *Suppliant Women* by Euripides, who dons her wedding dress, sings a wedding hymn, rushing from the house in a 'Bacchic frenzy', and throws herself into her husband's pyre, destroying their family line (Seaford, 1994, p. 355).

I notice that *one* of the five cases of this 'manic' rage which precedes perverted ritual is performed by King Lykourgos, who is in fact driven mad by Dionysos, whereas the other four cases do not involve Dionysos' affliction. The other four 'naturally occurring' rages and perversions are performed by Others, Andromache, a woman; and Achilles, directly in relation to his Queer relationship – i.e., agents of *phusis* who are *akrateis* by nature.

The subversion of ritual in tragedy extends to the corrupted sacrifices of Iphigenia by Agamemnon, Agamemnon by Klytimestra (as highlighted by Zeitlin, 1965), and I believe also Lykourgos' dismemberment of his son, and Agave's of Pentheus. These sacrifices both pervert ritual and destroy the *oikos* in an act of intra-familial violence.

The lesson is that subversion of ritual, whether intentional (in the case of Maenads), or unintentional (in the case of Andromache, Agave and others), results in the destruction of *oikos*. Where Seaford (1994) stops at the destruction of the *oikos*, I expand this reading to the destruction of the *polis* – where the royal *oikos* is representative for the *polis* at city rituals and sacrifices. I assert that their perversion of the rituals and sacrifices is perversion on behalf of the whole *polis*.

A possible explanation for this, provided by Seaford (1994, p. 341), is that funerals, weddings and sacrifices confirm the solidarity of a household. I will expand on Seaford's reading and point out that at large, a sacrifice also confirms the solidarity of the city. Subverted, the solidarity is dismembered and fragmented. A *polis* without unity is subject to the wills of *phusis*, since its unity within the city walls are its only fortification – working toward the singular goal to fighting *phusis*.

A second possible explanation provided is that 'tragedy dramatizes [sic.] cult aetiology' (Seaford, 1994, p. 344), marked by the ruling *oikos*' self-destruction and perverted ritual usually leading to establishment of Dionysiac cult in that specific city. Here, autocratic kings are eliminated by their own families, and replaced with a governance by the god. In a more literal sense, it could refer to the decentralisation of government power, and reminds of Classical Greek laws to convince powerful families to favour exogamy (decentralise power to prevent an autonomous governing *oikos*) instead of endogamy (hoard power within a family,

associated implicitly or explicitly with incest).<sup>46</sup> Thus, dissipating power from the powerful, and spreading it to the population.

Incest and endogamy seems to draw Dionysos the Purifier. Returning to *Septem* by Aeschylus, Oedipus' sons (who kill each other, are sons of incest), are mourned in a 'Maenadic frenzy' (Seaford, 1994, p. 347) by Theban women who shock Eteokles by running to the gates – like Hector, Eteokles repeatedly asks them to return as a woman's place is at home. Again, this is a disruption of the domains of men and women. This leaves Ismene, a woman without *muthos*, the last of the royal line.

I assert that the dead progeny of Oedipus are scapegoats due to their kin-killing and incestuous heritage, just as their father/half-brother and mother/grandmother were, which apparently pleases an unnamed god. Similarly, I notice the war coincides with the arrival of an unnamed foreign messenger, who is joyful at their death, saying 'The city is saved, but through their *mutual murder* the *earth has drunk the blood* of the two kings born of the same seed' (Aeschylus, 1926, line 820). This intra-familial violence over-seen by the mystery messenger is an act of human sacrifice to the gods which ends the family line, of and by sons of incest, is particularly Dionysiac. It should also be noted that the Fury responsible for this murder is called *Melanaigis*, the epithet for Dionysos meaning 'wearing black aegis'.

Their sister Antigone is also complicit. In *Antigone*, she uses 'quasi-erotic' language when speaking of her brother Polyneices, repeatedly mentioning she has made sacrifices for him she would never make for her husband or child, as well saying she will spend eternity with him in the afterlife, evoking that blurring between wedding and burial. She never mentions her betrothal to Haimon here, but in *Phoenician Women*, she explicitly rejects

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<sup>46</sup> The relationship to Freud's ideas in *Totem and Taboo* (1911) and Dionysos' opposition to incest will be returned to in chapter 6.

Haimon's betrothal in devotion to her brother and his death – where the erotic language is much more explicit (Seaford, 1994, p. 349).

The similarities with Andromache appear here. Antigone performs a procession, while throwing her veil from her head at the sight of Polyneices as Andromache did for Hector. In the blurring and subverting of rituals, she announces herself as 'Maenad of the dead', all the while stressing how intra-familial violence and incest destroyed the royal house.

Oedipus asks her to become a Maenad, but she rejects this, saying she did once before and it was 'thankless'. She instead wishes to die with her father.

The rejection of Dionysos in favour of her brothers and father's funeral beds once again hint at incest and familial introversion, directly in contradiction to Dionysos.

### **Always the Maenad, Never the Bride**

Andromache, Antigone, Euadne, Iole, Cassandra, Klytimestra and many others are all (female) characters that pervert ritual, subvert *polis*, and make their Maenadic departure from the home, where the spaces for and boundaries between feminine and masculine are negated, and procreation and death share space as merged funeral and wedding. *Phusis* enters the heart of *polis* – the royal *oikos*. There is no accident in the word associated with Maenadism – '*thuoustan*' means both 'raging' and 'sacrifice'.

The references to perverted wedding rituals leads Seaford to state 'in the various points of comparison with Maenadism all express the basic and constant idea that Maenadism negates marriage ritual and destroys the household' (1994, p. 357). As we will see in this chapter, Maenadic ritual and Mystery initiations involve a death and marriage ritual to Dionysos, not a man.

I notice that Maenadism in tragedy is almost always associated with destruction of the family line, if not just a negation of marriage. This supports my argument that Maenadism does not only negate marriage, but rejects *polis* outright.

These ‘Maenads of the dead’ are frenzied by Dionysos in their feminine association with *phusis*, whether he is present or not (as we have established so far in this thesis, he is the god that need not make an appearance for his presence to be known). His decisions to incite madness are also not arbitrary. An autonomous royal family is a danger to the community (like Pentheus’ ‘excessive kingliness’, or the unnecessary wars and blights of Oedipus and his sons, or Agamemnon and his crimes). At the same time, an attack on autonomous royal families undoes the effects of endogamy and/or incest (a privilege of the gods). Both provide a reason to transgress rituals that uphold *polis*, allowing *phusis* to develop at the city’s royal heart.

What Seaford terms ‘tragic ambiguity’ (1994, p.364), I instead see as a way of expressing how Dionysos is a purifier, and a healer of cities – by dismantling them and their most trusted representatives. A healer that must amputate, dismember and cauterise wounds at their roots. This is an undoing of the rituals that bind community together for community to be restored.

This unbinding has a catalyst that ever unravels, faster and faster. Agamemnon’s murder of Iphigenia is clearly signposted as being a literal (not metaphorical) sacrifice, as her virginity and the term *proleteia* (for pre-marriage sacrifice) is repeated in the scene (Zeitlin, 1965, p. 466). The sacrifice of Iphigenia takes place as she is being led (twistedly) to the altar for marriage, corrupting and confusing both rituals. This leads to his own sacrifice by Klytaimestra after a funerary ritual bathing and dressing. Here Klytaimestra plays role of



homely wife and woman, providing him with a welcoming woven shroud as a wife, but also as a woman who handles shrouding at funerary rituals (Zeitlin, 1985, p. 71), merging the welcoming *xenia* and the funeral that sends away the corpse. At his funeral, Klytaimestra prepares Cassandra for sacrifice in a manner analogous to Hesiodic animal sacrifice, Cassandra realises her fate as she is surrounded by all the tools and materials for sacrifice, and the verses evoke the language for festival sacrifice to the gods (Zeitlin, 1965, pp. 466-9), where Klytaimestra is dressed as a Maenad (*'thuoustan'*, *'rage'* and *'sacrifice'*). Holy rites blur together into acts of sacrifice and murder, or more accurately, the sacrifice of humans. Here the hierarchy of god-man-animal is broken as humans become cattle for ritual.

Zeitlin (1965) notes that Iphigenia's death evokes the image of a lion killing a sheep, but Cassandra's death evokes that of an eagle killing a hare. Structurally, I find this choice of animals interesting. Agamemnon-as-lion reminds us of Atalanta and Pentheus and the lion, driven by bloodlust, incapable of love (Detienne, 1979, pp. 43-4). Klytaimestra-as-eagle reminds us of the Caucasian eagle feeding on Prometheus as an agent of divine punishment (Hesiod, 1914, lines 520-30) and as the enraged eagles when robbed of their young in *Agamemnon* whose cry invokes the wrath of gods (Zeitlin, 1965, p. 481-2). This highlights the possibility that Agamemnon is in fact, the taboo-breaking, kin-killing sinner who invokes Dionysiac punishment, and Klytaimestra as Maenadic agent of the stranger god's violent will. Quintessentially Dionysiac, corrupt sacrifice begets corrupt sacrifice, and the House of Agamemnon collapses under the weight of kin-murder. The house that Cassandra sees as 'filled with death' (Zeitlin, 1965, p. 472), is only a house filled with *phusis* as *polis* is being broken into and cleansed by Dionysos the Purifier.

### **Performer of Sacrifice, Sacrificed**

Understanding the position of Dionysos as god of tragedy, and his implied presence in perverted rituals, sacrifice and parricidal royal families, will allow us to study a new dimension. That is, through the blurring of ritual, the great boundaries of life and death; god, human, and animal, become vague in the Dionysiac space.

This will help us understand the position of psychic anxiety when in conflict with the Other being projected upon.

In chapter 6, we will explore how taboos regarding rituals (particularly sacrifice, pertaining to totem animals) are upheld with utmost concern, since their violation will invoke divine wrath. Dionysos seems to be less interested in punishing those who break the taboos, as much as attracted to spaces where those taboos are broken. Those ritual spaces transport the participants into the Dionysiac spatio-temporal realm of *phusis*, where taboos are not yet born and death is ever-looming (or perhaps already present, if a lack of consciousness can be interpreted as 'death').

In this section, I am more interested in how those present in the *phusis* space transgress into seemingly multiple expressions of identity, and how these temporary transgressions set them on a path to permanent transformation.

Let us turn to documentations of Dionysiac Mystery initiation, which integrate aspects of sacrifice, funeral and wedding rituals. Then we will have a look at how Pentheus enacts similar rituals in the presence of Dionysos, along with a psychoanalytic interpretation of the conflict.

Earlier in this thesis we established that there seemed to be two *thiasoi*: one of Dionysiacs, particularly Maenads, devoted to the god through the year, performing secret rituals; the other includes the entire city when they join in for the public rituals of festivals like the Dionysia.

Of these secret rituals (*'orgia'*) and initiations (*'telete'*), very little is known. Not only were they secret, there seem to be separate rituals for the already initiated and the initiands (Seaford, 1996, p. 41). I also urge that one must also consider regional and chronological differences in practices amongst various *thiasoi* and cult manifestations that would naturally occur as in any cult. For example, *The Bacchae* has the Maenads typically take centre stage (Maenadic *thiasoi* known to be female-centric), whereas many of the symbols surrounding Pentheus and his death are suggestive of Mystery initiation of men.

We know, for example, that many rituals in the city festival, Anthesteria, were held publicly. City residents participated in drinking contests, libations, invocations of the dead and banishing of harmful spirits (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 302-4). However, secret rites (*orgia*) like the resurrection of Dionysos at Argos, or the marriage of the Archon Basillina to the god were held in secret (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 293). Like the *telete*, *orgia* were private and for cult initiands.

Livy (1936, book 39, chapters 10, 13) tells us about *telete* involving initiands being treated as sacrifices – they themselves, in a Dionysiac delirium, convinced they were about to die. This could easily be interpreted as their initiation into a new life, from one forbidden to view or participate in the *orgia*, to being part of the Dionysiac cult.

This death and resurrection mimics Dionysos' own rebirth. Similarly, there is the presence of a *sparagmos*, experienced by the sacrifice, by Dionysos, and metaphorically by the initiand (Seaford, 1994, p. 283), to be recomposed and resurrected after. The initiand

must be ignorant of their impending 'death', but upon facing it, must consent to it, like an animal at sacrifice.

Here again we witness the Dionysiac defiance of the god/human/animal boundary. A human walks to the altar, consents to sacrifice like an animal, and is rebirthed a god.

In a quick revisit to chapter 2, there are many occurrences in Dionysiac Mystery initiation prepare the initiand as Dionysos or Ariadne, for an apotheosis.

Like men in theatre (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 335, 340-1), or boys in cult ritual and festival (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 145, 150, 170), the male initiand in the Mysteries is also dressed in female dress, like Dionysos himself.

The mirror and toys, used to lure the infant Zagreus to his death in the Derveni Papyrus and Orphic myth (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 265-71), make repeated appearances in Dionysiac art. Kerenyi (1976, pp. 365-7) explains several instances of burial and Anthesteria wine jugs and kraters that show their use in several instances. For example, a pot with an ambiguous interpretation of a mirror being used to lead a woman either to marriage or death (pp. 365-6), as well as another which on one side shows a satyr and mirror drawing a woman to marriage, and on the other side the same woman dancing to Hades as a Maenad, recalling the mirroring of these transition rituals.

Kerenyi (1976, p. 359) looks to the use of a mirror in the coded initiation rituals depicted on the walls of the Pompeiian Villa dei Misteri. A boy being prepared for initiation is showed a mirror, but does not see his own reflection, instead he sees the mask of a Silenus held aloft behind him, insinuating his taking on of Dionysiac form.

Similarly, another example can be found at the Freud Museum London, with a column krater from 330 BCE showing a slightly androgynous Eros wielding a torch (a Mystery symbol) and ivy, facing a Maenad with *thyrsos* and *tympanon* holding aloft an ornate chest (presumably containing the other *arrheton* of the Mysteries, just as the Titans' box contained the toys), on it resting a mirror.



Figure 5: Black-figure column krater, dated 330 BCE, The Freud Museum, London, UK.

This krater's imagery is so ambiguous that it led to the Museum mislabelling it as a marriage ceremony (as of 2015). Upon closer inspection with the help of Kerényi's analysis of Dionysiac symbolism in pottery (1976), we find that it is common for Mystery initiation to use symbols of both wedding and funeral art.

These transitional rituals also serve a purpose in the initiand's apotheosis. The repetitive imagery of Bacchantes acting as mothers, nurses, and brides to the god is not uncommon (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 361), and this can be seen in the marriage of the Archon Basillina to Dionysos (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 307-12), just as the human Ariadne and Semele are apotheosised. They are both apotheosised after death, reinforcing the death symbolism of initiation. Indeed, it is in these rituals the initiands are identified as 'a Dionysos' and 'an Ariadne', avatars of the god who is here called 'Theos Dionysos' to make god distinct in his inherent divinity, as opposed to the initiands' after death.

In the Orphic myth of the god's death he is killed by the Titans in the form of a kid goat, hence perhaps the god's horns, before being boiled. Two Bacchic gold tablets buried with initiates in Thurii in the fourth century BCE state the following:

Line 4, Tablet A (Graf and Johnston, 2007, p. 9): 'You have become a god instead of a mortal. A kid you fell into milk.'

Lines 7, 9-10, Tablet B (Graf and Johnston, 2007, p. 13): 'I have sunk beneath the breast of the Lady, Chthonian Queen... "Happy and blessed, you will be a god instead of a mortal." A kid I fell into milk.'

Blessed by one of Dionysos' mothers, the initiate is identified with the god as a sacrificed kid, and reborn a god.

## 5.2. Communion with the Repressed: Punishment of Endogamy and Fall of *Polis*

### **Pentheus: Initiate and Enemy**

The mimicking of Dionysos, as well as temporary madness, death and initiation has been found in *The Bacchae* as well. Not only does *The Bacchae* contain references to Mystery cult

and Dionysiac ritual, but it is one of the most detailed surviving accounts of the fear and ambivalence from *polis* in the face of the projected Dionysos, as well as the repressed in oneself. For these reasons we will for the time being use *The Bacchae* (and analyses of the text by Parsons, Segal C, and others) as a hallmark for portraying ambivalence, projection, anxiety and response in the face of Dionysos and *phusis*.

Pentheus mimics Dionysos in his feminine clothing, him being mistaken for an animal, his dismemberment, and reconfiguration by his mother – Agave as Maenad carries the head of Pentheus with its shaggy, maned wig, much like a Maenad carries the mask of Dionysos in cult ritual. I do not think it is a mistake that she is named ‘Agave’, ‘Illustrious, Noble’. In her Dionysiac possession, she is ‘illustrious’ for both destroying the *oikos* of ‘excessive kingliness’, as well as performing a perverse, taboo-breaking sacrifice for the god who desires it. It could also be ironic, that the noble woman is ‘wretched’ (lines 1184-5) for parricide and regicide.

Pentheus as a sacrifice appears as him adorned in a dedication to Dionysos (line 934), his mother performs the sacrifice (line 1114), he is described as a sacrificial victim (line 1246). This mimics the adornment and consent of the sacrifice before slaughter. There is the procession and prayer (lines 1078-81), moment of silence (line 1083), encircling and pelting of victim (lines 1096-106), then the dismemberment and offering of flesh (lines 1184, 1242-7) (Seidensticker 1979, in Seaford, 1994, pp. 284-5). I have not included Seidensticker’s claim of the female cry being the same in sacrifice and the death of Pentheus, since the aggressive masculine cry of the Maenads is different from the feminine mourning cry of non-Maenadic women at sacrifice.

Other Mystery symbolism in the madness and death of Pentheus include transvestism, riddles, lights in the darkness, blessings, and the use of a mirror.

So, if Pentheus here acts like Maenad and initiand, why does he literally die, instead of metaphorically be reborn?

Line 502 has Pentheus reject the Dionysiac reality/*phusis*, but in Maenadic guise, he accepts it (line 924). This opposition, according to Dodds (1960, xii-xx) is psychological, rather than physical – with the repression of the Dionysiac breaking Pentheus. Seaford (1996) theorises that the negative emotions available in an individual viewer toward Dionysos are projected onto Pentheus, with his explicit resistance to the god punished by death, as opposed to the initiand or worshipper who makes attempts to negotiate a divine space for the harsh deity.

What Dionysos and Maenads achieve through cult, a permanent release (lines 895-901), is one that cannot be achieved by Pentheus with his repression and rejection – for him, release from ambivalence and psychic conflict can only be achieved in a literal death, rather than metaphorical rebirth.

Dionysos who is often invoked as purifier (especially of taboo and *dysmania*, or ‘bad’ madness) provides two ways of recovering from the psychic anxiety provoked by the dissolution of boundaries.

One is via initiation, where one mimics death and is ‘married’ to Dionysos, exhibiting an allyship with the repressed and *phusis*. A temporary indulging in the subversion of kinship and acceptance of boundary breaking for a cathartic experience. The other is via death (e.g.: Pentheus) – where such an anxiety is laid to rest by revoking consciousness through death. When Silenos waits for Dionysos to rescue him from Midas’ clutches, Midas asks him what is most desirable for men. Silenos’ response is for men to either have never been born, or to



die as quickly as possible. Silenos, as a member of the *thiasos*, displays contempt for the uninitiated, the cult provides relief to those who seek it and reconcile themselves with the Other in themselves, whereas the uninitiated must suffer the agony that comes with enforcing repression and then facing the repressed unprepared (Plutarch, Goodwin translation, pp. 326-7).

Resisting Dionysos is often portrayed as a kind of madness, as is welcoming him. The god both releases via madness (*Lusios*), and inflicts it as punishment (*Baccheios*). Resistance in the case of Pentheus is painful (*dysmania*), welcoming in the case of Maenads is ecstatic (*mania*).

The *dysmania* and death inflicted on Lykourgos, Pentheus and the like was inevitable. By rejecting the god, they made themselves *agos*, and to rid the city of the *nosos* they attract, the *pharmakos* ritual must be enacted. Their deaths can be seen as scapegoat sacrifices.

Dionysos as the returning repressed must be recovered from by Dionysos the Purifier. The city's *nosos* and its purification is a macrocosmic metaphor for the individual's anxiety in the face of returning repressed that can only be alleviated by acceptance of the repressed and its projections. Consider how 'Pentheus' (defined by his obstinacy and adherence to projections) means 'to suffer': psychologically, at the hand of his activated after-repressions.

The 'good' and 'bad' madness in the presence of Dionysos ultimately reveal a fundamental truth about the maddened to themselves. In Maenads and initiands, it is the unspeakable truth at the heart of the Mysteries. For the Minyades, Pentheus et al., it is similarities between them and the Other they project upon and loathe.

On how Mystery ritual manages to negotiate the anxiety that non-initiates in tragedy cannot, the ways in which initiates have already alienated themselves from society (both in their behaviour and marginalised and oppressed identity) allows them space in which to

safely explore their antagonism to *polis* values; whereas the *polis* and royal *oikos* are heavily embedded in *polis* culture and must adhere to them to maintain the laws of *polis*-against-*phusis*.

### **Dionysos: Agony and Cure in the Madness**

Euripides characteristically delineates the extremes of the psychological situations.

Here... the boundaries between normality and neurosis, between individual psychology and pathology, are unclear

- Segal C, 1982, p. 161.

The inflicting and alleviating of madness are both displayed in *The Bacchae*, both taking the form of a conversation, which leads some (Deveraux, 1970; Segal C, 1982, p. 287) to interpret the text as a display of psychotherapy. Most of the play plays out in *stichomythia*, a dialogue in quick succession between two characters. The majority of it is between Dionysos and Pentheus, and then between Agave and Kadmos.

The treatment of neuroses using psychoanalysis encourages the patient to explore a new language to elaborate. Deveraux in his 1970 paper explores Agave's recovery from her Bacchic madness through Kadmos' questioning and encouragement to explore her actions when he finds that commands and interrogations do not work. Notably, we find that suggestions and questions are the same method Dionysos uses against Pentheus to inflict madness in the first place, where Kadmos uses it to alleviate Agave's. Her adverse reaction to interrogation changes to enthusiasm when met with questioning and guiding to her own realisation that she did not kill a lion, but her own son.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> As previously discussed, Greeks believed a lion was unable to copulate due to its bloodthirst (Detienne, 1979, p. 46) – a lion is metaphorically castrated, and her bloodthirsty son literally through dismemberment.

There is an inverse symmetry between the Agave/ Kadmos conversation and that of Pentheus/Dionysos. Dionysos uses it, as well as his appearance, to mirror the repressed Other in Pentheus. This mirror later becomes literal when Pentheus looks at Dionysos in the mirror he is dressing in. Now that Pentheus is dressed like a Maenad, like Dionysos, he sees Dionysos for what he is: a bull (line 922). Similarly, the sun and towers of Thebes double, reflecting Pentheus and Dionysos as doubles in the mirror. In the madness he is guided to, Pentheus finds an unconscious truth.

Over the course of the play, their flirtatious tête-à-tête filled with argument and rationalisations evolves into complex double entendres rife with sinister implications and revealing insights. I find it difficult to say that Dionysos drives Pentheus mad through divine powers the way he does the women of Thebes. By confronting Pentheus with the repressions he must not know at any cost, he strikes Pentheus at the heart of his identity and where his defences are most strongly concentrated. The evolving double entendres becoming revelations of his repressed unconscious desires.

Psycho-analysis is able to show us other things as well which are important for understanding the effects of repression in the psychoneuroses. It shows us, for instance, that the instinctual representative develops with less interference and more profusely if it is withdrawn by repression from conscious influence. It proliferates in the dark, as it were, and takes on extreme forms of expression, which when they are translated and presented to the neurotic are not only bound to seem alien to him, but frighten him by giving him the picture of an extraordinary and dangerous strength of instinct.

- Freud, 1915a, vol. 14, p. 149.

Pentheus is unable to accept ambiguity, and what he perceives as foreign. He performs a splitting and projects the repressed onto Dionysos and the Others like him: both the Asiatic and Theban Bacchantes that include his grandfather, mother, and aunts. In enforcing this

splitting he must enforce the boundaries between them, separating himself as far away from ambiguity as possible. Pentheus accuses Dionysos of bringing foreign debauchery to his city when he doesn't recognise that he himself is descended from Kadmos the Syro-Phoenician. Pentheus enjoys his dressing in women's clothing. Pentheus doesn't even seem to notice his own fascination with Dionysos and his mother's sexuality. This split and projection is most literal in the doubles in the mirror,<sup>48</sup> unwittingly becoming the initiand looking at the Dionysiac in the reflection.

The Otherness of women, and Queerness of gender and sexuality in Greece, as stated earlier in the chapter, is in their being present in the *polis*, as well connected to the *physis* wilderness that threatens it. Pentheus' repressed Other manifests in him dressing up like a feminine foreign god of women, after commenting on the god's attractiveness and then the sexual overtones of his wrestling encounter with the hallucination of the god in the stables. There is an erotic alternate meaning to the verb used when Pentheus exhorts that he is hopelessly entwined/entangled/intertwined/locked together, the well-chosen verb denoting ambivalence (Seaford, 1996, p. 212).

Parsons (1990, p. 26) believes Pentheus' erotic fascination with this split-off aspect of himself means Pentheus is erotically fascinated with himself – this narcissism often found with excessive splitting. Both characters are narcissistic in their own way, mirrors of each other and the Narcissus' mirrors that they stare into.

Parsons (1990) notes that Freud's findings suggest that the repressed and actions to manage repression are always active, especially when faced with the repressed material. Parsons (1990, p. 23) relates this to how Pentheus is determined in binding the foreign cult, and how three times he is described as fighting against the gods in a hopeless struggle, who

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<sup>48</sup> I will refrain from Lacanian interpretations in this thesis, but there is something to be said about the mirror stage and Discourse of the Other in a future work.

simply keeps returning. Similarly, he comments on how Freud's claim that the 'ego was first and foremost a bodily ego...ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body' (Freud, 1923, vol. 19, p. 26) expresses itself in Pentheus' outburst toward Kadmos. When Kadmos reaches for Pentheus to convince him to join the rituals, Pentheus pushes the old man off, demanding he not 'wipe' his 'idiocy' onto him (lines 343-4). This reminds us of the Bacchic Body from chapter 2, and how the body's actions and nature makes it receptive to possession; interpreted as the ego's potential for being penetrated.

When studying the dialogue between Pentheus and Dionysos from a psychoanalytic perspective, it is important to remember that if we interpret Dionysos as a split-off aspect of Pentheus, then Pentheus is speaking to himself: an ego conversing with emerging repressed psychic contents.

Pentheus is an outstanding example of Greek citizenry, and his defences are concentrated around those criteria. This is precisely where Dionysos attacks him – and therefore the *polis*. Segal C (1982, p. 298) notes that he attacks Pentheus' perceived authority (line 503), his ability to bind and build boundaries (line 505) and his insecurity about his own identity (lines 503-8) seen in his name's ambiguity.

It is after this boast to bind Dionysos, or repress these contents, that the prideful Pentheus/ego begins to falter. The conversation pattern changes. Dionysos summons earthquake and lightning to destroy the the palace (symbolic of the *polis* and the ego's defences) (lines 585-95). Pentheus begins to hallucinate here, he wrestles with a bull in the stables, believing it to be Dionysos, and then attacks flashes of light with his sword, wrecking his home in the process (lines 615-40). In the face of no longer being able to repress these emerging contents, Pentheus lashes out in anger at displaced targets, whose related yet still

inaccurate nature portrayed as hallucinations. In other words, the flashes of light and the bull are associated with Dionysos, therefore understandably displaced to, but they are still not the same as the repressed content. In the process, he also destroys what he has built and what keeps him safe.

It is after the failure to bind/repress that Pentheus' fantasies of authority and control begin to falter. Pentheus' interrogations cease and he becomes submissive, as Dionysos resorts to questions and suggestions instead, as pointed out by Segal C (1982, p. 299).

Dionysos' questions begin to reveal worrying insights into Pentheus' repressed desire, suggesting that Dionysos was aware of these all along. Pentheus' aversion to sexuality and particularly what he perceived as the violence and sexual debauchery among the Maenads (lines 460-518) is suddenly replaced with a desire to kill them, including his mother (lines 795-7), and watch them having sex with one another, including his mother and aunts (lines 755-60). Dressing as a Maenad would give him license to these orgies as well.

Suddenly, he identifies with the Other, the *phusis*, repressed in himself.

At this point, Dionysos and Pentheus' conversation devolve into them finishing each other's sentences (lines 966-70), as the distinctness of identity between the two dissolves. As Segal C (1982, p. 301) describes it,

the overlapping of verbal expression on the level of syntax and versification parallels the overlapping and momentary coexistence of conscious and unconscious on the level of psychological meaning... This scene shows the conscious self being submerged into the unconscious; the Agave-Kadmos scene shows conscious, ego-integrative functions reasserting themselves over the unconscious.

This is also the most sinister part of the play in how Dionysos/the repressed deceives Pentheus/the ego by the latter believing his goal in infiltrating the cult will bring him back a

hero loved by his mother, when it implies death and disgrace, the warped perspectives a result of his madness. The double meanings that Dionysos speaks with are the voice of the psyche on multiple planes, allowing the unconscious to bypass the censor into consciousness, thus the subtle and deceptive emerging of Dionysos from Lydian stranger to bull god.

Becoming an extension of the god and identifying with him was the choice of the Asiatic Maenads; conversely the Theban Bacchantes and Pentheus had this temporary madness thrust upon them by the repressed with devastating consequences. The god's benevolent or malevolent nature is thus a result of the approach the individual/the ego takes to relating to him. Is this repressed content one you seek out, to converse, communicate with, then understand and find catharsis in? Or is it one you deny, split, project, displace and attack? The former brings understanding, the latter brings continued despair.

The themes that have been discussed throughout chapter 5 appear represented and condensed in the text of Euripides' *The Bacchae*, which is why it has often been used by scholars to analyse the response to the Dionysiac, and why I have paired it alongside the other texts and cultural evidence appearing in this chapter. The Dionysiac Other and its boundary-breaking in *cultus* are foreigners, feminine, Queer, refuters of traditional sacrificial ritual, and practitioners of Mystery initiation that defy the *polis* (Chapter 4, above). In *The Bacchae*, the cult is rejected as *asebeia* with attempt to convict, as a response to the irrational hatred manifesting from the anxiety at the returning repressed (Section 5.2, above; Parsons, 1990). Pentheus is then presented as a sacrifice, mimicking the experience of initiation that blurs lines between rituals, and themes of incest (that Dionysos purifies in plays like *Septem*) are met with customary intra-familial violence that ends the endogamous royal family line that

hoards power and represents the heart and extremes of *polis* (Section 5.1, above; Seaford, 1994).

### **Built by Father, Torn by the Mother**

The blurring of marriage/death, kin/non-kin, *polis/phusis* are well displayed in the acts of violence against kin performed by those possessed by Dionysos (willingly or not), and the acts of violence against incest incited by him. Politically, Dionysos' disapproval of incest is to prevent the gathering of too much power by royal families via endogamy, ended by the mourning 'Maenads of the dead'. Psychoanalytically, this can be interpreted as the institution of taboo laws against incest after the Primal Crime due to the Primal Father's jealousy, as explored in following chapter (Freud, 1913).

Using Pentheus as an example, his repressed sexual fascination accompanies the conspicuous absence of his father, Echion, in the play. Earlier in this chapter, I pointed out how precocious he was in assuming position as king and *kyrios*, even though we know nothing about Echion except his being autochthonic. Is he alive? Or dead? Is he simply absent?

Not only has Pentheus been abandoned by the father whose position he has taken, but by his mother he chooses to hunt down (only to be faced with a role reversal). And for an adolescent on the cusp of manhood, there is no fiancé, wife, or even male *erastes*. Pentheus seems entirely alone, with his mother who has now run to the mountains for this returning stranger with whom he engages in conflict.

But as his repressions come to light, his Oedipal desire for his mother does as well, and blurs with a need for an almost infantile dependence. On one hand, his desire to participate in (what he imagines are) incestuous orgies, occur alongside a desire to be carried home in his



mother's arms. What he considers a luxury, turns out is him being brought home a dismembered head.

This is heavily foreshadowed earlier in the play. They abandoned their children to nurse wolf cubs and deer in the woods (lines 699-702), but upon being confronted by men, they tore apart their adoptions (lines 735-40). They turn against their 'own nurturant motherhood' (Segal C, 1986, p. 309) and dismember a young cow who is still feeding her young, as well as a bull who is implied to be sexually excited. The killing of the angry and sexually aggressive bull foreshadows Pentheus' castration by his mother as he is dismembered, and the tall fir tree that he sits atop is uprooted (lines 1104-10) – his position, phallic power, and delusion of moving the mountain (lines 945-50) is stripped from him (Segal C, 1986, p. 309). All here in this sexually suggestive valley of the feminine that only the Queer and androgynous Dionysos is permitted to enter (Segal C, 1986, p. 311).

The mother who wields the phallic *thyrsos* possesses the ability to castrate, an unconscious anxiety for the men of the *polis* till Dionysos' return.

The return of Dionysos, and the repressed, marks also the return of the Orphic progenitor of mankind, and of the repressed Primal Father and his savagery, his ambiguity and ambivalence, and the guilt instilled in man after his murder. Oedipal desire is repaid with violence.

In the following chapter, Dionysos' significance as the Primal Father in myth and the importance of diet and sacrificial ritual are studied, along with the meaning of ritual subversion. This brings to the forefront the *polis* rituals of Hesiodic sacrifice and their attempt to protect the barrier between *phusis* and *polis*, then enforcing social stratification and marginalisation as elaborated in the thesis aims. It will also provide a new perspective on the

Primal Father's continued significance in societal stratification, and the ambivalence to, and maintenance of, personal subject boundaries.

## Chapter 6: Psychoanalytic Examination of the Orality and Ingestion in Dionysian Sacrifice

Chapter 3 concluded with acknowledging that allegorical interpretation might be an inescapable necessity in attempting to relate psychoanalysis and mythology – for every interpretation involves translation, perverting the ‘original meaning’. Chapters 4 and 5 showed that placing the myths in a socio-political context using that culture’s social standpoints has given us further insight into the myths surrounding Dionysos, helping us understand the how the relationship between *polis* and *Dionysos/phusis* enforces social stratification. However, can we further explore the significance of this deity by placing the politically subversive *sacrificial* rituals under a psychoanalytic lens?

Lacan and Lévi-Strauss tell us, contrary to Freud and Rank, that as analogous languages, we might never find the ‘essential meaning’ of a myth – but we can circle closer with continually expanding examinations – the ineffable heart of the myth will always be out of reach as a conflict that even the interpreter represses and evades.

Taking this into consideration, I argue that both the languages of mythology and psychoanalysis will never meet a centre since they both erupt from the same source of the unconscious. In psychoanalysis, myths are not simply stories told in an ancient culture to explain practices or beliefs; they ‘are the psyche’s symbolic renderings’ which ‘give vent to the repressed longings and fears of humankind’ (Sels, 2011, p. 56).

Myth arises from the same psychic source as psychoanalytic material, and psychic conflicts are enacted and reasoned with using the external acts of ritual. This reminds us of

how individual myth and neurosis arise from the same psychic source, and are brought into the modern ritual of unpacking on the psychoanalytic couch.

The sacramental aspects of Dionysos' sacrifices remind us of the sacramental sacrifice of the Primal Father and the totem animal. In his mythology, we will see how Dionysos mirrors the Primal Father, and how his return in myth raises the same anxieties and longing associated with the return of the Primal Father and his desire to enact talionic law in unconscious working as explained in *Totem and Taboo*.

I have presented critiques of Freud's work in *Totem and Taboo* (1913), particularly his misinterpretation of the Dionysos myths, and how this impacts psychoanalytic approaches to the interpretation of myth. A summary of those critiques includes the lack of appreciation of cultural dynamics, socio-political structures, and relationships between everyday life and religion; with the particular critique of *Totem and Taboo* for not focusing on cultures or religions separately and intimately instead of attempting to generalise across the globe. Though my thesis and Freud's text both appreciate the Primal Father hypothesis (with certain differences), I *only* do so in the context of the Dionysos cult – it is *not* something I would generalise to any chosen cult or to the root of religion.

To provide such focus, I appreciate uses of approaches of scholars adjacent to structuralism, that take into account various sociocultural references to the Dionysiac (e.g. Detienne's interpretation of the Dionysiac in the myths of Adonis and Atalanta; see Detienne, 1979). It helps focus on how a specific aspect of society relates to the culture of that society at large by drawing on the wealth of information said culture provided for said aspect. In this case, it helps with comparing and contrasting the mythemes, ritual, socio-political narratives pertaining to Dionysos and his sphere of influence in daily Grecian life. What we find is his presence involved in food culture, zoology, trading, international politics, commentary on the

rights of those who lacked *muthos* in said culture: the Other composed of women, immigrants, Queer individuals (or what can best be applied to Ancient Grecian sociopolitics) who subvert heteronormativity. For example: I will tie the information on the Dionysos cult to Freud's work on the Primal Father (1913) and find that Freud provides no information on women's active role in the Horde or proposals on their psychological response to the Father's demise – however, by looking at information provided by the Dionysos cult, we might be able to speculate on the part played by women.

Whereas Freud provides valuable and convincing insights in *Totem and Taboo*, they are not handled with the delicacy due the Dionysos cults. I stand by the hypotheses provided by Freud, but wish to develop on them. I believe discipline can be difficult to adhere to in psychoanalytic interpretations of myth and ritual. This discipline provides space to develop on the complexities in that culture (Kerenyi and other theorists on Dionysos provided a wealth of information I could develop on to an extent, considering the large amount of work they put forward), hence my selection of Grecian culture, and then isolating the Dionysos cult instead of the entirety of Grecian religion – which we saw provides a much richer understanding of the cult than that provided by *Totem and Taboo*.

I thus intend to first take what these *cultus* scholars have provided, and apply it further to themes of interest in the Dionysos cult – for example, by drawing structural models to the Triumph myths as the basis for my argument. Once that is complete, I will use a psychoanalytic lens to argue that the Primal Father and Horde are, for all intents and purposes, a notional event representing a typical conjunction of motifs which have a psychological role to play; which is demonstrated in both the myth and the ritual. I perceive the Primal Father/Horde hypothesis as a modern narrative which helps explain psychological currents and functions which become apparent within the myth and cult. The Horde event exists unconsciously and plays a part in the individual Oedipus Complex and thus in the religion of

Grecian culture. When taking this approach into account I maintain that in the mainstream Hesiodic and fringe cults of Dionysiacs (including Orphics), the part played by Dionysos is very similar to the part played by the Primal Father in the Horde – a fact that Freud disputes by saying Dionysos correlates to the son of the Primal Father (1913, pp. 153-4, 156). The method of first observing mythemes in raw data pertaining to myth, festivals, sacrifice and everyday life, then applying the psychoanalytic approach to those results provides a richer and more detailed interpretation of myth than provided by just one or the other.

I believe it is possible to use Freud to help us see how ritual and couch circle toward the Dionysiac wilderness of the psyche.

This thesis explores the development of ego-subjectivity and consciousness in the psyche against the unconscious and the id, and how it mirrors the development of *polis* and religion against *phusis*. The ego is also provided constraints by the superego's emergence via introjection. Freud (1913) argues that this process is also the result of the Primal Crime, which caused the introduction of superego emergence, ego-consciousness, taboos and animism. These taboos are indicative of the superego and civilisation. These taboos, when transgressed, create a threat of regression to the primal *phusis* state.

This chapter will explain how Dionysos and the Primal Father are both internal psychic narratives or conflicts reflecting the primal state of undifferentiated early childhood that are projected out as mythology, and re-introjected as psychology. As innate psychic characters that provide an intense sense of ambivalence and discomfort, the citizen with *muthos* projects it out onto the spatial/temporal realm of nature/*phusis*, and all things associated with it: primality, foreignness, the wilderness and nature, the Other and marginalised, and any form of subversion of the *polis* city-state and religion that upholds it. They are associated with nature's barbarism and inability to be defined or predicted that demanded to be controlled,

and represent the threat of regression to an era without civilisation, one founded purely on the pleasure principle, symbolic of the primal, pre-ego psychic state. This was regression that mainstream Hesiodic ritual symbolically fought against, since repeated stratification in ritual would reinforce the separation of the ego-subject from what it perceives to be external.

With that as a defined goal, and Freud's work as our lens, let us examine the myth and cult of the seemingly fickle, ambiguous, and ever metamorphosing Grecian god who both devours and is devoured: Dionysos.

### 6.1. The Eating of the Primal Father in *Totem and Taboo*

#### **Dionysos-Zagreus as the Primal Father**

The 'Zagreus Myth' – owing to the 'First' incarnation of the god being named 'Zagreus' before his death and resurrection with the name 'Dionysos' (Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History* 5.75.4) – explains how the murdered god's flesh was used to create mankind.

Zagreus is dismembered by the Titans (his relatives) and is resurrected upon his reunion with his 'knowing heart', a euphemism for the phallic-symbol (the symbol in Greek culture being the penis). His dismemberment is both his murder and symbolic of castration at a phallic level, i.e. removal from access to power. This sets a precedent for dismemberment as being symbolic for castration and being usurped (such as Khronos usurping Ouranos by castrating him, or preventing Zeus' rise to power by eating him).

The Orphic Titans are portrayed as the first sentient beings in Greece (and possibly a metaphor for early humanity; see Detienne, 1979, pp. 80-1), primitive and lawless, practising

acts of cannibalism that break ritual taboos and go against cultural evolution (by performing sacrifice backwards, boiling then roasting), deliberately reinforcing primal modes of existence that mirror the actions of the Primal Horde. In a myth where the Titans and Dionysos play the progenitors of mankind, the Orphic anthropogony/Zagreus myth portrays the murder and cannibalisation of the Primal Father/Dionysos at the hands of the Horde/Titans. This is further reinforced by humans being made from the soot and gypsum of the Titans who ate Dionysos, and that his essence is present even in their soot, implying that by consuming him, they have internalised him and he becomes a part of them – crossing the alimentary boundary from physical to psychological. What is eaten in sacrifice lives on in the eating participant.

In Ancient Grecian culture, the uniqueness of the Dionysos cult is the presence of explicitly sacramental sacrifice. Dionysos-Zagreus, the progenitor of mankind, manifests as a sacrifice. Even in mainstream sacrifice we find he-goats and bull-calves, which are looked after and even dressed up in human accoutrements before killing (Kerenyi, 1976, p. 88), implying their sacramental nature. By taking on the mantle of the progenitor who is murdered (dismembered/castrated) and eaten as a sacrifice by his progeny, Dionysos bears a similarity with the Primal Father of *Totem and Taboo* (1913). This section will find that Dionysos unconsciously plays the part of Primal Father in Grecian society.

I will present an argument for Dionysos being a projection of the Primal Father in myth. This comparison is most often seen in myth and theatre, but there are some examples in ritual which support the hypothesis that Dionysos is an image of the Primal Father, or that the Primal Father is projected onto him.



Mythology and theatre most often portray Dionysos' personality, actions, opinions, and attitudes of others towards him to support this hypothesis: the dramatic nature of his *epidemia* are central to his mythology, as well as his ambiguous nature – and the ambivalence it provokes.

Before I continue, I must reiterate: For me, the Primal Father is not Freud's 'historicised' bogeyman figure, but representative of primal experiences in early childhood. The Primal Father need not represent the patriarchy as much as the id desire (and 'psychological truth') of gender-conforming, cisgender, heterosexual men who wield *muthos*.<sup>49</sup>

As aforementioned, *phusis* is not feminine, but has femininity projected upon it by the phantasy of masculinity being sane and civilised, versus femininity being primal and *akrateis*. The Primal Horde myth is thus treated as a masculine phantasy. For the masculinised *polis* perceives the feminine as threatening and vengeful, and preserver of *phusis* disorder. Thus, the Dionysos myth itself is impacted on by the masculinised *polis* phantasy.

### **The Primal Crime's Aftermath and Modern-Day Oedipus Complex**

In what ways is Dionysos similar to the Primal Father? Let's consider what Freud has to say about the modern-day Oedipus complex and its relationship to the Primal Horde scenario, and see how that translates into Dionysiac myth and cult. This is another exercise in studying the ambivalence central to this thesis.

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<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, using Freud and the Oedipus complex as interpretations introduces the problem of binary gender, which is outdated, cissexist and exclusionary. *Totem and Taboo* itself is incredibly male-centric (although one could argue Freud acknowledges this on p. 131). I attempt to tackle this in the conclusion, by moving the discussion toward Klein and Irigaray, which helps tackle that problem for the child and the Primal Object. There is much work to be done on undoing the clear exclusionary cissexism in psychoanalytic and cultus study.

The ambivalence to Dionysos and his return is mirrored in the unconscious fears of the Primal Father's return. The Primal Crime intensified feelings of ambivalence toward the Primal Father (Freud, 1913, p. 143): his absence and remorse for their crimes made the sons feel guilt and long for the security and parental love provided by his rule – but fear of talionic retribution and despotic nature wish to keep him at bay.

This affection experienced a re-emergence upon his death, once their death wish towards him was put into effect, birthing guilt. Very little satisfaction was derived from the patricide since they were unable to fully identify with him. They could not fulfil their original wish that caused the rebellion: to take the Primal Father's place. Freud theorises that even more disappointingly for the power-hungry sons, the women they wished to subjugate would rise to power in the Father's absence (Freud, 1913, p. 144), once again withholding the phallus from them. What Freud does not venture to guess is what happens in this period. It is entirely possible that it is in this hypothetical matriarchal era that the incest and endogamy taboos were devised – but by the women, not the sons. This is reminiscent of the Maenadic abrasive attitude to marriage – as a kind of return to the Primal Crime's punishment. It also helps understand the fear of foreigners and the association of foreigners 'taking' native women.

If we persist with Freud's idea of the Crime's aftermath, then it is also possible that this matriarchal order and their execution of the punishment might have led to the patriarchal power grab and subsequent Othering of those outside it.

This is most evident in the *thiasoi* who act as executioners of the Primal Father's will, with Dionysos the Purifier punishing parricide and endogamy, being representative of the Grecian Other. The Othering thus prevents them from accessing political power as those associated with the Primal Father – preventing the Primal Father acting politically as leader

through them. This accomplishes one of the goals of the Primal Crime, granting political power to the Primal sons.

This is only one possibility, since it could very well be that the use of exogamy helps preserve political power for male citizens, since exogamy isolates individual women in foreign families.

This hypothesising highlights the intrinsic issues with the Primal Horde scenario – but regardless of the reason that the taboos were introduced, one could argue the results are nonetheless the same: patriarchal primacy, withholding of political currency from the Other, and a fear of the Other’s association with the Primal Father. Psychically, the result is still the same as well, that the *akrateis* qualities that drove the execution of the Primal Crime are exactly what is projected onto the Other, even though it is the *muthos* wielding sons that committed the crime that acted with unrestraint. In other words, the Primal Crime would be theoretically responsible for the political and psychical boundary building we have discussed in this thesis.

The effect of this Crime and its aftermath on the sons’ psyches was so strong, it gave birth to taboo and animism, and a son’s unconscious relationship to his father that persists to the modern day (Freud, 1913, p. 143). This is mirrored in the Primal Horde’s child-like adoration of the totem animal with expectations of “protection, care and indulgence” (Freud, 1913, p. 144).

Freud uses modern day cases of the Oedipus complex as examples of this persisting fear of the Primal Father. He links this to modern psychoanalytic case studies like Little Hans, and Ferenczi’s Arpad. The boys, midst the Oedipal phase and grappling with castration anxiety and the hostility combatting their love for their father, developing ambivalent attitudes to ‘totemic’ animals (as symbolic fathers). This projection of their castration anxiety

and deep fascination and ambivalence from their father to animals is possible due to a child's ability to relate more to animals than adults. 'Not infrequently' does the ambivalence intensify into a phobia (1913, p. 127). Freud also identifies and in *every* case of childhood animal phobias in the boys he studied, the phobia was Oedipal, with the ambivalence to the father and castration anxiety being projected onto the animal (1913, pp. 127-8). In the case of Little Hans, this phobia (being bitten by a horse) was a result of Hans' death wish to horses. However, once consoled that neither the horse, nor his father, would harm him, it appeared that not only did Hans wish death to his father/horse/totem, but also wished that no harm would come to them – a characteristic ambivalence (1909). Freud asserts that this is another retelling of the Primal Father scenario and that 'religion, morals, society and art converge in the Oedipal complex' (1913, p. 156).

Arpad's phobia (Freud, 1913, pp. 130-1) is more ritualistic, with notable elements of totemism. A fear of being castrated by a rooster that pecked at him led to a deep-seated fascination and ambivalence with the rooster, including explicitly identifying his father as 'the rooster' and himself as a 'chicken'. His aim was then to grow up to be a rooster, and marry his mother and neighbours, essentially replace the father and practise endogamy. His games and songs were dominated by a rooster theme. Interestingly, he ritualised the killing of poultry as a festival, celebrating it with much dancing around the corpses, followed by stroking and apologies to them – strikingly similar to rituals of totem or sacramental sacrifice followed by rituals of expiation and purification.

So, according to Freud (1913), both modern Oedipus complexes and religion are rooted in the Oedipal desire to remove the despotic father and indulge in incest that drove the sons of the Horde to kill and eat the Primal Father. In doing so, however, they developed a conscience (superego), and fear that he will return to castrate and/or kill them if he is not appeased. As I pointed out in chapter 3, the story of the Primal Horde is Freud applying the

individual Oedipus complex onto a whole group (and humanity), taking place as a cultural phenomenon. However, with the Primal Father there seems to be *no* effective resolution to the castration anxiety. Instead, it is a ritual of expiation that must be repeated to continually struggle against it.

This fear of retribution upon the Primal Father's return has given some powerful examples in the form of the Triumph myths. It is in these Triumphs where the boundaries built both socio-politically and psychically by the Primal Crime are undone upon the return of the imagined Primal Father and the penetration of *phusis* into *polis*.

### **The Primal Father in Myth: Coming to Murder His Sons**

Let us recap some important details from these Triumph myths that were given an overview in chapter 2, where royal personages rebel against Dionysos.

Aeschylus in *The Edonians* fragments 69-81 (1926) shows us how Lykourgos attacks Dionysos and his Maenads with a sword when they arrive at his city, chaining the survivors up. The angered Dionysos tears down the palace and drives Lykourgos into a frenzy. Lykourgos hallucinates that his son is a vinestock, proceeding to chop him up with a *labrys* (a double headed axe, associated with Dionysos).

Apollodorus *The Library* (1921, 3.5.1) continues: in order to purify the city of the king's parricide, the Delphic oracle orders the people of the city take the tainted king to Mt. Pangaeus, where resides the oracle of Dionysos (Herodotus, 1920, 7.111.2), the same mountain where the Bassarid Maenads dismembered Orpheus. Here, Lykourgos is tied to wild horses and dismembered.

The Minyades, three daughters of Orchomenos, mocked the Maenads who charged up Mt. Kithairon, refusing to join the ecstasy – here Dionysos appears as a young girl, asking them to come to the mountain. When they reject him and their looms secrete milk and nectar (a sign of the wild entering the home, turning *polis* into *phusis*), they are driven into a frenzy; they dismember and devour one of their sons, offering it up to the god as a sacrifice. They then run to join the Maenads, who attack them for being tainted (*agos*) by their parricide, much like Lykourgos.

However, this myth left a lasting impact on the people of Orchomenos. The curse of the Minyades and their ritual of atonement are passed down through the women of the house.<sup>50</sup> The daughters born from the women of the Minyad line are now called the *Oleiai* ('pernicious'), and their husbands the *Psoloeis* ('faces darkened by smoke'), and at the biannual Dionysos festival of Agrionia (the two-year trieteric period marking Dionysos' death and rebirth), they enact being hunted by the priest of Dionysos. Wielding a sword, the priest of Dionysos is allowed to dismember any of the *Oleiai* he catches (Detienne, 1989, p. 16). An entire house for countless generations is a target for Dionysos' retribution.

The most popular of these myths is of course, that of Pentheus and the House of Kadmos at Thebes. It is also the most important in terms of interpreting the god as the Primal Father. Dionysos is the patron god of Thebes, and known as Dionysos *Kadmeios*: Dionysos of the House of Kadmos. His family's antagonism leads to Dionysos tearing down the palace of Thebes, and his aunts (the Kadmeides: women of the House of Kadmos) dismembering the young King Pentheus who is dressed like a woman, like Dionysos. Agave and her sisters are now tabooed/*agos*, and forced to leave the city as murderesses of their own family members. Kadmos and his wife are also driven into exile to lead foreign armies to demolish the Greece

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<sup>50</sup> Much like how the totem is passed on through women of a tribe (Freud, 1913, p.4-9). It is possible that the murdering of the totem/totemic Father and its guilt is passed through the female lineage here.

they fought to build, including the cities' sacred altars of rival gods – semi-barbarian Kadmos has been returned to his barbarian status, working now for the semi-barbarian god who prefers to behave as a barbarian in his crusade against Greek *polis* (Euripides, *The Bacchae*, lines 1320-90). A truly Dionysiac punishment for the man who pursued 'Greekness' by mingling his blood with the autochthonic Spartoi.

A table for the Triumph myths would display the antagonists and royal personage in column 1, their blasphemy in column 2, the effect on their sanity in column 3, their violation in column 4, and punishment in column 5:

		1	2	3	4	5
		Title	Blasphemy	Sanity	Violation	Punishment
<b>A</b>	<b>Lykourgos</b>	King	Attacks Dionysos with Labrys	Driven mad	Dismembers son	-
		-	-	-	-	Is dismembered
<b>B</b>	<b>Minyades</b>	-	-	Driven mad	Dismember son, join <i>orgia</i>	Attacked, are cursed, female descendants might be dismembered by Dionysos' priest
		Princesses	Reject Dionysos	-	-	-
<b>C.1</b>	<b>Kadmeides</b>	-	-	Driven mad	Dismember son, join <i>orgia</i>	Exiled
		Princesses	Reject Dionysos	-	-	-
<b>C.2</b>	<b>Pentheus</b>	King	Imprisons Dionysos	Driven mad	-	-
		-	-	-	Spies on <i>orgia</i> , no filicide	Is dismembered

Table 1: Comparison and contrast of mythemes and descriptions of mythematic units of the Triumph myths

In the Triumphs, Dionysos can be interpreted as the Primal Father whose return is most feared: this is almost underlined by how he conducts his punishments. Dionysos invokes *lex*

*talionis*, reinstating the Primal Father's governance by demolishing the family that upholds *polis*.

In column 1, we see how all the antagonists are prominent members of the royal family: the substitute of the family that is the *polis* and conductors of city-wide sacrifices, symbolic of the 'first family' or the Primal Horde. Thus, it is them who are confronted by the Primal Father upon his return. The Triumph myths always centre around royal families and their destruction. This stands in contrast to other relationships Dionysos maintains with non-royal figures whose myths do not follow the thematic structure of the Triumph myths (e.g.: Ikarios, Ampelos, etc).

In column 2 we see the women (the Kadmeides and Minyades) reject Dionysos, whereas the men (Lykourgos and Pentheus) lay hands on him by attack or imprisonment. It is arguable this is a structural representation of the Primal Crime (an unconscious memory, according to Freud, 1913) being conducted by the *sons* of the Horde and not the daughters or mothers. Freud does not tell us how the women of the Primal Horde react to the Primal Crime, or their effect regarding the Father or sons of the Horde.

In column 3, all characters are unwillingly possessed (*dysmania*) by Dionysos, a representation of the Primal Father being an internalised figure, not an external one. This excludes the Bacchantes who willingly follow him and are allied with *phusis* as both a reaction to *polis*' oppression and to protect themselves from the Dionysos/the Primal Father's vengeful capriciousness. In all instances, we see the wild entering the city, *phusis* blurring into *polis*.

Column 4 shows the violation committed by the antagonists that will make them *agos*: there are three instances of filicide, possibly representative of the first son to participate in the Primal Crime. This is likely the son's fear of reprisal since it is Dionysos who convinces his



antagonists to kill their sons: the Primal Father causing the murder of the sons. If we bring this to the modern day, it is the son's fear of punishment due to his death wish towards his father mid-Oedipus complex. Their dismemberment is both talionic punishment for dismembering the Primal Father/Dionysos (both dismembered), as well as symbolic for castration: signifying castration anxiety at the return of the Primal Father or father of the Oedipal son (according to Freud, castration and death are symbolically equated).<sup>51</sup> The women of rows B and C.1 suffer a possession with the reinstatement of *phusis* and enact the Primal Father's punishment: undoing the sons' *polis* via taboo-breaking. In row C.2, filicide is not what makes the antagonist *agos*, Pentheus has dressed as a woman and attempts to join the Maenads as well as the Kadmeides of row C.1. He facilitates his own dismemberment, and facilitates the filicide that will make his mother and aunts *agos* in row C.1.

Column 5 shows how all *polis*-affiliated antagonists have been rejected by their communities: The men dismembered, and the women exiled. The men's dismembering is symbolic of the Primal Horde sons' fear of *lex talionis* at the hand of the Primal Father, and of the Oedipal son's fear of castration at the hands of the father. The women of rows B and C.1 are sent into exile for their filicide – spilling their own blood deserves the punishment as it is parricide like the Primal Crime. In row B, however, we see how the myth evolves into a biannual ritual that takes place in Ancient Greek history: the cursed female descendants of the Minyades are subject to dismemberment if caught by the priest of Dionysos after sacrificing the god. Talionic law is once again invoked by the Primal Father/Dionysos, but in live ritual, not myth.

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<sup>51</sup> I should also remind the reader that other punishments by Dionysos target the male transgressor's penis, such as satyriasis, priapism and disease – the function of the organ that represents phallic power is reversed and rendered painful and useless (Csapo, 1997, p. 267-8).

This table of relationships between symbols in the Triumph myths further facilitates a clear reading of the myths using a psychoanalytic lens, providing us with the interpretation of the return of Dionysos as the return of the Primal Father, and symbolic of Oedipal anxieties.

Chapter 4 showed us how Grecian society assumed (falsely) that the metaphoric phallus could be symbolised by the penis. The idols of Dionysos are not just shaped like penises, but represent the quintessential phallus, the progenitor and thus ‘Father’ of men and greatest threat of castration anxiety. He first goes unrecognised, seen as a foreigner, even in his homeland of Thebes. Greek but not-Greek, he is uncanny. He is uncanny also in his androgyny. As a local he is primordial, as a foreigner he is newly arrived. His antagonists and targets are royal houses, representatives of the city: both its people and its land. Their actions have the capacity to both taint and purify entire populations and the earth within their *polis* walls.

The royal houses are indeed the ‘family’ that is the city. In many ways, they are representative of the Primal Horde that stands in for the city as its founders.

Like the Primal Horde (or Arpad), the royal *oikos* present at Hesiodic sacrifices at the city temples – their faces ‘darkened by smoke’ – are the same who participate in the killings and are seated as the *splankhneuontes*, the sacrifice eaters who represent the ‘inner circle’ of the community, and the expiators of the sin of sacrificial murder. And at the trieteric sacrifices of Dionysos, they participate in the murder of a bull-calf wearing Dionysos’ hunting boots as a *labrys* axe is used to kill it instead of the traditional *makhaira* knife – in some cases, the axe-wielder is stoned to death (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 190-1). Both instances are sacramental, where the god/Primal Father is being sacrificed, and the murderers have to pay for their deeds either through execution or by participating in a ritual of atonement as dictated

in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* (1913, p. 104) amongst 'primitive' societies after a totem killing.

Dionysos' arrival undoes their efforts at forgiveness. The fear that they would not recognise the Primal Father that will come to them in foreign guise when their walls will no longer keep him out renders their rituals of expiation and purification so central to totem killings fruitless. Here we see an unconscious fear that regardless of the number of purifications man performs, the threat of retribution is always present, and the guilt of the Primal Crime hangs heavy on their shoulders. The ambivalence to the rituals, both enjoying the murder and feeling guilt, as well as ambivalence to a god who both nurtures and terrorises is always present.

In his smiting, Dionysos does not target specific individuals who antagonised him. He targets entire royal houses, by possession and parricide: *Lex talionis* is invoked again. As the Primal Horde dismembered and ate the Father, so do the mythical royal houses of Greece dismember and eat each other in the Triumphs. In many cases, the victim is a sacrifice, and is portrayed as a stand in for the god, e.g. are cross-dressing Pentheus with his *thyrsos*, and Lykourgos' vine-stock son that we discussed in chapter 5. At the Orchomenos Agrionia, he is manifested in the priest of Dionysos to murder women of the royal *oikos* at the end of every trieteric period when he is resurrected.

In exile, the living relatives are forced to wander the earth, much like himself, foreigners wherever they go, maddened and tabooed, without family or city walls to protect them.

If we read the myths of Dionysos as Grecian projections of the Primal Father that mirror each other in their themes and anxieties, the returning Primal Father is feared to not only tear down palace walls, but demolish entire generations. In the process he subverts the

laws of *polis*, bringing the wilderness into the city, a necessary precursor to seizing control as the Primal Father, taking the population back to the Primal Horde era of *phusis*: before the Crime and the birth of the superego.

But before we explore the threat of *asebeia* and the routinisation of Dionysiac cult into Hesiodic worship of the god, let's have a look at *polis* festivals celebrating Dionysos.

### **The Primal Father in the *Polis*: City-Sanctioned Festivals**

We witness how myth bleeds into ritual at the festival of Agrionia in the previous section. With festivals being important religious events that accompany major sacrifices, let us see how Dionysos manifests during his festivals among the Grecian people.

The Hesiodic festival of Anthesteria is a good example to illustrate how the ambivalence felt toward the Primal Father/Dionysos and the dead is negotiated in Greek society and managed by the ego.

The Anthesteria, or Festival of Blossoms (Otto, 1965, p. 159), celebrates the return of the vine blossoms and the return of Dionysos from Hades. Associated with bodies of water, the gate of Hades is opened for Dionysos by his frenzied worshippers, and for three days he lets loose the spirits of the dead. The Anthesteria most openly marks him as Lord of Souls and emphasises his chthonic nature (Harrison, 1960, p. 34).

Upon his return, the Archon Basillina of Athens (wife of the ruling archon) is married to Dionysos as he rises from the swamps outside Athens under the guidance of the *gerairai*: a council of fourteen elderly bacchantes. This *hierosgamos* ensures the safety of the city and fertility of its farms by placating the god who is now united with his castrated phallic-symbol upon resurrection (Kerenyi, 1976, pp. 300-2). This also represents the Archon Basillina

acquiring generative phallic power, and the ability to sustain the city for another trieteric period.

There is some celebration, hierarchical order is broken, with servants joining the family in festivities, drinking contests are held (Harrison, 1960, p. 36), and toddlers are given their first sips of wine.

Still, the festival's tone is primarily sombre, with the first of the three days opening casks of wine for god and the family's ancestral spirits, the second to placate the dead with food, and the third to perform complex rituals to send them back to Hades lest harm come to the living family. When exorcised, the spirits are referred to as Keres (Harrison, 1960, pp.35-6). The Keres exist as ravaging demons of death and plague:

Gnashing their white fangs, lowering, grim, bloody, and unapproachable, struggled for those who were falling, for they all were longing to drink dark blood.

- Hesiod, *Shield of Heracles*, 1914, lines 248-51.

The taboos present at Dionysos' return with his retinue of the dead are typical of Freud's (1913, pp. 36-75) listed taboos applied to rulers, dead family members, and dead enemies. Both the Primal Father and Dionysos are also rulers, dead family members, and dead enemies. This helps explain why those taboos came into existence after the Primal Crime and creation of taboos.

Taboos being rooted in ambivalence, this overall ambivalent effect that surrounds the Anthesteria is remarkably similar to the ambivalence to death and the dead in *Totem and Taboo*:

In almost every case where there is an intense emotional attachment to a particular person we find that behind the tender love there is a concealed hostility in the unconscious. This is the classical example, the prototype, of the ambivalence of human emotions.

This ambivalence is present to a greater or less amount in the innate disposition of everyone... The survivor thus denies that he has ever harboured any hostile feelings against the dead loved one; the soul of the dead harbours them instead and seeks to put them into action during the whole period of mourning. In spite of the successful defence which the survivor achieves by means of projection, his emotional reaction shows the characteristics of punishment and remorse, for he is the subject of fears and submits to renunciations and restrictions, though these are in part disguised as measures of protection against the hostile

- Freud, 1913, pp. 60-1.

Dionysos returns dead and is accompanied by the dead. He 'comes back to life' upon marriage to the Archon Basillina, the symbolic stand in for the city and its fertile land. He simultaneously is united with the 'knowing heart', which in chapter 2 was revealed to symbolise the phallic-symbol/penis and a generative symbol in Greek culture.

The returned Primal Father brings with him both joy and horror. Joy since his return is both desirable and absolves man of ancestral sin, and horror with the threat that unless *polis* and Horde are surrendered to him and he takes his place as deified archon, the same punishments of the Triumphs will be brought to plague the city. The presence of the Keres following the spirits of the dead is reminiscent of Freud (1913, pp. 60-1) explaining how the intense ambivalence to relatives when alive and repressed joy at their death results in deep senses of grief, self-reproach, and fear or hostility towards the dead. The repressed affect and guilt (symbolised by the spirits of dead ancestors) will quickly go from celebratory spirits to demonic Keres unless strict taboos and rituals are not applied to placate and exorcise them (see: the conflicts of chapter 5). The repressed hostility toward the dead is disguised as the dead being hostile to the living.

Once again, Dionysos subverts the ambivalent struggle to build boundaries between without and within by subverting efforts at subjectification and self-definition. He subverts *polis* by not just bringing the wilderness into the city, but bringing the dead back to the world of the living, the boundaries between outside and in are penetrated. The entry of the *physis* into *polis* mirrors the Dionysiac possession of the body. Chapter 4 discussed the *polis* being mirrored in the body, a fortress against the foreign. However, Bacchantes show us in chapter 2 that the Bacchic Body is willingly possessed by the Dionysiac, and those punished by Dionysos in Triumph myths are possessed by him unwillingly. Chapter 4 then explained the penetration of the body and the ego by the gaze that is reversed and becomes penetrating.

This possession of the body is the threat of the transgressed psychological boundaries that are projected onto physical and political boundaries. It can also come in the form of ingestion, which marks a crossing from the physical to the psychological – which is why one must discuss the sacrifice and ingestion of the Primal Father/Dionysos.

### **The Primal Father in the Body: Ingestion of Dionysos**

This penetration and possession occurs in various forms.

Dionysos' hypnotic gaze is reminiscent of Freud's theory that hypnotism was a submission to the Primal Father, reflecting a repressed desire to revert to infantilism, manifesting when meeting the gaze of gods and chiefs, their inheritance from the Primal Father and the gaze of parents (Freud, 1921, p. 127). Perhaps this servility is caused by the internalisation of a deity perceived to be external to the self, a reminder that the effort toward ego subjectivity comes at the cost of projection and its consequential Othering. This hypnotic gaze acting as a reminder of blurred boundaries is another similarity between Dionysos and the Primal Father.

In section 5.2 I talked about the gaze and drinking wine simultaneously, and the act of consuming the god through wine is reflected in the drinker adopting his visage in the *kylix*, and risking adopting his behaviour upon excessive imbibing (an act of *akrateis*).

Wine possesses the ambiguous qualities of the god as well. The Greek writing on wine, associated with the blood of Dionysos (Timotheus, in Csapo, 1997, p. 258) again reveals to us a sophisticated understanding the Greeks had of the symbolism of their mythical progenitor, and of concepts of ambivalence and ambiguity. Pliny quotes the physician Androcydes, where the blood of Earth is both medicine and toxin, simultaneously heating the organs and cooling the skin, strengthening and dangerous. It is fire in liquid form, the colour of blood, and the fear of death lurks around it. The consumption of the god Dionysos also takes place in the drinking of wine, which acts as his blood.<sup>52</sup> Ambiguous and fickle, it is a medium for the god of simultaneous opposites and his lawlessness to penetrate man as he breaks down the walls of cities.

The Greeks found a way to communicate Dionysos' ambiguity into their daily life, from the temples into the marketplace and their drinking cups. They drank his blood with both excitement and hesitation, knowing that possession by him – resurrecting him in their own blood and body – is an imminent threat.

Of course, Dionysos is consumed by both drinking wine, and eating sacramental sacrifice. Once again, Freud's accounts of cannibalism in *Totem and Taboo* can be applied to Dionysos. Where the animistic practice of cannibalism was meant to internalise and orally integrate the personality and abilities of the consumed (1913, p. 82), much like the sons of the Primal Horde devouring their Father to gain his powers (1913, p. 143).

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<sup>52</sup> It is possible that this also makes viticulture a sacrificial act.



Chapter 2 explained that the Orphic Titans are portrayed as the first sentient beings in Greece, primitive and lawless, practising acts of cannibalism that go against cultural evolution and deliberately reinforce primal modes of existence mirror the actions of the Primal Horde. In a myth where the Titans and Dionysos play the progenitors of mankind, the Orphic anthropogony/Zagreus myth portrays the murder and cannibalisation of the Primal Father/Dionysos at the hands of the Horde/Titans. This is further reinforced by humans being made from the soot and gypsum of the Titans who ate Dionysos, and that his essence is present even in their soot, implying that by consuming him, they have internalised him and he becomes a part of them – crossing the alimentary boundary from physical to psychical. What is eaten in sacrifice lives on in the eating participant.

Having established how the Zagreus Myth portrays the murder of the Primal Father by the Horde, and how the guilt weighs heavy on their following generations and is reflected in Hesiodic ritual, I will expand on the details of the sacrifices in Grecian life and festivals.

## 6.2. From *Phusis* to *Polis*: Cooking the Primal Father

### **Differences in Sacrificial Practice and their Symbolism**

Sacrifice and sacrificial methods play an important part in the defining of societal structure and the city's relationship with the gods in Grecian culture, as seen in chapter 2 and Detienne (1979). Here on, I will take those symbolic implications to facilitate a psychoanalytic reading of sacrificial ritual's purpose in Grecian psyche.

So far in this thesis, we have explored how it's not simply diet, but also methods of cooking that hold various significations in Grecian mythology and culture. Let's quickly

recap the more detailed explanation of sacrifice and cannibalism and their position in upholding or subverting *polis* from chapter 2.

Prometheus opened up a division between gods, humans and animals through sacrifice, creating a structure where humans could eat animals without it being considered cannibalism as a modality of allelophagia – eating one another – as they would have in *phusis* (Detienne, 1979, p. 55). Of course, the creation of this hierarchy means not eating meat in this manner undoes the hierarchy of god, humans and animal, a quality associated with Dionysos cults and the ecstasy that follows Dionysos.

It is the act of sacrifice and cooking that removes human and animal from the same alimentary plane, since lawless animals eat each other raw (Hesiod, *Works and Days*, lines 276-8). Without a separation between human and animal defined by sacrifice and cooking, all food is allelophagic. Committing allelophagia is sinful for men, and signifies the absence of civilisation or justice. Participating in it transports humans to *phusis*, before they tasted cooked meat at the table of the Olympians. Before Prometheus, no laws separated the human, god, or animal from each other, and once separated, established *polis*.

Earlier we read how Hesiodic sacrifice bound the city together, but also formed social stratifications. For the Greeks, it is cooking and Hesiodic sacrificial ritual that establishes the socio-political system of their culture – thus making religion inseparable from that socio-political structure. The anabatic Orphics and katabatic Dionysiacs thus assault *polis* via the semiotics of sacrifice.

This pre-*polis* state deconstructs the taboos of culture, which were enjoyed before the Primal Crime, and possible in the region of the Primal Father and Dionysos. These cults intentionally Other themselves from *polis* in open semiotic rebellion.

In the process, it also undoes the positive action of purification performed by the *splankhneutes* found in Hesiodic ritual, since according to *polis*, Hesiodic ritual marks a movement toward civilisation and the capacity for morality. Only with a conscience will one seek out purifications for their misdeeds.

For the Orphics, the very act of sacrifice itself should be done away with, since it represents a vicarious enjoyment of the murder of god. Therefore, the Orphic Zagreus myth so easily leads to the anthropogony of humans from Dionysos and the Titans: civilisation and consciousness (and conscience according to Freud, 1913, pp. 67-8) begins with the Primal Crime.

Where Orphic and Dionysiac sacrifice defied *polis*, *polis* itself attempted to routinise the *asebeia* worship of Dionysos into Hesiodic cult. It did so by applying a similar form of Hesiodic sacrifice to the other gods to Dionysos, while incorporating certain Dionysiac elements into it. Incense summoning, requesting permission of the animal before sacrifice and other rites would have remained, while channelling sacramental elements into it.

The sacramental aspect of the Dionysiac sacrifices is present in very carefully controlled elements of the *polis* Hesiodic sacrifices to Dionysos, as if there is an attempt to pacify and control the wildness of the Dionysiac cult by absorbing it into *polis* structure. We find in Kerényi (1976) the bull calf dedicated to Dionysos wearing his copper hunting boots and being looked after with utmost care and comfort, and the priestess of Dionysos leaving a raw piece of flesh in a 'holy basket' (*liknon*) for the god (Detienne, 1979). In any attempt to minimise the violent and primitive Dionysiac presence of the god, there is still an element of primality that surrounds him, even in comparatively tame *polis* sacrifices.

The incorporation of these Mystery elements was an attempt at routinising practices that otherwise questioned *polis* – particularly by subverting rituals that held *polis* together.

This is possibly what is reflected in epidemic myths where Dionysos arrives at *polis* from foreign lands resulting in cult aetiology, even though he is a Grecian god. These myths possibly portray him as a cult that otherwise does not belong in the *polis* being routinised.

Of course, what this tells us about *polis* sacrifices to Dionysos is that they are sacramental, unlike other *polis* sacrifices. It is an act that is being routinised into *polis* even though it possesses an allelophagic element. Unlike Hesiodic sacrifice to the other gods, it runs a risk of dismantling *polis*, but is necessary in order to prevent the same. However, its Hesiodic elements still reinforce the same political structure that results in social stratification.

That explains the political motive of the sacrifice, but how can we interpret it psychically? The *polis* sacrifices to Dionysos are excellent examples of the individual's ambivalence to the act of boundary building, particularly in the context of *Totem and Taboo* (1913), with the intense ambivalence at the murder of the Primal Father. It is an attempt to simultaneously introject, split and project, to build boundaries at all costs, with a cost. Where Bacchic cults have allied themselves with the Dionysiac (as explained in chapters 4 and 5), the *polis* still attempts to both expel and appease the god.

Holding this in comparison to the Hesiodic sacrifice to other gods, it becomes clear that Dionysos' cults subvert the religious, political, and social goals of Hesiodic ritual. Not only are divine hierarchies dispelled, but social ones as well, as *phusis* rejects the *polis* laws defining citizen from Other.

The Dionysos myths (particularly as progenitor of humanity) fit surprisingly well into the mould of the Primal Father hypothesis proposed by Freud (1913), and this is understood even further when we see how the Hesiodic sacrifices *attempt* to keep the retribution of the Primal Crime at bay (and continue to repress it further) by reinforcing *polis* values (while

vicariously indulging in the Crime). Where Hesiodic sacrifice seems to be a continual propelling away from the events of Primal Crime, in an attempt to subdue the Father and prevent his return by reinforcing then-modern values, the Dionysos cults make no denial of man's role and inherent guilt for the Crime. The cults undo the socio-religious fabric that built the walls of *polis* to separate it from the lawless wilderness of undifferentiated primality humanity grew from. The very formation of *polis* is the repression of *phusis*, not unlike the dynamic between ego and id, humanity stands between the city and wild. The myths of Adonis, Atalanta, Narcissus and others have shown how the gods punish those who embrace the lawless wild – whereas Dionysos punishes those who fervently deny it in his presence (represented by the anxiety and unconscious conflict in chapter 6).

Taking this into account, it becomes clear that Freud's hypothesis that the Dionysos cult displayed a psychic evolution moving from worship/sacrifice of the Primal Father to worship/sacrifice of the son god of the Horde who killed the Primal Father was arguably incorrect (1913, p. 153). A more thorough background of Grecian myth, its culture, philosophical and political values, and ritual symbolism, gives us a us a richer interpretation of the Dionysos cult, and that Freud could have portrayed a more accurate depiction of the function of the cults by not attempting to generalise a single hypothesis across all cultures, or attempting to enforce the idea of the Primal Crime as a literal event.

The Primal Crime as a *polis* phantasy of the primal experience is projected onto associations of undifferentiation: *phusis*, the wilderness, the Other. In Hesiodic ritual we find this continuous maintenance to prevent the Primal era/*phusis*' resurgence, establishing that their perspective of the superego is that it is fragile, that it develops and is not innate, and is

the result of generations of work and repression of Oedipal impulses to prevent their re-emergence. Does this have a psychological correlate among the structures of the psyche?

### **Sustaining Psychic Balance**

That would also mean that this Primal era of the Horde and *phusis* is a threat that lingers at the gates, and (consciously or unconsciously) is a threat the Greeks knew was as internal as it was external. The fear of regression projected onto the unforgiving wilderness where fathers are not safe from their sons that mature and grow stronger.

It also means that they would have seen the Primal era/*phusis* as a time before *polis* values. Thus, leaving one possibility: the word *phusis* – this nature of Dionysos – would be used to exemplify the base instinctual drives of the id that are motivated and organised by the pleasure principle.

Freud (1913, p. 28) explains how ceremonial acts and ritual are directly related to rituals pertaining to taboos and obsessional acts in neuroses. Ceremonial acts thus allow the suppressed id-driven impulse and the impulse that suppresses it to find common satisfaction. The act is (consciously) a protection against what is prohibited, but is (unconsciously) a repetition of it (Freud, 1913, p. 50). The actions of the sacrifice ritual are thus manners of strengthening the superego against the instincts of the id that also holds powerful allure, and like Dionysos and nature, the id is what feeds, provides, and sustains. The ego, being caught between wishes and prohibitions, responds to this conflict by resorting to self-defence.

The introjection causes an internalisation of the relationship with the Primal Father and Nature that both provides and takes. This relationship, being as ambivalent as it is, is internalised and subjected to threats and conflict (Freud, 1917). Like the Oedipus Complex, the child possesses an ambivalent relationship to the parent, regardless of gender, since both

parents are perceived as providing and phallic (the phallus is non-gendered), and the introjection of and identification with this parent is the most important identification to be made (Freud, 1923, pp. 31, 33). In this primitive phase, the inability to distinguish between the object-cathexis and identification, ingesting the nurturing 'Primal Father' results in the 'feeble' (Freud, 1923, p. 29) ego struggling to distinguish between the aspects introjected, desirable and undesirable. This results in needing defences to manage the internal ambivalence and conflict, this management is one of the ways the ego continues to develop, in defining what is needed to repress and project, and what to keep identifying with – a strength gathered from the phallic nature of the introjected (Freud, 1923, p. 34). The introjected Primal Father does not simply manifest as the superego, instead the superego is a result of dynamic processes involving it being a residue of the id's desires regarding the Primal Father, and a reaction formation against those desires, while deciding how much of the introjected Primal Father is tolerable to keep conscious (Freud, 1923, p. 34)

The ego defences needed to manage this conflict are the same defences described in chapters 4 and 5, of splitting the repressed internal object, and projecting it out. This continues the cycle of sacrifice as the ego is repeatedly caught in the space between wishes and prohibitions, the desired and undesired natures of the consumed object – consuming the Father and regurgitating him. This follows the same neurotic cycle detailed throughout *Totem and Taboo* (1913) as the source of both obsessive ritual behaviour and religious ritualism, in a clearer context that adequately works with Dionysos. This introjection presents new developments and challenges to the internal structures of the psyche:

The ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavours to substitute the reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id. For the ego, perception plays

the part which in the id falls to instinct. The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions.

- Freud, 1927, p. 25.

The ego, like Prometheus, attempts to take power away from the id and curb it with the use of ritual by building boundaries and laws upheld by the superego. Once the boundaries and hierarchies in society and between the gods, men, and animals are erected, the boundary-less wilderness and Primal era are kept at bay. The reality principle attempts to substitute the pleasure principle.

Keeping this in mind, we get a clearer picture of the Primal Father. Like Dionysos and unforgiving Nature, before the development of the superego, this was a society governed not by morality or law, but by will and strength. The pleasure principle dominated both the will of the Father and the Horde's sons – it is seeking genital pleasure that convinced the Father to keep his despotic regime, and convince his sons to overthrow him. And it is the fear of pain that prevented his sons from rebellion until they were strong enough to overthrow him. It is thus the fear of reprisal from the Primal Father that would prevent the Grecians from returning to the Dionysos state of *phusis*, where the pleasure principle reigns supreme and the Father can return to his tyrannical position.

We must not forget, however, that in the Primal Family only the head of it enjoyed this instinctual freedom; the rest lived in slavish suppression. In that primal period of civilization, the contrast between a minority who enjoyed the advantages of civilization and a majority who were robbed of those advantages was, therefore, carried to extremes.

- Freud, 1930, p. 115.

Freud (1927, p. 37) also attributes the development of religion and moral attributes to the ego's attempt to master the Oedipus Complex via the above process, and is a skill attributed



to the male sex, only acquired by women via cross-inheritance – possibly hinting at why women were very rarely allowed to participate in the sacrifice, and their willingness to take part in the violent Dionysiac cult, giving in to what was perceived by men as the id's will. This also helps explain why this Horde phantasy provided men with the political arms to weaponise religion against femininity and Queerness, ejecting them into *phusis*. Freud's quote fails to tell us that the process of oppression continues well into the 'civilised' era, this time sanctified by religion.

What we have gathered is that the Primal Father's authoritative nature is internalised as the superego, whereas his acting as a representative of primality and the initial desire to kill and devour him is a repetitive reminder of the id, presenting a self-sustaining dilemma that is difficult to negotiate.

The maintenance of *polis* would take the strengthening of the ego and superego using methods like ritual, which Hesiodic sacrifice proves to be. It accomplishes the three necessities to do so as explained by Freud (1939, p. 82): the renunciation of instinct (in the form of giving up animals for sacrifice), the recognition of mutual obligations (in the form of rituals of expiation for the community in said sacrifice), and finally, the introduction of definite institutions pronounced inviolable (taboos and cult action). The immediate result of which is the setting up of religious faculties, and placing taboos on incest, parricide, and any attempt to take the Father's place.

By refusing to take the Father's place, Dionysos' position remains inviolable ('you must be like the object, you must not be like the object,' Freud, 1923, p. 34), and allows him residence there over the Primal era. It also would strengthen the desire against returning to

*phusis*, since there his position is unchallenged: if he remained the totem animal present at sacrifices.

This rejection of *phusis* in exchange for the development of *polis*, in the context of the topographical structure of the psyche, would thus imply that *phusis* (and Dionysos) is intentionally repressed by developing civilisation. Here it is instrumental to recognise that the word *phusis* translates to ‘Nature’. The era of the Primal Horde being a continuing threat means that it is no longer a ‘time’ or ‘event’ to be repressed, but something that continues to exist – and in the context of Dionysos, as we have seen in his myths and myths of those like him (Adonis, etc), is spatial: the wilderness. Ever-present and outside the rules of *polis*, Nature becomes recipient of the projections of the id and its desires.

The topography of the psyche thus becomes spatial in Grecian culture, the id outside the city walls, the ego within, and possibly the superego above in Olympus that relates its will through the royal and religious personages that govern the *polis* and perform its sacrifices. Then there is Dionysos, waiting at the gates. The characters of Adonis and Atalanta leave the civilised world to live in the mountains and actively reject the post-Oedipal psychic developments of *polis*, like the ritual of *pharmakos*, human sacrifices that make the city *agos* are exiled to the wild to fend for themselves (Oedipus is a popular example, as is Antiope, the Minyades and Kadmeides), and the subversion of rituals by either the *Mystai* or taboo-breakers like Agamemnon or Klytaimestra. Their actions and desires do not belong in the realm of *polis* according to the men who wield *muthos*, and are forced out to a place where they may indulge their instincts rather than in *polis* where they must renounce them.

This projection also brings about a yield of satisfaction to the ego, where obeying the reality principle and renouncing the instinct is a display of agency and control. This reinforced many social prejudices against marginalised groups associated with Dionysos.

### **The Grand Dysmania: The False Introjection and the Polis Neurosis**

Freud (1913, pp. 141-2) explains that the cannibalism of the Primal Father is the root of cannibalism taboos and other food taboos present today, that one acquires the qualities and personality of that which is eaten and is psychically internalised (Freud, 1913, p. 82). The cannibalisation of the Father was performed to internalise the Primal Father's qualities: his strength, his ownership of those around him, his virility, while also acting as expiation for their crime. Internalising the Father keeps him alive psychically, alleviating some of the guilt for their actions, while causing a conflict caused by his internal presence. This cannibalism was the first form of boundary-breaking performed by Dionysos. The confusion and permeability between subject and object, ego and unconscious is not only present, but also created by the subject. The Primal Crime myth is a myth that highlights the internal presence of *phusis* and the costs of ego's continued development, a fact that goes undiscussed in *Totem and Taboo* (1913). *Phusis* possesses similar qualities to the id (which is *akrateis*), yet upon ingestion of the Primal Father, is associated with him, and projected onto the outside and rejected.

When Freud talks about the birth of the superego along with consciousness at the ingestion of the Primal Father (Freud, 1913, pp. 67-9), he should have also considered that ego is a psychical structure most invested in consciousness – and that the Primal Crime was the first instance of this self-definition as being penetrable, vulnerable and volatile. This moment might not be the genesis of the ego, but causes the ego to understand itself in relation to the object and it correlates in society (since I approach the Primal Father myth as a primal phantasy and not an event) by having to defend itself against the new dynamics presented by the internalised object. The ego is what allows the repression of the id's desire upon instigation of the superego and then projecting the repressed content onto *phusis* and those

associated with it, an attempt to regurgitate the Primal Father out and project Dionysos into the wilderness.

I argue that this ability for the ego to separate itself in deluded opposition to *phusis* is what causes the *polis* Greek to routinely repeat Hesiodic sacrifice. The Hesiodic sacrifice that is performed in reverse to the Titanic sacrifice emphasises the evolution of humanity from primality, whereas the sacrifice of Dionysos is sacramental. Hesiodic sacrifice exists to repeatedly reinforce the boundaries that are believed to separate the *polis* and the ego from *phusis* and the Other, the unconscious, and Dionysos as the Primal Father.

This penetration by gaze and projection, by the ingestion of wine and sacrificial meat implies an internalisation. This arguably establishes in a Freudian context that the fabric between the physical and psychic is permeable, and thus what is eaten in everyday life and sacrificial ritual (an act that holds particular affective and psychic significance) is of utmost import since it will be psychically internalised by the eater.

The phantasy of the Primal Crime revolves around the evolution of certain psychical structures upon the introjection of the Primal Father. Where Freud suggests it marks the superego's inception, I assert that the ego is also now aware of the internalised Primal Father in both his virtues and faults. It develops taboos against incest and parricide out of an acute rejection of the Primal Father's *phusis* qualities (both practised only by gods and animals, not humans in the Hesiodic hierarchy) internalised in the Crime and his ability to possess (marked by his hypnotic qualities, Freud, 1921, p. 127). As a result, the Primal Father must be split and projected out not only as a way of externalising *phusis* and id desire, but as a way of 'undoing' the Crime. The cost of undoing the Crime is his imminent return in the outside world, thus the sacrifices must be performed again to bind him, resulting in introjection. This separates the *polis* from *phusis*, but it internalises the Primal Father once more, restarting the

cycle. One anxiety can be treated by consumption, which presents a new anxiety that demands expulsion, and so on. This reflects the simultaneous demand of the Other to participate in *polis*, while rejecting them for not innately 'belonging' to it. Conversely, the Dionysiac cults more explicitly separate themselves from this neurotic ritual cycle by attacking the socio-political structure that demands it. Of course, the irony here is that *phusis* qualities are innate. They do not generate upon introjection of the Primal Father, but he stands as a symbol for it since the superego provides a reaction to the id's demands, and this introjection internalises the profound ambivalence that occurs in relation to him and what he represents. He is only a mythic match for this primal level of the psyche that is rejected by the ego.

Unlike Freud's, my approach is that the performance of the sacrifice is not to both simultaneously atone for and enjoy killing the Primal Father, but instead a futile attempt to externalise the Father (via projection and Hesiodic sacrifice) but then consume and bind him again (via sacramental sacrifice), resulting in a cycle of death and rebirth (much like Dionysos as a resurrecting god), of leaving and returning (Dionysos the travelling epidemic, Simmel's Trader, Bauman's Stranger). This approach can be taken once put into the context of projecting the Primal Father as symbolic id figure represented by *phusis*, which is a development on Freud's presentation of him solely as the genesis of the superego. The introjection of the Primal Father might be the phantasied genesis of the superego, but he is also representative of id desire and primality. The unfortunate irony of why the cycle is futile is that what is phantasied as being projected and introjected is an aspect of the psyche and cannot be removed or controlled outside the basic ego defences provided. There is a narcissistic demand to both usurp and possess what is the Father's, without this introjection internalising him.

This cycle of death and rebirth is very similar to Kerenyi's (1976, p. xxxii) description of Dionysos as being both *bios* and *zoe* – biological life that experiences death, and Life as a constant. Regardless of whether he has been killed and consumed or reigns outside, he lives. He lives in the psyche of the citizen, and his horror and ambivalence are projected onto the Other that suffers alongside him. With this cycle of eating and regurgitating, we have developed on Freud's idea that the psyche is experienced in myth as a projection, then introjected as psychology. The cycle this thesis began with is now closed.

The masked god of madness and irony stands aside in the stable as Pentheus kicks against the goads in his *dysmania*, in a desperate attempt to reject what is in himself, and cast it out beyond the city walls. There is no removing what can't be removed, and nowhere to eject when there is no place to eject it to. The Stranger can only watch as a delusional cycle to maintain a sense of subjectivity and mastery must be repeated, at the cost of oneself, and most sadly, at the cost of others/Others. This grand *dysmania* is inflicted on the conscious mind, and as unavoidable as Silenos' warning about the best for man is having never been born. For those who have been caught in the fire between man and himself, some found it easier to take refuge in their Otherness, in open declaration against the *dysmanic* and cyclical system, resorting to the *mania* of the god that provides some form of solace. This form of semiotic rebellion might not be revolutionary for us today in the modern world with its new challenges and developments, but *orgia* does not only involve secret rites, it provides unity, companionship and security. Even in the din of the continuing cycle of self-harm and healing, there is refuge in sharing wine under the pine trees.

## Conclusion

This thesis drew on Freud to understand the innate human need to create boundaries, and argues that ambivalence is an inescapable dilemma in their creation. This was accomplished by thorough research into, and analysing the function of *cultus* in social and psychic boundary building and transgression in the Grecian Dionysos cults. The project deepened the understanding of these cults and gives a more sophisticated example of how psychoanalysis can be used in conjunction with *cultus* scholarship.

The two aims of this thesis, one methodological and one political, were accomplished. First, a more thorough and firmer ethnography allowed the thesis to explore the relationship between *phusis* and *polis* and the imagined boundary between them. It elaborated on how *phusis* and thus, Dionysos, was a projection of internal states, and how the marginalised (chapter 4), the perversion of ritual (chapter 5) and the intentional subversion of ritual (chapter 6) represented a danger to *polis* due to their Dionysiac nature at blurring boundaries.

This allowed me to make the argument that Dionysos was in fact, a projection of the Primal Father, which explained the importance of sacrificial ritual in maintaining anxieties associated with his return. This both provided a different reading of Dionysos and the Primal Father from Freud, and resulted in the decentralisation of the Oedipus myth and complex in psychoanalysis by highlighting it as a consequent result of the Primal Crime/Dionysos. This decentralisation is an inherently political stance that questions the biases of 20<sup>th</sup> Century psychoanalysis that still persist.

Second, I use this to place Dionysos and the Primal Father in a political context that discusses the enforced marginalisation present in Grecian polis (chapter 4), the psychoanalytic defences and resolutions associated with it (chapter 5) and the ritualised forms of upholding and subverting the *polis* status quo (chapter 6). This conclusion finds that, like

the Oedipus complex, Dionysos as Other and the marginalisation that comes with the threat he poses extends to today, presenting a challenge for psychoanalysis in the modern day.

These psychoanalytic perspectives on the Dionysos cults and ambivalence to them is new and has not been attempted in this manner. It is certainly a departure from Freud's text (1913). It presents a dedicated analysis without the traps of comparative study, and presents an option to taking psychoanalysis to postcolonial *cultus* study.

As established in chapter 3, I would like to continue this study in Dionysos to using Kleinian theory, with the modern work of feminist scholars like Irigaray and Butler to help undo many of the gender binaries and essentialism that come with Freud – although one must keep in mind we are studying a culture that is heavily invested in such binaries and essentialism. Klein's work, however, helps tackle the psyche's primal layers from a more nuanced angle by understanding its relationship to external objects with a less gendered eye and integrating the elements of ritualistic eating and regurgitating mirrored in the psyche. For example, I can see how the relationship to Dionysos and Nature in its ambivalence and helpless dependency can be interpreted as Klein's Mother or (ungendered) primal object and the psychotic defences involved.

I would also like to continue this study in light of the work of Braidotti (2002, 2013, 2017), posthumanism and new materialism. This would help place the usefulness of the Dionysiac in a current context of philosophical methodology, critical theory, ecology and humankind's stumbling backward into self-extinction.

However, there are some caveats I'd like to keep in mind in the study of Dionysos.

The myths around Dionysos still suit the hegemonic narrative of the Grecian Other's inferiority, claiming that they belong to the wild. Perhaps the myth of Dionysos – a myth of



the *polis* – facilitated this oppression. Perhaps it is what gave the oppressed a space to resist and form community. Perhaps Dionysos chooses to be that paradox. In the Greek narrative, Circe was called a villain for defending her home from colonising Greek invaders.

Like Agave, we have participated in forming these divisions. Like Agave, we can undo those separations – but only after accepting the Dionysos we claim we cannot see.

I would request of the reader that we must leave the Dionysos we read about in his own time and world. Every culture has its own Dionysos as its antithesis, like all wine tastes of its *terroir*. I can't help but think of *terreur* – terror, but also, a stranger.

On one hand, I see similarities in the Grecian Other and the Other of the West today. We could possibly make a genealogical inference that the Western academe's veneration of the Greeks and the part played by academe in colonisation and epistemicide are a perpetuation of the Grecian ideal and Other. After all, as late as 692 CE the Church of Constantinople still had to decree 'that no man from this time forth shall be dressed as a woman, nor any woman in the garb suitable to men. Nor shall he assume comic, satyric, or tragic masks; nor may men invoke the name of the execrable Bacchus when they squeeze out the wine in the presses; nor when pouring out wine into jars' (The Quinsext Council, Percival tr., 1955, p. 393); and influences of Euripides' *The Bacchae* appear in Christian recordings of the Passion of the Christ in the eleventh and twelfth century (Seaford, 1996, p. 53).

I also see similarities to the forms of resistance in the Dionysos cults in modern day semiotic resistance within marginalised communities. This occurs in the fostering of families kept safe with riddles and codes, art where resistance appears as confrontation of the hegemony's projections by turning to and finding strength in those claims, and the increasing return amongst diaspora to precolonial *cultus* and oral tradition.

On the other, I must advise caution before we adopt this perspective as we should with any ancient *cultus*, since Dionysos was a creature of the culture of *polis* and thus a result of those oppressive structures (Jacobs, 2007, p. 102). I set out with the explicit aim to let Dionysos remain in his culture, and not fall prey to Freud's mistakes. But as a Queer Person of Colour, an immigrant from a colonised country, his summon to the mountains tears at the heart-strings with all the subtlety of a battleaxe. I believe it is important the categories *polis* has designated me are represented clearly to confront those divisions, and understand how I operate in these *polis* structures. The fantasy of objective academia is what should be confronted, not how one's subjectivity operates in a system that contributed to those oppressions.

Can we learn something from Dionysos and his followers? Yes. We can ask how we operate in the structures of oppression that uphold *polis* today and how we challenge it. How much of our oppressor do we contain and sustain? Unknowingly, even Pentheus and Agave participated.

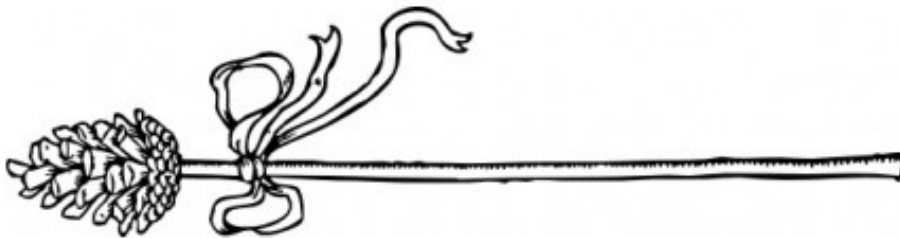
But to put the pieces back together, we must also understand how the hegemony understands oppression. Ask what today's Dionysos riddles. All the while remembering that we cannot simply ascribe oppression to unconscious machinations, these systems are perpetuated with the explicit intention of benefitting at all costs. I feel much of modern psychoanalysis very easily relinquishes responsibility to social transformation by resorting to the very convenient answer: the unconscious. We cannot extricate the psyche from power relations.

Stringing the corpse back together, returning the 'knowing heart', our approach to social transformation (I will not sugar-coat what I mean by transform: upheaval, murder, rebirth, dismembering, re-membering) must be holistic – including a revaluation of

psychoanalytic discourse itself. There are still ways to go transforming psychoanalysis, a discourse that was birthed under the powerful influences of colonialism, patriarchy, cisheteronormativity, an idea of mental health, qualities in the field that persist. In a world where psychoanalysis was once a Dionysos, psychoanalysis still wrestles with its own Dionysos, even after decades of examination and critique. I believe we can facilitate this re-examination with measured amounts of professional caution, and Maenadic abandon.

But as in the myths, all things return to *phusis* in the end, when one can no longer ignore the god because he's been inside the city walls the entire time. The movement to social change, its destruction and rebirth, the communities fostered, the lives saved, these are the things that will echo once the walls fall and decay. They remind us that stories of resistance are remembered, reflected on, and in this thesis, admired.

The phallus is just a piece of wood.



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