

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

The Rituals of Sparagmos and Omophagy
in Tragedy, Romance, and Horror Genres.

by

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TRAGEDY, ROMANCE, AND HORROR GENRES**

BY

DAVID S. STYMEIST

**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of**

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1-3
Chapter One: Tragedy.....	4-34
The Origins of Greek Tragedy.....	4
Dionysian Rite and Myth.....	10
Aristotle and Tragic Ritual.....	13
Hamartia, Anagnorisis, and Peripeteia in the Tragic Process.....	16
Catharsis and Ritual.....	18
DUCHESS OF MALFI as Tragic Ritual.....	21
Enacted Sparagmos and Elicited Horror.....	23
Enacted Sparagmos and Elicited Empathy.....	26
Blood Sacrifice.....	29
Chapter Two: Horror Fiction.....	35-54
Generative Violence in Blood Ritual.....	35
Sparagmos versus Carnival.....	39
Rites of Initiation, Blood Ritual, and Horror Fiction.....	40
DRACULA and Blood Ritual.....	42
The Transitional Stage and Horror Fiction.....	46
Death and the Ritual of Horror.....	48
Death and Eros.....	52
Chapter Three: Romance.....	56-84
Sparagmos, Romance, and Hierogamy.....	56
Resistance to Erotic Renewal in THE GIRL IN A SWING.....	58
Dissolution and the Body.....	61
The Numinous and the Erotic.....	64
Erotic Healing.....	66
Masks and Transformation.....	70
Bacchic Intercourse in Literary Ritual.....	72
Romance as Asocial Drama.....	76
Reader Response and Shamanic Texts.....	80
Conclusion.....	85-88

Introduction

Within secularized literary studies, ritual has frequently been regarded as an essentially sacred activity and therefore largely divorced from artistic expression. Nevertheless, I believe that ritual plays a vital role in the formation and functioning of certain literary genres. Specifically, I wish to examine the ways that the Dionysian rituals of sparagmos (dismemberment/dissolution) and omophagy (devouring/incorporation) inform and interpenetrate the genres of tragedy, horror and romance. Structurally, the treatment of each genre will constitute a single chapter of the thesis. Overall, an interdisciplinary approach using an eclectic mix of critical traditions, ranging from psychology, classical philology, religious studies, philosophy, and cultural anthropology, will be used to provide a pragmatic yet balanced approach to the subject area. In each chapter, the focus will be on a particular work which exemplifies the genre in question: respectively, John Webster's Duchess of Malfi, Bram Stoker's Dracula, and Richard Adams's The Girl in a Swing.

The first chapter will look primarily at the genre of tragedy. Works such as Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy will be integrated with Walter Otto's writings on Dionysian religion and Jane Ellen Harrison's Ancient Art and Ritual to emphasize both the historical development and the functional connection between preclassical religious ritual and the dramatic experience of tragedy. Particular emphasis will then be placed on a much needed

clarification and extension of the Aristotelian concept of catharsis, especially the famous yet highly debated: "with incidents arousing pity and terror, with which to accomplish the purgation of these emotions" (Poetics 6). Accordingly, attention will be given to the role and response of the spectator in a dramatic ritual of renewal through destruction.

The second chapter will focus on the genre of horror fiction. The so-called "excessive" violence of this genre will be shown to function primarily in the form of "generative violence" much along the lines of Rene Girard's idea of the homeopathic nature of communal scapegoating and other forms of ritual sacrifice. In addition, in this section M. Bakhtin's concept of periodic carnivalistic inversion will be contrasted with anthropologist Victor Turner's theories about liminality in rituals of initiation. In this way, I hope to free the concepts of sparagmos and omophagy from the limitations of carnival--namely its inability to include violence and revolutionary change. In turn, Ernest Becker's observations on the "denial of death" will be used to explore the psychological foundations of the desire for the experience of horror.

The third and last chapter will concentrate on the genre of romance. Paradoxically, romance ties together elements of dissolution with those of birth and renewal. As such, this genre becomes ideally suited to bring together sparagmos and omophagy and place them within an overall cyclic structure along the lines of Mircea Eliade's The Myth of the Eternal Return. Yet, Eliade's

mythological approach needs to be modified in the light of what ritual critics describe as the therapeutic qualities of shamanistic activity in order to suggest both the psychological and cultural nature of sacrificial rituals. Moreover, romance revisions Dionysian sparagmos and omophagy, which emphasize the interplay of individual and the communal, by giving primacy to the erotic couple. This realignment is especially pertinent to a genre that functions primarily through the one-to-one relationship of text and reader.

In these ways, this thesis will attempt not merely to show the interconnectedness of ritual and literature but also demonstrate the central shamanistic role that sparagmos and omophagy play as they appear within these three literary genres. Hopefully, this study will not so much categorize as explore the cultural importance and function of the "darker" types of artistic expression.

Chapter One

Tragedy

At a recent performance of Macbeth at a local fringe festival, I was astounded to notice how entranced the audience seemed during moments of grisly horror. Despite the commonplace production, actual gasps of horror could be heard. I had to ask myself, if the audience was so appalled why did they not simply flee the theatre? In some sense, the experience of tragedy served a need of the audience. This experience of the interaction between audience and performance causes me to ask: why do audiences and readers derive "pleasure" (Aristotle 49) from the portrayal of tragic pain and violence? Why do we collectively seek out entertainments that threaten our sense of well-being and security? In order to comprehend these essential paradoxes, one must look at the very roots of the tragic genre and its genesis in primitive rituals.

The Origins of Greek Tragedy

Tragedy, as a discrete artistic genre, first emerged in Western society in the fifth century B.C. as a part of a yearly

contest/festival in honour of the god Dionysus in Athens. In an attempt to distance their high art from "vulgar" cult worship, the classical Greek opinion was that tragedy had "nothing to do with Dionysus" (Winkler 3). Nevertheless, Attic tragedy contains residual traces of Dionysian blood rituals. Central to the tragic milieu is the Dionysian focus on the loss of self in ecstatic participation in the communal and the accompanying immersion in suffering and violence up to and including death. Because of both the historical and functional connection of Dionysian myth and ritual to the tragic genre and because these myths and rituals belong to a "shared" language within Western thought, Hellenic configurations are best suited to describe the ritual actions of tragedy.

Walter Burkert, in "Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual," traces the evolution of tragedy out of Dionysian rituals of sacrifice using anthropological, archaeological, and etymological evidence. The word tragedy itself has a direct connection to blood sacrifice: "Scholars...still uphold the ancient etymology, 'song at the sacrifice of a goat'" (88). The annual Dionysia had as a prize of the dramatic agon a sacrificial victim. Similar instances of sacrificial slaughter of so-called "prizes" occur both in the Iliad (22.159) and in Pindar (Ol.13.9). We should remember that in the ancient Mediterranean world every slaughter was formulated as a type of ritual sacrifice whereby the meat was divided among the community. Leviticus 17 incorporates a prohibition on meat not ritually slaughtered, and even the Hallah dietary law of Moslems

dictates that every slaughter must be a religious one. Sixth-century Attic black-figure vases portray a he-goat or lambs accompanied with either Dionysus or satyrs. As well, the fifth-century Athenian calender Frieze shows an actor dragging a sacrificial goat in the month of the great Dionysia. In the centre of the tragic stage, or orchestra, as depicted in vase-paintings, was a platform or flat table. The origins of this block or bench indicate a place where a sacrificial victim was slaughtered and divided up (Burkert 102). If this was the case, then the tragic stage retains the memory of Dionysian sacrifice in its essential configuration. Overall, a variety of evidence suggests that Attic tragedy evolved out of and was a sublimation of Dionysian rituals of blood sacrifice.

The modern anthropological work of Burkert (1966) comes relatively late into the genealogy of the debate over the connection of Dionysian sacrifice and tragedy. To a great extent the pioneering work was Nietzsche's problematic but seminal Birth of Tragedy (1872), which changed the romantic conception of Dionysus as the benign, jolly patron god of theatre to our current conception of Dionysus as a locus of paradox, suffering, inversion, and ecstatic loss of self. Nietzsche radically breaks with the classicist tradition, that tragedy was both didactic in nature and a "high" art that had nothing to do with Dionysus or ecstatic ritual:

The Apollonian art of sculpture, and the non-imagistic, Dionysian art of music...appear coupled with each other, and through this coupling ultimately generate an equally Dionysian and Apollonian form of art--Attic tragedy. (33)

Nietzsche uses art forms here in a metaphoric sense, describing the dialectical opposition of these complexes. Within his model, "coupling" becomes more akin to rape than marriage. This intercourse, which generates tragedy, depends on the interaction, often violent, of these two concepts: Apollo provides the structure that the Dionysian ruptures. This is especially pertinent when describing the audience's reactions to tragedy: Apollo sculpts the self, Dionysus wreaks its destruction; Apollo separates the self from its environment, Dionysus immerses it back into formless chaos of the mass. This immersion, however, has its positive side:

If we add to this terror the blissful ecstasy that wells from the innermost depths of man, indeed of nature, at this collapse of principium individuationis, we steal a glimpse into the nature of the Dionysian, which is brought home to us most intimately by the analogy of intoxication. (36)

The ecstatic moment, the moment of emotional overflow, takes the form of a descent into madness, sex, death, but ultimately transformation. Thus, Attic tragedy, for Nietzsche, raises the Dionysian complex of the chthonian above the static vision of the world offered by the superhuman, logocentric eye of Apollo.

Nietzsche's thesis constitutes a radical departure from the moral-didactic conception of tragedy articulated by Schopenhauer:

What gives everything tragic its peculiar elevating force...is the realization that the world and life can never give real satisfaction and hence are not worthy of our affection: this constitutes the tragic spirit--which therefore leads to resignation. (433)

For Nietzsche, in contrast, the Dionysian complex was "a formula for the highest affirmation, born of fullness, of overfullness, a Yes-saying without reservation, even to suffering, even to guilt,

even to everything that is questionable and strange in existence" (Ecce Homo 728). Similarly, in opposition to the classical philologists working with texts in dead tongues and not colloquial performances, Nietzsche's theories incorporated responses to the living theatre of his time, in particular Wagner's attempts to join and communalize the arts in a form of social ritual:

With Wagner the theatrical part of the programme reappears in a pure form. The product is a new German drama--music-drama--which, with its re-integration of long separated arts, its mythic basis and its aspiration towards a socially organic function, evokes, at least in intention, several of Greek tragedy's most distinctive characteristics. (Silk & Stern 3)

However, while returning tragedy to the ritualistic, Nietzsche's work ignored many of internal paradoxes of the Dionysian complex when he created the binary opposition of the Dionysian and the Apollonian. As well, in concentrating more on the communal aspects, his work neglected many of the more violent and bloody aspects of the cult rituals.

It was only with the advent of the Cambridge Ritualists that the Dionysian complex in tragedy was widened to incorporate extreme violence as well as the loss of self in ecstatic ritual. Gilbert Murray (1912) centres his schema of tragedy upon "a Pathos of the Year-Daimon, generally a ritual or sacrificial death, in which Adonis or Attis is slain by the tabu animal, the Pharmakos stoned, Osiris, Dionysus, Pentheus, Orpheus, Hippolytus torn to Pieces" (342). Murray, however, relies too much on the single example of Euripides's Bacchae, and dubiously assumes that the Sacer Ludus (ritual dance), out of which tragedy evolved, directly represented a particular Aition (a historical cause or originary moment). As

with the other Cambridge Ritualists, Murray often mistakes social concerns for vegetative concerns within ritual studies. Nevertheless, his work constitutes a sharp departure from the then dominant views of Pickard-Cambridge who discounted the ritual roots of tragedy in his account of the historical development of tragedy from Thespis and Pratinas down to Aeschylus and Euripides.

Another Cambridge Ritualist who helped to clarify the linkage between ritual and dramatic performance was Jane Ellen Harrison, whose work illuminates the problem of ritual mimesis:

Ritual then involves imitation; but does not arise out of it. It desires to recreate an emotion, not to reproduce an object. A rite is...a sort of stereotyped action, not really practical, but yet not wholly cut loose from practice, a reminiscence or an anticipation of actual doing. (Ancient Art and Ritual 24)

Therefore, the efficacy of ritual lies not in its power to make Spring return or to end drought, but to provide a renewal of the human psyche. Ritual mimesis concerns itself with the emotional-psychological health of its participants; because emotion links body and mind, the celebrant becomes revitalised and reintegrated in a holistic manner. Rite lies halfway between direct experience of life and dramatic artifice. Now, it becomes easier to apprehend how ritual mimesis evolved out of actual experience, and how artistic mimesis constitutes an adaption of ritual mimesis. The difference between rite and drama lies mainly in the distance the participant/audience has from the performance; the emotions created in rite and in the artistic experience may be analogous.

Victor Turner in his study of the rituals of East Africa asserts that "the unity of a given ritual is a dramatic unity. It

is in this sense a work of art" (Drums of Affliction 269). The reverse may be more precise: that the unity of a dramatic work is a ritual unity. In other words, the structure of a tragedy aims at creating a definite emotional effect in a communal audience; tragedy has incorporated the processes of ritual. Because ritual predates drama, it seems highly probable, as the Cambridge Ritualists have argued, that tragedy evolved out of prehistoric cultural rituals; accordingly, it is not suprising that tragedy should contain comparable structures, or that tragedy and ritual have a syncretic relationship; tragedy imitates both the structures and intents of ritual, not consciously, but through a long historical development out of ritual. This "evolution" of the genre should not be seen as "progress," however, but simply as the successful adaption of social behaviour to better suit changing cultural conditions.

Dionysian Rite and Myth

There can be a dangerous temptation to see Dionysian elements of sacrifice within tragedy purely in symbolic terms, and to forget the true nature of violence and suffering and its impact on the audience. To avoid this we must temper evaluations of myth and rite with a understanding of their cultural functions. In "Culture and the Humanities: The Archetypal Approach," Evelyn J. Hinz and John J. Teunissen assert that "the long range objective of

archetypal criticism is the understanding of how archetypes operate culturally" (27). By bringing myth, ritual, art, culture and audience together in a unifying complex we are able to avoid reductionist methodologies. As well, by bringing an interdisciplinary approach to literature, no longer are texts and performances "closed" artifacts but part of a wider field of cultural interactions.

In itself, Dionysian sacrificial ritual centred upon a two-fold movement of dismemberment and devouring. Sparagmos originated as an ancient Greek ritual that included the rending of a live sacrificial victim. It was accompanied by an immediate omophagy: the eating of the raw dismembered flesh by cult initiates. The flesh was believed to contain the essence of Dionysus, much like the Christian eucharist. Moreover, the flesh was "fresh," i.e. just killed, to prevent any incidental loss of essence. The isolation of the victim both prior to and during the sparagmos represented a forced separation, which was then subsumed into the primal unity of the collective body in the subsequent omophagy.

Because ritual and myth are intimately bound together, they should not be discussed without reference to the other. Richard Hawthorn indicates the basic fellowship of ritual and myth: "A reconciliation may be brought about in the myth-versus-ritual controversy (and, in fact, the synthetic view is now pretty generally acceded to) to the effect that ritual is only the gestural and physical side of a unified activity of which myth is the verbal side" (24). In this respect, tragedy rejoins the

separated verbal and gestural elements in a unified performance.

The precise rites of sparagmos and omophagy enacted the birth myth of the god Dionysus, and generally represented the renewal through destruction:

Zeus mated with his daughter Persephone, who bore a son, Zagreus, which is another name for Dionysus. In her jealousy, Hera then aroused the Titans to attack the child. These monstrous beings, their faces whited with chalk, attacked the infant as he was looking in a mirror, and cut him to pieces with knives. After the murder, the Titans devoured the dismembered corpse. But the heart of the infant god was saved and brought to Zeus by Athena, and Dionysus was born again -- swallowed by Zeus and begotten on Semele. Zeus was angry with the Titans and destroyed them with his thunder and lightning; but from their ashes mankind was born. (Morford 263)

This Zagreus myth, which Nietzsche ignored, encodes structures that parallel better known versions of Dionysus's birth. The Semele myth continues the cycle exactly where the Zagreus myth ends; the true essence of Zeus incinerates Semele. Then Zeus removes the fetal Dionysus and sows him into his thigh. The consistent element in the various myths is the centrality of violent death and subsequent rebirth; Dionysus becomes an essence that flows through a series of incarnations. Dionysus's body is swallowed by the Titans; the Titans are annihilated into ash, out of which man is formed. Man comes into being as a fusion of the gross matter of the Titans and the divine spirit of renewal in Dionysus. Moreover, Dionysus's heart is swallowed by Zeus; that consumed "food" becomes transformed into semen which impregnates Semele; Dionysus becomes "twice born" both through a divine and a human line.

Overall, both Dionysian myths and rituals show how appropriate this symbolic configuration is as a patron of the tragic arts.

Dionysus has been popularly regarded as the benign, light-hearted god of the vine; nevertheless, as these myths and rituals show, Dionysus presides over all vital flowing things--wine, vegetation, semen, honey, milk, and blood. In this he is primarily a resurrection god, much like Attis, Osiris, Persephone, Ceres and countless others, and represents the basic cyclic nature of this world; the growth of living, flowing things depend wholly on the death and breaking down of other living things--to stay alive we eat the lamb, who crops the grass, which is fed by the faeces and carcasses of both lamb and man. Life within the Dionysian paradigm as encoded in myth, ritual, and tragedy consists of repeated and alternating cycles of creation and destruction. The destruction of Dionysus's flesh and the spilling of his blood fertilize the earth, allowing the birth, or the rebirth, of mankind, and the continuance of the spirit of that god--the immortal part of humanity--through a series of corporeal bodies. The rituals of sparagmos and omophagy do not merely incorporate the imagery of myth as an artistic artifact cut off from social function; they in fact attempt to recreate the spirit and passion of this "Dionysian" reality in the celebrants.

Aristotle and Tragic Ritual

Aristotle, as the originator of the analytical method, was an unconscious but accurate recorder of the ritual process in tragedy.

He faithfully recorded what we might call a template or a master-narrative of tragic discourse. His account of tragedy acts much in the same manner as myth acts to describe ritual, yet in a more analytical and dispassionate manner. As the first critical interpretation of the tragic genre, Aristotle's Poetics provides a famous yet enigmatic description of a ritual process:

Tragedy, then, is a representation of an action that is worth serious attention, complete in itself, and of some amplitude; in language enriched by a variety of artistic devices appropriate to the several parts of the play; presented in the form of action, not narration; by means of pity and fear bringing about the purgation of such emotions.
(39)

The primary agenda of Aristotle's analysis is to objectively describe and order phenomena. Yet, tragic experience is primarily passionate and not rational. Analytic discourse does a disservice to the homeopathic aims of the tragic genre. Moreover, even as rational critic, Aristotle still recognizes the centrality of the audience's reactions in the emotions of "pity" and "fear" within the process of tragic action.

The heart of Aristotle's definition of tragedy lies in "by means of pity and fear bringing about the purgation of such emotions" (39). The Greek word that is translated into English as "fear," describes an emotion that repels the audience away from a character or situation. Horror, however, might be a more appropriate substitute term, especially because an audience generally feels more horror during a tragedy than actual fear. Similarly, the Greek word which the English translate as "pity" describes the sensation of the audience's intimate awareness of a

character's suffering--perhaps empathy would better describe the feelings of attraction in tragedy than the word pity. Aristotle properly places these elements side by side because they are almost always bound together as a simultaneous emotional response from the audience during tragic action. The suffering of a sympathetic character will produce an effect of horror; conversely, violent actions against an innocent character will produce empathy. Once a character has been put in a situation of victimization, each violent act enacted elicits a crescendo of commingled horror and empathy.

Gerald F. Else, in his minute study of the catharsis clause, states that catharsis "was not brought about 'by pity and fear' but 'through (a course of) pity and fear,' that is, in the course of a sequence of pathetic and fearful incidents" (263). His distinction becomes particularly fruitful when we consider the primacy Aristotle gave to the order of events in a tragic plot: "Fear and pity may be excited by means of spectacle; but they can also take their rise from the very structure of the action, which is the preferable method" (49). As in ritual, the sequence of actions becomes more important than the characters performing the actions.

The audience's reactions to the on-stage dismemberments constitutes what would be the omophagic element in primitive rite. "Eating" now becomes the consumption of oral and visual media, rather than actual raw flesh. The responses of an audience are "raw" because their reactions are both immediate and of an emotional character; as well, on-stage action becomes instantly

incorporated into the audience as a whole. The "rawness" of essence is integral to Dionysian rupture of the barriers between man and man, between the human and the divine, and between spectator and spectacle. Dirk Obbink, in "Dionysus Poured out: Ancient Ritual and Modern Theories of Sacrifice and Cultural Formation," draws attention to the drive towards the raw omophagia rather than a "cooked" ceremonial: "You must eat him quick and raw, before the blood has oozed from him: only so can you add his life to yours" (66). Throughout the ritual process of tragedy, the public, in a sense, has "become" the players on stage through omophagia:

Omophagy...is the assimilation and internalization of godhead. Ancient mystery religion was posited on the worshipper's imitation of the god. Cannibalism was impersonation, a primitive theatre. You are what you eat. (Paglia 95)

Instead of the primitive theatre of rite where the celebrant joins with godhead, in the tragic theatre the audience joins its being with the actor's mask--his or her on-stage character.

Hamartia, Anagnorisis, and Peripeteia in the Tragic Process

The hamartia or so-called tragic flaw of the tragic hero triggers the sparagmic(dismembering) actions of the plot. This tragic flaw is very similar to the type of "guilt" that the sacrificial animal embodies and which allows it to be sacrificed by the community. Walter Burkert describes how sacrifice to Dionysus

involved making the victim responsible for its own death: "The goat, it is said, has knawed the vine, and must therefore die" (109). These types of methods for outmanoeuvring the human reluctance to kill typifies most forms of ceremonial slaughter. In Violence and the Sacred, Rene Girard has noticed this profound linkage between the sacrificial victim and Aristotle's description of the ideal tragic hero:

Aristotle's text is something of a manual of sacrificial practices, for the qualities that make a "good" tragic hero are precisely those required of the sacrificial victim. If the latter is to polarize and purge the emotions of the community, he must at once resemble the members of the community and differ from them; he must be at once insider and outsider, both "double" and incarnation of the "sacred difference." He must be neither wholly good nor wholly bad. A certain degree of goodness is required in the tragic hero in order to establish sympathy between him and the audience; yet a certain degree of weakness, a "tragic flaw" is needed to neutralize the goodness and permit the audience to tolerate the hero's downfall and death. (290)

Yet, Girard is only partly correct in his description of the sacrificial character of the tragic hero; for, the tragic flaw does not allow the audience to "tolerate" the destruction of the hero. It may provide an excuse for the players on stage to victimize the hero, but for the audience the tragic flaw never fully justifies the excessive amount of suffering inflicted. Furthermore, it is the horror the audience feels combined with the frustrating inability to change events in favour of the victim that leads toward the overflow of horror and empathy in catharsis.

Successful tragedies work more on an emotional level than on an intellectual level; rather than the "pleasure of learning and inference" (Golden 41), Aristotle refers to the "tragic pleasure

that is associated with pity and fear" (49). Pity and fear are emotional not intellectual reactions. It is the rapid swings of emotion that accompany the anagnorisis and peripeteia that engender catharsis. Shock has a large part to play in galvanizing our emotions; the "sudden reversals, violent swings from extreme to opposite extreme, give the world of the play its most alarming aspect" (Smith 84). The importance of the elements of reversal and recognition cannot be too highly noted in the progress of tragic action:

Thus, the catharsis is not a change or end-product in the spectator's soul, or in the fear and pity in his soul, but a process carried forward in the emotional material of the play by its structural elements, above all by the recognition. For the recognition is the pay-off. (Else 268)

Aristotle indicates the importance of the simultaneous occurrence of these elements: "The most effective form of discovery is that which is accompanied by reversals, like the one in Oedipus" (46). Simultaneous occurrence of revelation and reversal ruptures audience non-participation; it does not allow the time for an analytical response--only for an immediate visceral reaction, often of a group nature.

Catharsis and Ritual

As noted earlier, Aristotle's perspective is largely one of the rational observer. As such, he may have seen the animalistic, lower "emotions" of fear and pity as in need of "purgation." Yet,

the Athenian audience may have thought less in terms of expelling than in revelling in ecstatic states. Interpreting the concept of catharsis has been treated mainly as a problem of translation, which allows critics to define the term in such a way as to promote their own ideology. Moral clarification, medical purgation, cognitive awakening, and ritual purification are extremely different in their intent, yet all stem from the single word, catharsis. With his use of the word purgation, Aristotle probably saw these emotions in primarily medical terms--the need of expulsion, in order to balance the four humours.

Nevertheless, Aristotle links medical purgation with something we typically do not, that of "pleasure"--"the tragic pleasure that is associated with pity and fear" (Aristotle 49). Critics have often tried to circumscribe tragic emotion within a rationalistic or cognitive framework: "Katharsis is better understood--etymologically as well as aesthetically and psychologically--as clarification of the emotions: truth-telling about the passions, including the confusion and disruption they bring" (Alford 59). Emotions become a locus of thought rather than of being. D.W. Lucas in his introduction to Aristotle's Poetics provides a homeopathic interpretation of catharsis based on medical and psychological belief in the Greek Classical period:

Much ingenious fancy is employed on the diverse effects of hot and cold bile, but the upshot is that those with an excess of warm black bile are in a state similar to that of ordinary men when drunk. The important thing from the point of tragic katharsis is that it gives real meaning to the purge of emotion. An excess of bile involves an increase in emotional pressure....The Greek doctrine of humours implies that each man has an emotional capacity directly related to

his physical make-up, and an excess of one humour can cause an undue generation of emotional pressure, which will need an outlet. If the imbalance of humours is marked, the emotional congestion can become serious, and the pleasure, when it is relieved, proportionately greater. So the release of accumulated pity and fear experienced in the theatre presents no problem. (285)

In the modern age we have largely separated physical health, mental health, and emotional health; yet, in Aristotle's day they were wholly inter-dependent. Hill and Bateson in "Catharsis" argue against medical purgation in favour of the cognitive theory: "Aristotle, despite a long sojourn in Elysium, has never gotten over the shock of that precipitate and undignified dash for the jakes" (294). These types of critics have too long interpreted Aristotle from the perspective of their own times and disciplines. Cathartic "purgation" in Classical Greece represented mainly a release of accumulated primal emotion--a ritual safety valve if you will.

Aristotle links the representation of emotions and the audience's experience of emotion, yet like his mentor Plato he sees emotions as being primarily in need of control. It is only with Nietzsche that tragic emotions are returned to the primitive Dionysian complex: "Rather than providing Schopenhauerian resignation or Aristotelian catharsis by purging our emotions through pity and fear, Nietzschean...tragedy promotes exultation in the midst of terror" (Bohlmann 54). To Nietzsche, sensation, even that of fear, becomes not a thing to enslave or periodically expel but something to celebrate: "To realize in oneself the eternal joy of becoming--that joy which also encompasses joy in destruction"

(What I Owe the Ancients). Mimesis repeats the past, brings it into being, but it cannot rid it of impurity; it cannot purge. In returning tragedy to its Dionysian and ritual roots, we counterbalance the rational Aristotelian prescription of tragedy as "purgation" with one that sees emotion, violence, destruction, and even death as vital parts of a cohesive, cyclic complex.

Within a ritual interpretation of tragedy, the cathartic instant becomes analogous to the climax of Dionysian blood ritual in the instant of sparagmos and subsequent omophagy. When the tragic hero becomes murdered on stage, the hero's dismembered body becomes the flesh that the audience feasts upon. The spectators have become ecstatic celebrants through the course of tragic and pathetic events, the anagnorisis, the peripeteia, and ultimately the catharsis. In the successful tragedy the spectator loses self-awareness and becomes joined in a group consciousness incarnated through the events on stage. The cathartic moment of ecstasis, the removal of self, is integral for this ritual experience. We should not think that the blessings of ritual "madness" are inconceivable for the rational observer, for "Dionysiac experience is essentially collective or congregational and is so far from being a rare gift that it is highly infectious" (Dodds 69).

THE DUCHESS OF MALFI as Tragic Ritual

The Duchess of Malfi is a particularly instructive play when

looking at the ritual elements within tragedy. It was a part of what has been termed the "Theatre of Blood," tragedies of the late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods that were defined by their excessive violence. The violence in this particular play occurs directly on stage, for the audience's eyes and not solely for their imagination. In this way, the play becomes less cerebral and more visceral, which means that the emotional reactions of the audience are much rawer and intense. As well, Webster's choice of a woman as sacrificial victim adds to the empathic power of the violent components within the play's structure. Overall, it is a play where the ritual elements are more easily discerned than other tragedies where these elements are often disguised or submerged.

Charles Lamb, one of the most vigorous defenders of Webster's tragic art in the nineteenth century, describes the process of accumulated horror and empathy that occurs in the audience's reaction to The Duchess of Malfi: "To move a horror skilfully, to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear, to wean and weary a life till it is ready to drop, and then step in with mortal instruments to take its last forfeit" (57). The drama's plot actively dismembers the Duchess; horror becomes produced not only on stage but in the audience from such a progression. It is my contention that the incremental process of enacted sparagmos elicits an immediate emotional-omophagic reaction of the audience.

Enacted Sparagmos and Elicited Horror

Northrop Frye's definition of tragedy highlights the importance of the way that the "hero [heroine] becomes isolated from his [her] society" (35). Instead of the word "isolated" I would use the stronger term "dismembered." For in Webster's play, the Duchess becomes separated not only from society but also from her family, her self-identity, her mind, and eventually her own physical body. The agents of her dismemberment elicit horror through their actions.

It is significant that the main means of the Duchess's dismemberment be her brothers; this demonstrates that corruption and decay has leached into the smallest and most essential part of the community, the family. The tragic tradition "asserts that the only violence appropriate to tragic action is violence between close relatives" (Girard 292). If the eventual healing or cathartic effects of tragic action are to be felt in community, it is appropriate that such conflict should centre on familial groupings. Ferdinand, on finding that she has both a lover and children against his prohibitions, offers her a poniard and says "die, then, quickly" (3.2.71). The audience's trauma at this moment increases when we realize that these words come from the mouth of the Duchess's twin. It almost seems as if the pair constitute a separated whole, which has developed two natures--one, destructive, the other, generative. Behind their human guises they are monster and maiden, shadow and anima; they embody for the

audience the powers of repulsion and attraction.

Perhaps what arouses the most horror about this inner-familial conflict is Ferdinand's incestuous desire for the Duchess. With this desire he transgresses an almost universal taboo against endogamy (see Parson). Ferdinand's fear of exogamy--the weakening of his blood-line--informs his "assumption of class disparity" (Whigham 170); he fantasises that the Duchess's lover is:

Some strong thigh'd bargeman;
Or one o'th'wood-yard, that can quoit the sledge,
Or toss the bar, or else some lovely squire
That carries coals up to her privy lodgings.(2.5.42-45)

In a Renaissance context, Ferdinand's behaviour is not atypical, for there was a high degree of economic and social endogamy in the upper classes. Still, this type of conflict goes beyond simple social satire. Can there be a greater horror created in the communal responses of a audience than witnessing the enactment of the breach of incest taboos?

What Ferdinand cannot do in the flesh he attempts to do through words; both brothers use language as a means of control. After a lengthy lecture attempting to prevent the Duchess from marrying again, she says to her brothers, "I think this speech between you both was studied" (1.3.38). The Duchess perceives not only that their discourse was not a spontaneous upwelling of true sentiment, nor a dialogue of equals, but a set monologue wholly intended to make her into an "it," not a "who." By controlling the forms of speech, the brothers attempt to suppress her. As a non-person she becomes, in their minds, a thing that can be easily manipulated, controlled, or even destroyed. For instance,

Ferdinand takes on the Adamistic prerogative and names her throughout the lecture. He defines her as a "lusty widow," an "irregular crab" and even implies that she is a "witch ... [who] gives the devil suck" (1.3.21). He has projected his own fears, perceptions and even his repressed sexual desires onto his sister. Ferdinand goes on to make an explicit conceit between the sexual lure of the male sex organ and the danger of the courtier's tongue. The comparison is a revealing one; he is in fact trying to rape his sister by the way he shapes discourse.

Much later, Ferdinand develops lycanthropy, becoming a werewolf digging up the dismembered parts of human corpses. One account places him:

Behind Saint Mark's church, with the leg of a man
upon his shoulder; and he howl'd fearfully;
said he was a wolf, only the difference
was, a wolf's skin was hairy on the outside,
his on the inside. (5.2.11-15)

Ferdinand's sympathy for his twin sister's suffering and his own culpability in her downfall promote irredeemable feelings of guilt that lead to madness. His precise form of madness is experienced as an inverted hair shirt--one such as the monks wore to exhibit penitence for sin, but one constructed psychologically.

Furthermore, the werewolf as opposed to the natural wolf is a human who has become cannibal; first his incestuous desires and now his reversion to cannibalism place him wholly outside community mores. As human monster Ferdinand generates the horror that drives us toward his victim, the Duchess.

The world of the play serves as a Jungian shadow world upon

which the audience's own imbalances can play themselves out. The world of The Duchess of Malfi depicts a sterile cosmos, where destructive forces appropriate generative power, especially from the female characters. This pseudo-fertility corrupts and perverts into a corrosive force in the play, creating nothing except violence, devastation, and death. Bosola describes the Cardinal in a particularly apt and grotesque way: "the spring in his face is nothing but the engend'ing of toads" (1.2.90). As assassin, Bosola has particular insight into the workings of dissolution. He says of the brothers:

[they] are like plum-trees
that grow crooked over standing-pools; they
are rich and o'erladen with fruit, but none but
crows, pies, and caterpillars feed on them. (1.2.56)

The standing pool suggests the stagnancy of their type of generation; fruitfulness here does not preserve, sustain, or construct community. It should be noted that the word caterpillar was formed during the English Renaissance, and was a conjunction of hairy (cater) and spoiler (pillar). Furthermore, crows and magpies are the nordic versions of carrion creatures such as the vulture. The repetition of this type of imagery creates a miasma of perverted fertility.

Enacted Sparagmos and Elicited Empathy

Overall, in The Duchess of Malfi the reversals in fortune are staged long before the Duchess herself recognizes their full

import; in fact, the audience's anagnorisis occurs much before that of the characters--much as in Oedipus, where the audience is privileged with the story far before the tragic hero. The tragic story of the Duchess of Malfi was part of popular Renaissance culture: Mateo Bandello, Bishop of Agen, first recorded the tragic history, but it was soon translated into French by Francois de Belleforest in his Histoires Tragiques (1565) and in William Panter's Twenty Third Tale in The Palace of Pleasure (1567)(see Ranald 49). It is these expectations of dissolution arising from the foreknowledge of the story that force an increased tempo and intensity in the audience's anticipations and reactions of horror and empathy; the final impact of a character's traumatic self-realization of the horror of his/her own situation brings with it a culmination of the audience's built up emotions, forcing a crisis. These elements in tragedy are not simply isolated or modular but integral to the overall ritual process.

The horrifying and pathetic incidents occur primarily on the psychological plane; when we first meet the Duchess she says to her brothers "I'll never marry" (1.3.12), yet almost immediately after, we see her propose to Antonio. This is not insincerity; rather, she knows that she must wear a mask, and so carefully constructs a persona. The very fact that she cannot act as she chooses, indicates her vulnerability. As well, this situation creates a schism in her personality--one face for public show, another for private. Virtually every character in this play is forced into a similar compromise. Even Bosola feigns his malcontent sincerity.

In showing the psychological risks of creating these mental schisms, Webster satirizes the omnipresent need in court society of hiding one's truer self. This situation, however, is not alien to either Renaissance or contemporary audiences in their day-to-day lives; the difficulty of preserving identity due to social pressures is a universal experience. Therefore, it is natural to empathize with those that experience similar problems albeit in more violent and exaggerated circumstances.

The Duchess becomes progressively separated from all forms of community in this course of "pity and fear." In the play, the brothers represent the communities of religion and state; this increases her isolation beyond the family and into a wider social sphere. The Dumb show provides a place where the Cardinal, both as a religious and military figure-head, ceremonially annuls the marriage between Antonio and the Duchess by removing their wedding bands. Immediately following this scene we see the Duchess's authority bleed away; on the road to Loretto her train has "shrunk to this poor remainder" (3.5.4). Now that she has lost her power and wealth, her followers abandon her to find new hosts. The threat of the brothers forces the Duchess to split up her children. Furthermore, at the warning of an ambush the Duchess sends Antonio away: "I know not which is best, / to see you dead, or to part with you" (3.5.64). The "parting" of herself from her lover constitutes as much a mental dismemberment as a physical separation.

To elicit our empathy the plot constructs the Duchess as the quintessential victim. A spectator typically feels empathy for

characters "more sinned against than sinning" (King Lear 3.2.59). The so-called "sin" of remarriage hardly constitutes an adequate cause for her torment. If desire is her tragic flaw, it is one that hardly can be faulted. The excess of her undeserved suffering inspires pity even from her executioners. Bosola disavows the part he played and even vows to revenge her death. Ferdinand's attitude at first is that "the death of young wolves is never to be pitied" (4.2.267). Yet at the sight of his sister he recants: "cover her face; mine eyes dazzle: she/died young" (4.2.274).

Blood Sacrifice

Fred Alford, in The Psychoanalytic Theory of Greek Tragedy, declares that tragedy is "an account of the 'horror or absurdity of existence.' Period." (59), yet The Duchess of Malfi becomes much more than a documentary of meaningless atrocity. Throughout this thesis I have argued that death and suffering in tragedy are not solely a representation of the existential horrors of reality but part of a ritual process of renewal through destruction. Many critics of tragedy have agreed with Heraclitus: "In Vain do they strive for purification by besmirching themselves with blood, as the man who has bathed in the mire seeks to cleanse himself with mud" (fifth fragment). Still, as Walter Otto states of the Greeks: "Fertility and death did not belong to separate realms" (11). Even the Judaic and Christian religions believed in the efficacy of

blood rituals: "The blood is the life" (Lev. 17.11); "I am poured out, as a sacrifice" (Phil. 2.17). The portrayal of suffering, violence, and blood libation in tragedy serves a wider communal need, especially in the efficacy of catharsis. The suffering and subsequent death of the Duchess serves as the ground for the audience's experience of ritual renewal through a course of horror and empathy leading to an emotional eruption/release in catharsis.

When the Duchess proclaims "I am Duchess of Malfi still," we know that those words will not remain true for long. Throughout her harrying we know that her final denouement is both inevitable and irrevocable; every mechanism of plot moves toward her ultimate destruction. For instance, Ferdinand designs a horrific torture using wax duplicate figurines; pretending to offer his hand in an feigned act of forgiveness, he gives her the severed hand of her lover Antonio. The shock and terror of that moment unhinges her: "I long to bleed," (3.1.107) she says. In these horrific moments the Duchess seems both to realize and accept her position in the play's world as a sacrificial victim. She describes herself "like to a rusty o'ercharg'd cannon, / shall I never fly in pieces?" (3.5.103). This image is a particularly apt one; the process of oxidation (rusting) is analogous to the corrosive affects of her brother's torture of her; she remains whole but with a foreboding of the explosion that will shatter her self-integrity.

The famous dance of the madmen contains ritual elements that lead up to the Duchess's sacrificial death. Madmen, as well as ghosts and Furies, in the tragic idiom, have access to the deeper

underpinnings of the human psyche; perhaps, it is unbearable knowledge that drives them insane. Eight madmen dance around the Duchess, howling distorted songs and twisted axioms. Eight turned on its side symbolized eternity in the medieval world, and their masquerade enacts the eternal macabre dance of death/life. The probability, due to the limitations in the number of cast, that the madmen are played by the offstage characters enhances the expressionistic effect of this scene. One says "I have pared the devil's nails / forty times, roasted them in raven's eggs, / and cur'd agues with them" (4.2.115). Base debris from corrupted essence becomes recycled into a cure. Another speaker uses the image of "milch bats": bat manure was a valuable fertilizer and compost agent before the introduction of synthetic fertilizers. Again a waste product transforms into something useful--a cure for insomnia. Overall, the language of cyclic renewal informs the speech of the madmen. Instead of frightening the Duchess as Ferdinand intended, the madmen ceremonially prepare her for her death.

Not only the Duchess but the other sympathetic characters of Duchess of Malfi invariably become "fated" to bloody deaths. Outside the chamber where the Duchess is giving birth, Antonio's nose begins to bleed spontaneously, as if the blood of Antonio were paving the way for his son's birth into the world. The blood vessels of Webster's characters seem to burst spontaneously. When the repentant Bosola accidentally kills Antonio, the arbitrary nature of this death indicates the play's desire for violence and

blood. Nevertheless, there seems to be a direct correlation between blood shed and fertility produced: "In cold countries husbandmen plant vines, and with warm blood manure them" (3.2.186). The great heap of bodies that litter the stage at the end of Webster's tragedy attest to the characters' predilection toward sacrificial self-destruction.

Nevertheless, the major sacrificial moment comes with the Duchess's murder. She is strangled, her dead children are shown to the audience, and her maid Cariola is murdered despite a desperate plea of pregnancy. Then, after all this gruesome terror, the Duchess revives for a moment and gasps "Antonio" (5.1.361); the repentant Bosola, whose reward for the deed proved illusory, tells the Duchess that her lover still lives. With this mercy, she then dies peacefully. A small consolation, but in a world of horror this gentle moment forms a release point for the eruption of the audience's pent-up emotions. On stage, Bosola cries: "where were these penitent fountains while she was living? / O, they were frozen up!" (5.1.376). His tears and the audience's are the physical expression of empathy hemmed in and then overcome by horror. Catharsis constitutes an inner experience, but one of its extreme and outward expressions is the act of crying. It is a visible sign that disbelief in the audience has been fully suspended and that the voyeur has become participant. The ritual process of tragedy leads up to and culminates in this cathartic moment; it produces the ecstatic states which we typically associate solely with the celebrants of primitive ritual.

The finale of The Duchess of Malfi installs a new order. Antonio's faithful companion Delio says, "let us make noble use / of his great ruin" (5.5.113). Typically, there is a slight upward movement at the end of a tragedy. This does not redefine the horror that has gone before, but signals to the audience the ending of the ritual process, the closing off of that shadow world (in its Jungian sense of a world that enacts negative images of the psyche), and the renewal of day-to-day functions. Therefore, closure includes the inception of renewal, which is enforced by the concluding speech:

These wretched eminent things
 Leave no more fame behind them than should one
 Fall in a frost, and leave his print in snow;
 As soon as the sun shines, it ever melts. (5.5.116-8)

The destruction, dismemberment, corruption, blood libation and death that came before seem to allow for formative growth and the renewal of structure. This slight upward shift marking the end of tragedies suggests that the tragic world is inter-dependent and cyclic--a world where every death presages a birth, every dismemberment a future unity, every act of violence an act of healing, every sensation of suffering a sensation of pleasure and so on.

Overall, we have seen that tragedy has evolved out of and incorporated some elements of the Dionysian sacrificial rituals of sparagmos and omophagy. While tragedy holds many differences from ritual, it essentially contains a ritual process. In this schema tragedy can no longer be called "high art"; instead of occupying a superior and isolated position, it is an art intricately connected

to community. Thus, tragedy constitutes a form of societal self-healing--a way of binding a collective together, relieving the guilt of killing for food, inverting the day-to-day hierarchies of reason and law, renewing fecundity through ritualized destruction, and dissipating societal and familial violence that has the potential of destroying the whole.

Chapter Two

Horror Fiction

Horror fiction has been much maligned as either an "adolescent" or a "pulp" genre. Nevertheless, horror literature continues to outsell many of the so-called classics and has created many of the major themes and icons of popular culture. If we look more closely at the effects of horror fiction on its readership, we may discern the types of functions it performs in our society and in turn provide the answers to several questions such literature provokes. Why does violence play such an integral role in the horror genres? What are the psychological motivations for textual rituals involving sacrificial elements? Furthermore, what is the connection between death, life, and the erotic in horror fiction?

Generative Violence in Blood Ritual

The so-called "excessive" violence found in blood rituals may in fact function as a manifestation of "generative violence." Rene Girard's theories incorporate this idea of the homeopathic nature of violence in ritual sacrifice:

Sacrifice plays a very real role in these societies, and the problem of substitution concerns the entire community. The

victim is not a substitute for some particularly endangered individual, nor is it offered up to some individual of particularly bloodthirsty temperament. Rather, it is a substitute for all the members of the community, offered up by the members themselves. The sacrifice serves to protect the entire community from its own violence....The elements of dissention scattered throughout the community are drawn to the person of the sacrificial victim and eliminated, at least temporarily, by its sacrifice. (8)

Girard argues that the structure of primitive societies require periodic, ritually directed exhibitions of violence, and he argues that as the judiciary system develops, the need for such spontaneous "mob" violence lessens. I would argue that what really happens as we become more "civilized" is that the individual's physical distance from acts of blood, such as hunting, familial vendettas, and the slaughter of domestic animals, increases. Therefore, disgust and revulsion become the typical reaction to actual sacrificial practice; participation in bloody rites becomes totally unacceptable. However, the need to discharge accumulated violence still exists, for our legal system is incapable of dissipating all of our potential violence. Where this discharge now occurs is in a symbolic fashion within our fictions, especially genres such as horror.

The act of substitution in the creation of a human "scapegoat" has become increasingly distanced from the locus of the originary social disruption. First, animals become acceptable replacements for human victims, and then merely the artistic representation of violent rites becomes the means. What remains the same, however, even if the sacrificial "body" has changed, is the recreated emotion and its accompanying social and psychological functions.

The possibility of "generative" violence seems at first paradoxical. Yet, there is nothing about sacrifice that is not ambivalent. The ritual act typically encompasses everything that is taboo in the orderly working of a community; it operates against the norms and values of society. In ritual for a brief moment the taboo has suddenly become not only allowable but actually sacred. Even in classical Greece, many states maintained the use of the pharmakos in case of civic disaster. These unfortunate souls were selected and treated as respected religious personages, but in time of disaster they could be and were ritually slaughtered. The word pharmakos itself cannot be translated into any single English or French word, for it signifies both poison and cure at the same time. Similarly, violence in the form of sacrificial rite, such as the slaughter of the pharmakos, is violence used as both social preventative and cure--a homeopathic means of "putting an end to the vicious and destructive cycle of violence" (Girard 93).

Although Girard in his schema sees no difference between the pharmakon and the scapegoat, these terms should be better distinguished. In the Hebraic tradition the scapegoat was paraded around the community to sop up the evils and then sent alive into the wilderness. On this "Day of Atonement" (Lev. xvi) another goat was ritually sacrificed and the people partook of its flesh. The pharmakon in rituals of sparagmos incorporates into one the traits of these two victims, the profane (the scapegoat) and the sacred (the slaughtered goat).

It is this intrinsic duplicity and transformative aspect that

typifies sacrificial rites. The scapegoat represents purely "purgation" in its meaning of expulsion of the unwanted; in contrast, sacrifice encodes a complex movement wherein the debasing of the victim precipitates its slaughter and wherein its exclusion becomes eventual reincorporation with the community. While the act of dismemberment "separates" the victim, both physically and socially, it unites the community because it functions as a communal act of violence. The "guilty" or polluted animal--for it must be thought to be guilty and deserving of its fate--becomes sanctified at the moment of death. Its flesh, once profane because of its pollution, now becomes sacred and is reincorporated into the community with the feast--omophagia. It is not unusual that human sacrifices are presumed among primitive societies to be the most effective in restoring order in times of disaster; this derives from the view that it is human flesh which is most imbued with the profane qualities of pollution and most capable of reintegration.

In sparagmos all the participants take part in the actual slaughter. This type of communal approval sanctifies the violence; without it the violence is simply destructive and no generative effects can be derived from it. As Girard observes of rituals in general: "Unanimity is a formal requirement; the abstention of a single participant renders the sacrifice even worse than useless--it makes it dangerous" (100). Blood rituals are simply "murder" without their social context.

Sparagmos versus Carnival

Sparagmos constitutes a concept/function that is quite different from the notion of carnival advanced by Mikhail Bakhtin. Carnival celebrates a "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from established order; mark[ing] the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (Rablais 10). Carnival and sparagmos do have many comparable elements: both contain inversions of structure and elements of debasing and decrowning; both reaffirm the "lower bodily stratum," and are concerned with the renewal of fertility in a community of participants/readers. Yet, these two related complexes function in very different ways. Simply, carnival cannot contain the violence and bloodshed that sparagmos does; it allows only the limited violence of mock fights, awakening slaps, and sympathetic demolitions, such as the ceremonial breaking of crockery and the burning in effigy of hierarchy. Carnivalistic violence is solely figurative violence--a bloodless violence that ultimately reaffirms the status quo.

In contrast, patterns of hierarchy are completely levelled within rituals of sparagmos. Chaos becomes incorporated in forms of destruction and dismemberment and razes impotent social and psychological structures, allowing the generation of new structures. Thus, the effects of rituals of sparagmos are not as temporary as carnivalistic inversions. Carnival, comes from the Latin root *carnis*, the flesh, and verb levare, to raise (O.E.D.).

While carnival raises the flesh--for it allows for the indulgence in the physical appetite and passions-- sparagmos rends the flesh. Renewal comes in the form of bloody, violent and traumatic action that holds both birth as well as death.

Periodic inversion also operates in rites of initiation. Because these rituals of passage often include a strong element of violence and an accompanying semi-permanent change in state or status, they are more closely aligned to rituals of sparagmos than to the temporary, bloodless carnival. Victor Turner's theories of status reversal in such rituals meshes well with the idea of sparagmos:

During the intervening "liminal" period, the characteristics of the ritual subject are ambiguous....It is as though they are being reduced or ground down to a uniform condition to be fashioned anew....Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to and eclipse of the sun or moon. (The Ritual Process 94-95)

Turner widens rites of initiation to include a variety of social rituals. In light of these ideas stemming from his study of initiation, social ritual, instead of being a bastion of conservativity, now can be seen to be capable of producing new social structures: ritual can in fact be revolutionary.

Rites of Initiation, Blood Ritual, and Horror Fiction

Literature has not been typically seen as social ritual. Nevertheless, the readers experiencing the sparagmic text, as well

as the characters within the narrative, constitute ritual subjects that enter a state of liminality. Simply put, texts can function in a similar fashion to a rite of passage; they include many of the same processes and elements, albeit in a modified media.

As part of rites of passage, the liminal period constitutes a temporal arena where the subjects are first destroyed to allow for their subsequent reintegration and change of status. In the process of being "ground down," the element of horror plays a vital role. Horror as a specific literary genre, as well as any horrific or terrifying action in artistic media, enacts this liminal stage. The action of horror fiction largely revolves around disrupting the reader's state of being. The liminal plane that the text creates causes every norm to become inverted. The intensity of violence in a work of horror is directly related to the difficulty of enlisting or disturbing an audience's emotions. Socially formed ego-consciousness proves extremely resilient to transformation; horror is one tool that can breach the reserve and distance of the non-participatory or voyeuristic reader. This resultant liminal state of disruption allows for a full emotional contact with the work without prejudice, objectivity, or distance, which is necessary if any "purgative" effect is to be experienced.

The artistic depiction of horror can produce unpleasant experiences for the readership. Nevertheless, the reader's desire for the experience of horror does not reveal the suppressed sadistic and sado-masochistic desires; rather, the violent disruption of order that occurs around sparagmos in horror fiction

should be seen within the wider picture of a ritual process. Readers do become victims of the text while reading horror fiction. In this way, they are analogous to the participants in rites of passage who, while in a liminal state, allow for "the acceptance of pain and suffering even to the point of undergoing martyrdom" (Turner 112). In sparagmic texts, the experience of violence inaugurates the passage of the reader into a process of transformation.

DRACULA and Blood Ritual

Like Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, Stoker's Dracula has been described as a process to "invite, entertain, and expel" a monster (Craft 168). This process can be compared to Turner's three stages of ritual transition: separation, margin (or limen), and aggregation (94). As well, much like the pharmakon Dracula's true nature is primarily ambivalent; he is both sacrificer and sacrificed, both poison and cure. What is so elegant about his sacrificial nature is there can be no guilt for killing him, for he is already a corpse that expresses a longing for his own death.

Dracula's plot unites a variety of different strands of bloodlines into a single corporate organism, just as the Count lies at the nucleus of a vast network of blood connections. The characters become "blood brothers" through the sharing of vital

fluid. This occurs not only in the case of Dracula's feastings but as well with the transfusions that Dr. Van Helsing administers. After Lucy is drained of blood by the nocturnal visits of Dracula, she is in desperate need of blood replenishment; her fiancé Arthur becomes the first to offer a transfusion. Eventually, Quincey, Dr. Seward, and Dr. Helsing come to donate blood for Lucy. The characters themselves realize the special bond this creates: "No man knows till he experiences it, what it is to feel his own life-blood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves" (167).

This blood-bonding is seen in primarily sexual terms; as Von Helsing notes, after the transfusions, the "sweet maid is a polyandrist, and me, with my poor wife dead to me, but alive by church's law...even I, who am faithful husband to this now no-wife, am bigamist (227). Furthermore, before the arrival of Dracula, Lucy herself expresses a desire for such promiscuity: "why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her" (81). As Judith Weissmann states, "the intended meaning is that she would like to be kind to these three fine men who love her; the implicit meaning is that she feels able to handle three men sexually" (74). The transfusions, as well as Dracula's nocturnal visits, indicate a desire for and fulfilment of illicit sexuality. The characters, in a period of Bacchic inversion, are allowed to express their suppressed orgiastic desires--albeit in the sublimated form of the vampire's bite and the injections of blood.

Overall, Dracula's plot undermines order, using devices which border on deus ex machina. The best planned attempts to protect

Lucy and the separateness of her bloodflow fail. Several unforeseen circumstances, such as Lady Westenra's removal of the garlic wreath from Lucy (174) and the unaccountable day's delay of an urgent telegram from Van Helsing to Dr. Seward (184), allows for Dracula's surreptitious "love" making.

Dracula's body forms the final receptacle of the blood transfusions; he drinks their blood filtered through the body of Lucy. Later, he drinks Mina's blood and forces her to drink his. Additionally, Dracula's three wives drain Harker of his blood. Unlike Christopher Craft, I do not see this orgy of vital liquids in the terms of a homo-erotic gang rape, where the females are simply passive receptacles. What does occur is a liberation of sexual desires that allows a non-hierarchical fusion in communal orgy. The young Quincey is generated out of a three-part conjunction of the semen of Harker, the spirit of Quincey, and the blood and ovum of Mina, which includes the blood of Dracula, who apart from the untold thousands of past victims, has the blood of all the travellers in his veins. Paternity becomes ambiguous, and it is precisely this which allows creation to be basically communal. Mina's child is named Quincey; this act of re-naming indicates a renewal of the corporate body through the death of its individual parts.

Contributing to the sense of the communal is the way every strand of textual narrative is given its own voice and language, but is ultimately interwoven into a over-riding network. Stoker has written a consummate polyphonic novel, creating a "mosaic" as

it were out of linguistic fragments. This type of literary practice creates a communal orgy of voices that deconstructs notions of hierarchy and the monologic control of language. However, the polyphonic world of Dracula is one where the inter-animating voices move toward a single project--the climactic sacrifice of Dracula. This sense of the many focusing into the one exhibits the type of ecstatic unity that accompanies omophagia.

Dracula creates a distorted and primitive version of the communion ceremony; but in the process the symbolic sacrifice becomes returned to its preclassical fleshly roots. Mina Harker is exiled from the community of the living, yet is not fully of the dead. She lies suspended in a liminal phase between life and death. The community of the "good" elements--i.e., that of the living--is of the body; they do not partake of the blood of communion, only the bread. Mina is marked off from this community by the scar of the host on her forehead, for it is a visible sign that she can not partake of their feasts. This status eerily reminds one of the taboos and restrictions that are often placed on menstruating women in primitive societies--they are seen as polluted and therefore are not allowed normal interaction with the other members of a community. Mina partakes of Dracula's world, the world of the dead, the night, the supernatural, the erotic, by drinking his blood. Yet, she is not fully of Dracula's spirit either, for she is horrified at the voluptuous, predatory appearance of his wives at the count's castle: "The terror in her sweet eyes, the repulsion, the horror" (472). The party's quest is

not to "punish" illicit feminine sexuality. Rather, it is to rid the world of a dangerous beast, which constitutes a form of scapegoating, and in this way move Mina from a liminal state back into the community.

The Transitional Stage and Horror Fiction

Not only the body of Mina, but the entire world of Dracula is in a state of transition, especially within the social realm. Arthur's father dies leaving his title, fortune and responsibilities. Mrs. Westenra dies of old age and a weak heart. Harker's senior partner leaves him both his inheritance and practice. Doctor Van Helsing is in the process of teaching Dr Seward to replace him as shaman/guide of the numinous realm. Everywhere in Dracula's world there are signs of both death and renewal in the form of the succession of generations.

Dracula represents a father figure, but one who refuses to give up his allotted span of life. As such, he is a social abomination. Like the gods of old, Chronos and Uranus, he must be decapitated/emasculated by his "sons" to allow the natural progression of generations. Once sacred figures that now have become profane and polluted, they must be sacrificed for the good of the community. Dracula as sacrifice similarly becomes the locus of an re-enactment of the primordial rite of succession, a social rite of initiation where the status of one generation is elevated

while another becomes lowered.

One could look on this sacrificial moment in psychological terms as well as social. As earlier stated, Dracula operates as a threatening father figure: he has absolute authority, wealth, control of movement, a hypnotic command over his subjects, and even has the power to attract desirable females away from his sons (when he calls Mina she must come). Dracula, on one level, represents what Freud called "the return of the repressed." A part of the Oedipal complex--where the dominant parent tries to control the child who in turn struggles for freedom--upwells in this monstrous figure. Dracula's plot also uncannily enacts Freud's description of the primordial "family romance":

One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. United, they have the courage to do and succeed in doing what would have been impossible for them individually. Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him. The violent primal father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers; and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their act of identification with him, and each of them acquired a portion of his strength. The totem meal, which is perhaps mankind's earliest festival, would thus be a repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things--of social organization, of moral restriction and of religion. (Totem and Taboo 141-2)

This Oedipal element appears especially strong during the sequence of Dracula's sacrifice--a phallic stake must be driven through his heart and his "head" must be cut off.

The sacrificial process that accompanies succession has been encoded psychologically in myths and culturally in rites. Whether this master-narrative arises out of the repressed unconscious,

through the manifestations of archetypes from the template of the collective unconscious, or through inescapable patterns of human socialization is debatable. In the final analysis, it may be a instance of both/and and not either/or. In any case, the different levels of its manifestation speak about its importance to the individual and social human animal.

Overall, Dracula functions as a successful rite of passage. Once the father has been removed and returned to dust the next generation can reproduce and grow. Arthur and Seward become happily married and Mina produces a son into whom she hopes Quincey's "spirit has passed" (485). Darkness has dissipated and the mark of pollution on Mina's forehead vanishes. Simply put, order and structure return as the liminal period ends.

Death and the Ritual of Horror

What are we really dealing with in the moment of sacrifice, whether enacted on a primitive platform or dramatized in literature? I would answer that it is an attempt to master death and the dread of it, not through its "heroic" defeat, but through a complete and absolute immersion in it. Death and dread has been largely undervalued in psychiatry and anthropology, despite the role that death plays in the formation of our cultural and psychic structures. As Ernest Becker has observed: "The idea of death, the fear of it, haunts the human animal like nothing else; it is a

mainspring of human activity--activity designed largely to avoid the fatality of death, to overcome it by denying in some way that it is the final destiny for man" (ix).

When confidence in the efficacy of a parent's agency fails or when faith in the promise of an afterlife declines, the fear of death becomes both over-riding and debilitating, for the individual's mental health as well as social functioning in general. The fear of death is a double-edged sword: on one hand, it can function as an effective goad for self-preservation and reproduction; on the other hand, if not properly regulated a fear of death can impair the human animal's "fitness for survival." The noted psychiatrist Zilboorg describes this essential paradox:

Such constant expenditure of psychological energy on the business of preserving life would be impossible if the fear of death were not as constant....If this fear were as consciously conscious, we should be unable to function normally. It must be properly repressed to keep us living with any modicum of comfort. (465)

Literature which enacts sacrifice, especially horror fiction, allows society and the individual a space to encounter the dread of death. The emotional experience generated by the sparagmic text is not so different from that of mystical or religious experience; nor is the connection merely coincidental: the dread of death may have in fact inspired all human religious actions--from abstract notions of heavens to the belief in resurrection. Moreover, the "denial of death" can also be seen as the impetus which spurs intellectual pursuits: for instance, Schopenhauer called death the "muse of philosophy." Recognizing the importance of death, Freud admonished: "Would it not be better to give death the place in

actuality and in our thoughts which properly belongs to it, and to yield a little more prominence to that unconscious attitude towards death which we have hitherto so carefully suppressed?" (Thoughts 316)

The dread of death and its subsequent suppression provides us with the psychological ground for literature of horror. As Julia Kristeva has observed:

Far from being a minor, marginal activity in our culture, as a general consensus seems to have it, this kind of literature, or even literature as such, represents the ultimate coding of our crises, of our most intimate and most serious apocalypses. (208)

Of course, the most serious of these apocalyptic crises is death--the final and most threatening transition in our lives. Wolfgang Iser, in developing reader-response theory into "literary anthropology," comes to a similar conclusion about how literature constitutes a ground to enact our fears and desires:

Literature simulates life, not in order to portray it, but in order to allow the reader to share in it. He can step out of his own world and enter another, where he can experience extremes of pleasure and pain without being involved in any consequences whatsoever. It is this lack of consequences that enables him to experience things that would otherwise be inaccessible owing to the pressing demands of everyday reality. (29)

Later he goes on to explain how literature provides a sense of what lies beyond the individual:

Literature generates the illusion of a perception, so that the inconceivable may gain presence by being staged through a sequence of images. Therefore, literature does not look toward a future utopia so much as continue the process begun by myth. Like myth, it takes hold of the ungraspable, or rather appears to take hold of it. (212)

In literature, the reader responds to the incarnation of the

numinous Other with either desire or dread; in horror fiction, whatever lies Outside the self becomes threat, and for the living self this is death.

As stated earlier, the world of Dracula characterizes the liminal universe of horror; the living are placed on the precarious and dangerous margin between life and death. Moreover, here the "other" world seeps back into ours--the world becomes populated with the living dead. There perhaps can be no greater phobia than that of the dead awakened. We should note that even in our day-to-day lives the dead are always alive--their ghosts haunt us and beckon with their decaying bodies to what lies ahead for us all. To purge us of our fear of death, the encounter with the corpse is essential, for as Kristeva explains:

The corpse (or cadaver: cadere, to fall), that which has irremediably come a cropper, is cesspool, and death; it upsets even more violently the one who confronts it as fragile and fallacious chance. A wound with blood and pus, or the sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay, does not signify death. In the presence of signified death--a flat encephalograph, for instance--I would understand, react, or accept. No, as in true theatre, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order to live. (3)

Harker displays this natural revulsion for the dead and the decaying: "As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me , I could not repress a shudder. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which, do what I would, I could not conceal" (29). It is this experience of death that must be reckoned with if it is to be exorcised. Dracula invokes, harbours, and then destroys death in the person of Dracula, and by literally bring the reader through death overcomes

its denial.

Death and Eros

Much has been said about the way that sexuality and eroticism are implied rather than made explicit in Dracula. All too often the more disturbing elements of that sexuality, namely its necrophilic elements, are ignored; instead emphasis is placed on the way that the Victorian era forced sexuality to be veiled, euphemised, and sublimated. While such dynamics are in operation, there is also a deeper meaning to the licentious images included in works of horror. It is not simply another case of a distorted sexual energy. Sexuality never divorces itself from terror and the representation of death even in our supposedly more liberal times.

Necrophiliacs desire an absolute control over their erotic objects, something which they lack in their ordinary sexual lives. Still, the situation in Dracula reveals a very different desire. In horror fiction the dead are alive and active and even exert control over the living. It has been argued that this agency is designed to relieve the guilt of necrophilic desires (Annadale 63). Similarly, vampirism has been seen as "a reversion to the most primitive aspects of sadism" (Jones iii). I would argue instead that this "love of the dead" is a means of giving death its proper and vital place within eroticism. All erotism--i.e., sexuality that is not solely for reproduction--incorporates the dissolution

of the self. As George Bataille observes: "What does physical eroticism signify if not a violation of the very being of its practitioner?--a violation bordering on death, bordering on murder" (17). Herein lies the perception behind the use of le petit mort, the little death, to epitomize orgasm. Death, in short, plays a much more central role in our erotic desires and experiences than most would like to admit.

The paradoxical mixture of voluptuous sensuality and violent savagery appears throughout Dracula. For instance, when Harker describes his encounter with the Count's hungry wives he reveals a bittersweet mixture of horror and desire:

The fair girl went on her knees, and bent over me, fairly gloating. There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed about to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips, and could feel the hot breath on my neck. Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one's flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer -- nearer. I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the supersensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of the two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstasy and waited -- waited with beating heart. (54)

Ecstasy removes self-awareness--it has been seen as a type of divine possession. Harker, in this passage, is not merely a passive victim but exhibits an active longing for self-immolation.

It is relatively easy to apprehend intellectually the deep connection death has with life:

The death of the one being is correlated with the birth of the other, heralding it and making it possible. Life is

always a product of the decomposition of life. Life first pays its tribute to death which disappears, then to corruption following on death and bringing back into the cycle of change the matter necessary for the ceaseless arrival of new beings into the world. (Bataille 55)

But it proves much more difficult to feel this connection up to the point of affirming death in the personal erotic experience. Death is still the antithesis of life. We try to shut it out at all times.

The vampire provides a bridge between fear and desire. The creature is ambivalent; it represents the monstrous in its gift of living death, but it also represents the sensual in its artful courtships and its sexual hedonism. The erotic in horror fiction reaffirms the connection of life and death not in objective intellectual terms but coded to produce a subjective emotional response in the audience. For instance, the licentious images used to describe Mina's seduction elicit both arousal and horror:

Kneeling on the near edge of the bed facing outwards was the white-clad figure of his wife. By her side stood a tall, thin man, clad in black. His face was turned from us, but the instant we saw we all recognized the Count--in every way, even to the scar on his forehead. With his left hand he held both Mrs Harker's hands, keeping them away with the arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast which was shown by his torn-open dress. The attitude of the two had a terrible resemblance to a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink. (363)

In this combined scene of forced fellatio and nursing, Mina receives and gives bodily fluids. She is both a partner in a tabooed sexual act and a child that the count is "nursing." She undergoes a transition that Van Helsing calls "the Vampire's

baptism of blood" (414). Mina, as an erotic subject, arrives at the border between life and death--literally so, since the count personifies Death. Nevertheless, she participates in this "forbidden romance" (Twitchell 134) as an active partner: "I was bewildered, and, strangely enough, I did not want to hinder him" (370).

Texts that combine both the erotic and horrific incarnate the inconceivable; they force us to recognize that our greatest fear is part and parcel of our greatest pleasure: that all our desires are ultimately deleterious to the preservation of self, and that all life comes from death. The operations of "darker" fictions are therefore extremely difficult to accept, for "it takes an iron nerve to perceive the connection between the promise of life implicit in eroticism and the sensuous aspect of death" (Bataille 59). Sparagmos in literary form allows the reader to experience a momentary and direct apprehension of the vital connection between death, the erotic, and life.

Chapter Three

Romance

The definitive feature of romance is the erotic couple, in contrast to the more multiple cast of characters in tragedy and horror fiction. In addition, romance typically expresses an asocial aspect, not only by virtue of the plot and characters, but also in the more "private" relationship of text to reader, whereas the social rituals explored so far have tended to emphasize public or communal values. To see a continuity between romance and other ritualist genres, therefore, we must address the question of whether romance functions as a private ritual, and if so how such rituals relate to the more communal kind involved in omophagy. Equally, we need to consider how the violence of sparagmos translates to a genre typically associated with "love."

Sparagmos, Romance and Hierogamy

In their Dionysian aspect, sparagmos and omophagy join a community of celebrants with their god; thus, sparagmos as a primitive ecstatic rite is directed more at a social group than

individuals. When a sexual component is involved, it tends to be orgiastic--both in the sense of the communal and the physical.

Yet, as Mircea Eliade observes in his study of primal myths:

Collective or individual, periodic or spontaneous, regeneration rites always comprise, in their structure and meaning, an element of regeneration through repetition of an archetypal act, usually of the cosmogonic act. (85)

In romance the cosmogonic act--the formation of creation or cosmos out of chaos--becomes embodied in the depiction of hierogamous union. Hieros Gamos is the Greek term for a sacred union; it is exemplified by the union of earth and sky in myth, but its humanized form is that of sexual contact without moral or social bounds. Consequently, hierogamy is very different from marriage, for as Evelyn J. Hinz observes, "we are accustomed to regard marriage as a social and legal institution with moral overtones or as a conjugal relationship which, if not always ratified by society, nevertheless takes place within a social frame of reference" (900).

Sparagmos and omophagy in romance are exhibited not on the level of the communal rituals but through the lovers and their private rituals. In Greek myth, there are numerous examples of hierogamous union associated with blood sacrifice; such fatal relationships as that of Aphrodite and Adonis, and Apollo and Hyacinth come to mind. Yet, the archetypal configuration is perhaps most evident in the Egyptian myth of Osiris and Isis:

Osiris, foe of his brother Set, who yearly slew him, cut up his body into fourteen pieces, which he scattered. Isis recovered all but the phallus which a fish ate. Binding the pieces with linen (mummy form) she breathed life into his nostrils. In other versions she buried each piece where she

found it to distribute his fertilizing powers, or she placed the parts in a coffin that floated down the Nile. (Jobes 1218)

This myth ties the killing and resurrection of Osiris with the wider cycle of life. In Egypt, the flooding of the Nile was seen as both a destroying agent and a life giver. Romance enacts the cycle of fertility through the hierogamous couple: the plot takes the form of a cyclic pattern involving dismemberment, death, return, union, growth.

Renewal in romance comes in the form of physical sexual contact that includes a spiritual and emotional merging of opposing principles--in other words, hierogamy. A lover's desire arises because "we are discontinuous beings, individuals who perish in isolation in the midst of an incomprehensible adventure, but we yearn for our lost continuity" (Bataille 15). Yet, this attraction is ultimately "self"-destructive, because it paves "the way for a fusion where both are mingled, attaining at length the same degree of dissolution. The whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives" (Bataille 17). As with any ritual of renewal, death and degeneration must be included; erotic renewal within romance proves no different.

Resistance to Erotic Renewal in THE GIRL IN A SWING

As a romance, Richard Adams's The Girl in a Swing exemplifies

a type of text that depicts erotic renewal through private ritual. This text is perhaps especially valuable, for it was written after the sexual revolution of the 1960's. Many of the earlier romances, especially Victorian ones such as Bronte's Wuthering Heights, tend to shy away from the direct depiction of erotic matters, resorting either to lacunae or metaphoric euphemism. These writers had no problem writing scenes of violence but rarely connected violence and eroticism as it is in Adams's work.

Alan Desland, the narrator and protagonist of the Girl in a Swing, is firmly enmeshed in what Nietzsche would call the Apollonian. As the "divine image of the principium individuationis" (Birth of Tragedy 36), Apollo "seeks to pacify individual beings precisely by drawing boundary-lines between them" (79). This represents an originary sparagmic act, separating the individual from the corporate whole. Yet, this sparagmos is one held in stasis, resisting the omophagic act of re-incorporation that fulfils the ritual process. Romance attempts to break the Apollonian illusion of self-containment and self-sufficiency. The genre invokes the Dionysian complex of the chthonian, the body, the emotions, communal frenzy, metamorphosis, madness, and especially erotic love, and places this complex above the petrified vision of the world offered by the superhuman, logocentric eye of Apollo. Desland functions as the ritual initiate undergoing a process of transformation from the Apollonian to the Dionysian.

The most precise expression of Alan's obsession with idealized, static images over Bacchic flux is in his worship--and I

think we can call it that--of ceramics. It is not the worship of porcelain figures itself that indicates the Apollonian chill but how his worship manifests itself. He views art as a "well wrought urn"--an object aesthetically complete in and of itself:

In this art (ceramics), as in Bach, lay something more valid than mere emotion--or so I felt. Bach, as God's amanuensis, composed the music of the spheres, as mathematically appointed and ordered as tides or the return of Halley's comet. If emotion was present, it was controlled and in the correct proportion; that is, to the extent that emotion in living creatures is a functional, constituent part of the entire created order. (30)

There is a gesture towards the whole in Desland's schema, but it is a whole under the domination of logic. "Mathematically appointed" emotion is no emotion at all; emotion overflows, it cannot be bound by order. Emotion becomes suppressed, much as the wild beasts, monsters and Titans of old were killed, thrown down under the earth and fettered by the Olympian gods. Desland explains why he prefers objects d'art over living people: "But things--beautiful things--were so much easier and more dependable than people: consistent, predictable and on that account satisfying. Porcelain was a simplification, a refinement of fallible, often-disappointing reality" (34). Apollonian illusion creates security through stasis. Objects are preferred over living subjects; people prove mercurial, protean, whereas objects never change--they are frozen separated forms.

Dissolution and the Body

Alan Desland's desire for stasis arises out of a profound fear of losing his individuality through sex and/or death. The first and paramount indication of this phobia of self-dissolution occurs during Mrs. Cook's E.S.P. experiment:

The soft firmness of one of her breasts...just touched the side of my face and I could smell her light, warm femininity; scented soap and the faintest trace of fresh sweat. I felt myself erect--instantly and fully, as a boy does--and became horribly embarrassed. (10)

This moment describes a direct encounter with the Dionysian aspect of hygra physis, wet or liquid nature. The male penis and the female breasts are the pre-eminent fluid organs of the body; they cyclically engorge or slacken and produce fluid secretions. The smell of Mrs. Cook's sweat and the feel of her breasts break the Apollonian purity of form. This sensual experience, accompanied by the rushing of the blood to his face in blushing, produce a moment where the inviolable taboos of self-stasis dissolve. The word dissolution with its formation from Greek "to make or become liquid," and its more modern denotation as "disintegration and decomposition" makes it especially apt in describing immersion in the Dionysian complex.

Desland's confrontation with liquid metamorphosis at Mrs. Cook's becomes immediately associated with dissolution, death and horror. He is forced to perceive a vision of a garden and what lies underneath:

The bodies of innocent, helpless victims, whose wanton murders nullified the sunlight and flowers, nullified Mrs. Cook and

her pretty breasts and cool hands. The worms--the worms were coming, wriggling, slimy and voracious to fill my mouth. (11)

That the crimes were of a necrophilic nature intensifies Desland's experience of a horrid connection between love and death.

Moreover, Desland does not merely view the decaying bodies but actually becomes them; he encounters his body as what Bosola in Duchess of Malfi described as a "box of worm seed" (4.2.130). The distance of seeing allows for voyeurism, but the E.S.P. experiment does not allow for this distance and objectivity. Desland experiences his own death through both the incidence of a trance state and the embodiment of death while in that state. In his own words the sexual pleasures he felt were "nullified," The Marquis De Sade stated that "there is no better way to know death than to link it with some licentious image" (Bataille 24). This hypothesis inverts itself here, for Desland learns sexuality through images of decomposition. Instead of learning the generative qualities of death, he learns the deathly qualities of generation. Like the medieval image of the world, the Worm Ouroboros, a dragon whose many fanged head devours its generative segment, death immediately swallows sexual flow. Desland's own body becomes implicated in this cyclic system of creation and destruction. His penis becomes a worm that presages decomposition. The fear of annihilation drives him toward the safety of the immortal, static images that Apollo offers in ceramics.

This same fear of annihilation causes Desland to wall himself off from other bodies and even his own body:

I never kissed or embraced anyone if I could help it--not even

my mother, whom of course I loved dearly--and if anyone kissed me I froze, letting them perceive that it gave me no pleasure....Long before the unsought, spontaneous time-bomb of my first orgasm went off by night in the sleeping dormitory, noli me tangere had become an accepted, no-longer even-conscious part of myself. (14)

He "freezes" when anyone, including his own mother, touches him. The words of the resurrected Christ have become a taboo against touching in general and against the dangers of masturbation in particular. In addition, the language he uses to describe his "wet" dreams are envisioned as a violent imposition, a terrorist act, a time-bomb. Overall, Desland's body has become brutally separated from his mind and incapable of giving or receiving pleasure.

Moreover, Desland later dreams that the manipulative and voluptuous Mrs. Cook demands him to dive into deep turbid water:

I found myself on the bottom. It was littered with all manner of debris...there were broken plates and cups, smashed china figures and fragments of pottery and earthenware....As she [Phoebe Parr] turned to me I saw, with sickening horror, that she must have been in the water for weeks. Her face, not yet entirely destroyed, was more dreadful than that of a skull. The rotten, spongy flesh of the limbs was almost soaked off the bones....The hand I held in my own was no longer attached to the wrist. (50)

Sex, birth and subsequent death are combined within this apparition of a child that already is decaying before reaching puberty. The Deep in his dreams becomes a place of dismemberment: pottery lies in shards, and even the little girl's hand comes off with a slight pull. What is most dreadful is not a skull--the complete, clean and separate almost sculpted state of death--but the decay of flesh into non-flesh, into clay, sand and mud. This dream represents how Desland has become both resistant to and in need of an erotic

renewal, whereby his dread can be transformed into desire.

The Numinous and the Erotic

Kathe represents everything that Desland has repressed and suppressed: the female, the body, orgasm, liquid, transformation, and death. The presence of this "femme fatal" vitalizes Alan:

I know that I did indeed feel, at the time, an impact hard to describe--a kind of leaping of my consciousness to a new level, a swift change both in the quality of my awareness and the nature of the moment that was passing; as when a scent or a melody startling makes one not merely remember but actually return to the sensation of being five years old--or in Seville long ago--or plunging into deep water for the first time. (58)

This passage indicates that Desland has shifted his focus from the cerebral and abstract to the concrete, emotional, and physical. Accompanying this transformation, there is a move from the higher sense of sight to the lower senses of smell and hearing. In addition, Desland's description regresses back to the mental state of childhood with an accompanying sensation of release of the repressed. The reference to Seville moves us back in time to a foreign place that is a locus of violent emotions--i.e., the centre of bullfighting in Spain and the site of the classic opera The Barber of Seville. Despite the regression in time, the sensation is not of memory but of actually being there "in Illo Tempore."

Nevertheless, Desland dreads instead of desires the love object. He beauty is not "attractive" but awe-inspiring. To consider this problem we might consider what Rudolf Otto describes

as the awe that accompanies an encounter with the Other:

The truly "mysterious" object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently "wholly other," whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb. (29)

In the case of hierogamy, the Otherness of the love object has to be somehow incorporated; fear, abjectness, and reverence have to be transformed into desire. The sparagmic encounter with its accompanying dissolution has to lead to an accompanying omophagy, or else the ritual subject will simply separate and then elevate the love object into worship.

As we have seen before, blood ritual serves as a process to break down barriers, allowing for an omophagic "communion," and this is the import of Kathe's and Alan's visit to Kronberg citadel. It is here that Kathe cuts her foot during their walk:

"Just clean it off and tell me where the cut is."
I looked vaguely round. "No water."
"Lick fingers." I hesitated. "Go on!" (78)

This situation forces Alan to confront his own distaste of the body's secretions and of bodily contact. This unplanned incident develops into a private blood ritual which joins the couple through an interchange of blood and saliva much in the manner that children pledge blood loyalties with an exchange of vital fluid.

Certainly, this type of limited blood omophagy can be useful in bonding lovers, but why is this particular type of symbolism efficacious? Wounds are visible signs of human frailty and viscosity, and they gesture both back to the genesis of an individual in the womb and forward towards that individual's

eventual demise. The barriers that the isolated self constructs as protection are fractured by the experience of wounding. In the case of The Girl in a Swing, the location of this wounding becomes revealing in itself. For an uptight Englishman such as Alan, feet constitute the dirtiest part of the body and therefore are the most distasteful to touch and clean.

Furthermore, in this scene, Kathe shows that she is not "self-sufficient" as Alan earlier stated. Kathe falls because she is on raised shoes--a moving pedestal; she is symbolically lowered to prevent worship. The visible expression of vulnerability of her bleeding wound allows Alan to develop empathy. At the moment when their life-liquids are conjoined and mingled, Alan and Kathe are physically and emotionally united in a ritualistic expression of their own fragility as human beings.

Erotic Healing

The blood "marriage" at Kronberg citadel constitutes the first of a series of incremental dissolutions that comprise the breaking up of Alan's Apollonian nature. Kathe desires sex before marriage, but Alan feels that it would not be "sacred" (105). His ideals of propriety serve as facades for deeply held fears of self-dissolution. Even after the wedding ceremonies, he finds himself unable to become a physical lover. Alan reveals that ultimately it is his awe of Kathe's beauty that makes him impotent: "I think now

that it was her beauty that daunted me at the deepest level--that more than credible beauty" (149). His impotence stems from his elevation of the love object into a position of worship; he has put her on a pedestal much as he would one of his porcelain figurines.

Florida provides a setting whereby Desland can overcome his awe of Kathe. In addition, the New World becomes a place for the lovers to escape from the Old World paradigms and restrictions. The Edenic garden with its orderliness and walled borders is replaced by a wild riot of vegetative growth that cannot be contained by either man or god:

There appeared to be no tended gardens, but the houses were surrounded (and even, in some cases, covered) by such a riot of trees, creepers and huge flowers that the idea of deliberate horticulture seemed almost out of place. (146)

This chaos of Florida's vegetation provides an ideal location for the unravelling of law and order. As well, the swimming trip down the Itchetucknee comprises a journey into the liquid, feminine body. One of the sources is named Jug Spring, insinuating that the waters are perhaps intoxicating, inviting an inversion of norms and values. In this context we should note the significance of Alan's surname, Desland; des is the first syllable of desert, and des spelled backwards is sed, the Spanish word for thirst. By his very name, as well as in his character, Alan is associated with a sterile dry place; it is the extended immersion in the moist climate and in the flowing waters of Florida that soften his protective exterior.

Moisture, running water and wild vegetation provide the setting for an erotic encounter, but it is terror that serves to

trigger Alan's sensuality. Kathe becomes hysterical when she has the illusion of seeing a dead child on the river bottom: "It was perhaps three feet long and, seen from above, bore a distinct likeness to the naked body of a child. Some of the larger knots in the wood even resembled features" (159). The motif of metamorphosis, especially a vegetative one, and eros alludes to an Ovidian concept of the cosmos. This creates an atmosphere where hierogamy is returned to its elemental roots. The encounter with the phantasm of a dead child precipitates a violent bout of lovemaking on a sandy bank: "I could feel her nails, like a spray of bramble, but blunter and harder, across the flesh of my back. There was no caressing and no control on either part" (160). The invocation of chaos that the dead child represents breaks the boundaries and structures of self that bind Alan. The violence of the sex act itself, with its reference to vegetative flagellation, joins the destructive with the creative, germinating a frenzied Bacchic celebration that reaffirms the life-giving role that death has in a cyclic, flowing cosmos.

Sparagmos, as part of the ritual complex, allows the conceptualization of the destructive in the formation of cosmos and structure. The invocation of chaos constitutes an integral part of a holistic, cyclic sense of human existence. Mircea Eliade elucidates the need for dissolution and dismemberment in any process of renewal:

The death of the individual and death of humanity are alike necessary for their regeneration. Any form whatever, by the mere fact that it exists as such and endures, necessarily loses vigour and becomes worn; to recover vigour, it must be

reabsorbed into the formless if only for an instant; it must be restored to the primordial unity from which it issued. (Myth 88)

If there is to be any reconstruction or "healing" of Desland's character, the death of his isolated and moral self must occur, as it does during the omophagic erotic encounter in Florida.

Through sexual intercourse Kathe and Alan become a new Adam and Eve, Isis and Osiris, Sky and Earth. For the hierogamous couple the outside world does not exist, time does not exist: "wherever we might happen to be was the centre of the world" (163). Sexual intercourse becomes more than a physical union of flesh. The lovers have an erotic epiphany arising out of their constant lovemaking, as Alan observes:

The purpose of coupling was neither to procreate nor to refresh or gratify the participants. Rather, it was the appointed destiny of lovers, the compulsive service of a goddess, self-justified as fighting to a Viking. Kathe's love--Kathe herself--could have no expression and no meaning beyond or apart from her body--and mine. (211)

In general, Alan employs sacred terminology to describe Kathe: "I was to come to realize that Kathe was a kind of erotic saint, possessing the power to impart faith, to convert, to heal" (150). Orthodox religion has little to do with sex, other than prescribing various restrictive taboos. By describing his sensual experience as a vocation and couching his experience in religious terms, Alan parodies orthodox religion. Furthermore, by associating sacred imagery with taboo sexual acts Alan exposes the physical basis of religious metaphors--i.e., the church is the bride of Christ. In addition, this debasing reveals the inadequacies of institutionalized religion, especially Christianity, in relation to

the erotic communions of paganized ritual. In romance, hierogamous sex is seen as a healing union; healing at its root indicates a wholeness of being. In a Christian context, abstinence is not viewed as illness, yet within romance it becomes disease, because of the necessity of completeness--a need to speak through body, mind, emotion and spirit.

Masks and Transformation

Through becoming incarnations of god and goddess in their lovemaking, Alan and Kathe utilize the transformative powers of the mask. Dionysus, in addition to his other roles, is the god of the mask. Albin Lesky observes that in ritual masks were "the device used to effect that transformation which is the first requirement of any genuinely dramatic practice" (223). It is in the powers of the transformative mask that ritual and art come together. Walter Otto in his seminal study on Dionysian religion notes that both ritual and art ideally should produce ecstatic trance:

The whole splendour of that which has been submerged draws imperatively near at the same time that it is lost in eternity. The wearer of the mask is seized by the sublimity and dignity of those who are no more. He is himself and yet someone else. Madness has touched him--something of the mystery of the mad god, something of the spirit of the dual being who lives in the masks and whose most recent descendant is the Actor. (210)

In describing the powers of the mask, Otto here gestures towards a genealogy of the mask, connecting the use of masks in primitive fertility rites to the Greek theatre and subsequently down to us in

the modern-day actor. The need for an actual mask has dissipated; the possession of the actor while "acting" creates a living mask. Custom dictates whether the "possessed" need wear an actual mask--the effect remains the same.

The word ecstasy derives from the Greek root ex-tasis: to leave one's body and to allow a god, a daemon or a demon to inhabit the body. In this sense, masking does not constitute either adopting a disguise or even pretending to be another; rather masking constitutes an actual loss of identity and the assumption of a different role. It is in these terms of possession that Alan describes their passion:

I was not startled when I saw Kathe. She was sitting naked in the swing, and arm raised to either rope, barely moving back and forth as she sat watching me. Her breasts and shoulder, glistening with drops of water, were shaded by her wide, green-ribboned straw hat, but her belly and thighs, as the swing moved, were flame-coloured by the sunset gleaming between the cob-nut trees....I might have fled, for I was very much afraid: or I might have knelt before her; but she grasped my hand.

"You know now?"

"Yes."

"Who I am?"

"You are not to be named. You have many names."

"And yet I have need of you, my subject, my lord." (275)

The couple here assume roles beyond their socially formed egos. Their bodies become inhabited by archetypal configurations; Alan describes the experience as both hallucinatory and mythical: "I myself, dizzy at that great depth, became lost for a time, striving half-frenzied in a marshy wood close beside that same sea where the bull swam with Europa on his back" (275). Their nakedness indicates a shedding of their worldly personas to allow for the assumption of new roles. Furthermore, by being positioned on the

swing which is tied to the cob nut trees, Kathe becomes part of the vegetative world, creating the overall impression of an elemental hierogamy in the sexual act. The "many named goddess" is an allusion with a long history: it was first invoked in literature in Lucius Apuleius's narrative of transformation, The Golden Ass. The term described the ubiquitous worship of the goddess of fertility, whether incarnated in the name of Isis, Demeter, Persephone, Venus, or Artemis of Ephesus (The Golden Ass 227). The naming of an archetypal fertility god or goddess is resisted in the romantic portrait of hierogamy, for once mystery is named it becomes codified and liturgical: law, dogma and prohibition swiftly follow the naming act. Unnamed, the archetypal configuration inhabits and utterly possesses the psyche as mask.

Bacchic Intercourse in Literary Ritual

As we have seen, sex in The Girl in a Swing often has its brutal and violent elements, which in general, we might term "Bacchic." Bacchus was another term for the god Dionysus, but one used more often when describing orgiastic rites, where the participants become bacchoi--literally possessed by the god's spirit. An example of "Bacchic" behaviour occurs when Kathe literally becomes "the girl in a swing" and the subsequent copulation becomes both sublime and brutal: "And then you came round the corner like a sort of human goat and just raped me--it

was shear heaven, even by our standards...Look, I'm all scratched and torn about" (277). Fertility cult rituals were often accompanied by trance states and madness exhibited in self-laceration. This is the kind of "ecstasy" that defines sparagmos. During the ritual madness all taboos and barriers are removed; pleasure becomes pain and pain becomes pleasure.

Desland, after the final coupling that leads to Kathe's death, comes to typify this Bacchic madness:

When I came to myself, I was lying among nettles and thick brambles, bleeding from innumerable scratches on my face, limbs and body. I crept deeper still into the thicket, clutching at the nettles with my bare hands and sobbing with a terror as much like normal fear as leopard is like a cat. The edge of a rusty tin cut my wrist almost to the bone and blood spurted out. Sand and dirt, mingled with the blood, covered my torn clothes from head to foot. I began to cry. (326)

The body has become porous and bodily secretions pour unstaunched into nature. Blood and tears fertilize the earth, and by implication the cosmos itself. The vegetation itself, with its nettles, thickets, and brambles, opens up Desland's body in order to rain blood on its roots. Nature seems to respond spontaneously to this flow with rain: "Crawling out, at last, from among the brambles, I stood up in the open, in heavy rain" (326). Pathetic fallacy thus functions as a type of "sympathetic magic" within romance fiction. Alan through these scenes of sexual self-wounding comes to be a part of a wider natural cyclic world--something from which he had been walled off by Apollonian perspectives. As Alan states, "I used to think that--that things were separate from one another; each one itself and not another thing" (315).

In these ritualistic erotic instants not only are blood, tears

and sweat used to fertilize the natural world; death also reveals its true role within the hierogamous union. Bacchic sexual intercourse literally as well as metaphorically holds death within it, as well as birth. Alan has a prophetic vision that incorporates this vision of the erotic: "I was thrusting and thrusting in the throes of love, knowing that the orgasm I could not restrain would bring about the death of Kathe" (241). Strangely, he does not feel guilty about this "murder." Perhaps Kathe's use of malapropism--"you said you loved me to destruction" (103)--proves more accurate than Alan's subsequent correction: "distraction." Because we can never experience our own deaths, since the process of death entails the destruction of the senses and cognitive functions, death has to be experienced through the deaths of others. Through Kathe's death, Alan experiences his own.

Death becomes present in the terrifying appearance of the murdered child: "What came out of the sea, groping blindly with arms and stumbling on legs to which grey, sodden flesh still clung, had once been a little girl" (325). This apparition recalls their first sexual experience, which was triggered by the illusion of the dead child in the river. But, this apparition now has a basis in reality and not illusion. The reader, as well as Alan, have been slowly led to the realization of Kathe's crime: namely, the brutal murder of her own child to prevent any roadblocks to her eroticism. This revelation has been delayed until the moment on the beach where the murder and their intercourse cross over in time and place and culminate. The true relationship of their sexual coupling to

murder is revealed--death frames the couple, allowing them to come together in the first place and ending their union with Kathe's own death. Furthermore, the ectopic pregnancy, where an impregnated egg attaches itself to the linings of the fallopian tubes and creates an internal rupture, becomes the official cause of death. This realistic and physiological explanation represents yet another illustration of how life holds death, death holds life. The moment of hierogamous orgasm, sparagmos and omophagy are not sequential as in the tragic ritual process but virtually simultaneous.

It is in the representation of cyclic alterations that include dismemberment and death that the romantic lovers are repeatedly depicted, especially during their last copulation:

Through love-making I had known her express every emotion and mood, her every response to the world. This was an elegy...she received me into herself like the sea receiving a setting sun. (325)

In what is perhaps the oldest metaphor, death becomes the setting of the sun, an absence that will bear future presence. The death of Dionysus and Osiris forecast their rebirth, for they become immortal through an immersion in death. Sacrificial ritual is in direct opposition to the Olympian and Christian gods that are immortal through stasis and the denial, defeat and rejection of death. Death has ceased to signify solely annihilation for Alan; now, death now holds the possibility of rebirth or return.

Ultimately, Alan comes to an acceptance of death and loss through transformation:

Porcelain and pottery--they are my mystery...Clay scrabbled out of the dungy earth, mixed with water, with sand, with flint, with the ashes of bones; kneaded, caressed and moulded

by patient hands....and, like our own flesh, doomed at last to be shattered and discarded, rubbish trampled back into the ground whence it came....What else thus bodies forth the nature of life and manifests, from the finite, the infinite? I have work to do. Somehow, my grief and loss are to enrich the world. (369)

The once idealized sculptured objects have become implicated in a cycle of destruction; far from being superhuman in durability they are proven to be even more fragile than the human body. Their bonded images dissolve into the sand and clay from which they were once formed. Both pottery and human flesh are now seen as a part of a cycle of destruction and creation that allows for the immortality of life through metamorphosis.

Moreover, Alan's bereavement of Kathe takes the form of reincarnation: through his retrospective narration he resurrects both his experience and memories of Kathe and his own burgeoning growth. As autobiography, his text is neither a confession of guilt nor an apologia; it is a metamorphosis of Kathe into language. Much as Parr's ceramic creations are connected to his loss of his daughter Phoebe, Alan's literary art is a part and parcel of the loss of Kathe. Creation ultimately comes out of loss.

Romance as Asocial Drama

Romance provides both an alternative and a reaction to traditional forms of religion and social institutions. For example, the paganistic belief in the efficacy of blood sacrifice

is an absolute negation of the Christian belief system; despite the vestigial rituals of sparagmos contained within Christianity. During the service, the minister invokes the ritual sacrifice of Christ before the communion: "The Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee" (296). Communion includes elements of sparagmos and omophagy in it; blood is shed metaphorically and drunk in order to join the congregation with the god--to make Christ's presence, present.

Nevertheless, Christianity has focused primarily on the guilt that humanity should feel for the killing of its saviour. More importantly, it demands that humans shed their bodily desires and concerns and concentrate on supra-natural values. The promised rewards are not in this life but in a spiritual afterlife devoid of both flesh and sexual union. Alan encourages Kathe to seek comfort within the orthodox church, yet these efforts only serve to deepen the guilt that she feels for the sacrifice of her child. The Christian law of "Thou Shalt Not Kill" is incompatible with chthonic blood rituals. Nietzsche makes a lucid distinction between these two systems of worship:

The god on the cross is a curse on life, a sign that one is to redeem oneself from life;--Dionysus cut to pieces is a promise of life: it will be eternally reborn and return from destruction. (Will to Power 543)

Kathe reaches out for Christian redemption from her crime, but is unable to accept this system on an unconscious level:

"clutching the full chalice, [she] collapsed on the floor and lay

senseless. The wine spilled over the rails, over my clothes, over the kneeler, and Kathe's skirt" (296). The congregation sees her actions as a blasphemous waste of the consecrated wine which has become Christ's blood. In contrast, sacrificial blood is overflow. In addition, there is a certain economy of presence in the ceremony of communion, for only what is necessary for the congregation is produced--there is no overflow. Kathe breaks this law of miserly economy as well as the taboo against uncontrolled and emotional behaviour during the ceremony of communion. The church cannot provide a structure where Alan and Kathe can come together as lovers; they must revive chthonic ways of incarnating the divine in the self through ritual experience of the erotic. Through Kathe's "profane" act, Alan comes to see that they are not meant to worship in the structure of church. They themselves become the gods of a private religion; for example Alan observes that: "Kathe giveth and Kathe taketh away" (368).

Secular social and political institutions, as well as religious institutions, reject and are rejected by the erotic couple in romance. The trial scene depicts the legal and clinical dismemberment of the body:

It seemed as though Kathe's naked body, fouled and contorted with pain, was lying stretched on the floor of the court for all to stare at: a desolate temple, whose doors hung sagging, where dried dung littered the cracked and broken paving and dead leaves, blown on the wind, pattered against the scrawled walls. (347)

While this dismemberment is set in a temple of sorts and has the trappings of social ritual, it is not sparagmos. Medicine and the Law are concerned with rational explanations of phenomena, and they

aim to weigh and measure the evidence without passion or subjectivity. The dismemberment occurs in the form of a clinical reductionist post-mortem on the flesh. In addition, the findings are then exposed and exhibited to a wider social field: "The notebook-men, together with two or three other people who also looked like reporters, came in" (344). Personal mystery becomes public fact; therefore, the post-mortem becomes a profane parody of the communal aspect of ritual.

The Girl in a Swing begins with the motif of secular trial with the staging of Aeschylus's tragedy "The Agamemnon" at Bradfield college in the original Greek. In that play Orestes finds redemption from his guilt in the court of Athena with Apollo as his defender against the chthonian Furies. It is with this "tragic" solution--i.e., one generated out of communal values--that Alan's world begins. Nevertheless, in its closure with its own trial scene The Girl in a Swing reverses this paradigm, for here there is no escape from blood guilt; blood sacrifice has become an integral part of connecting the individual to the cosmos. Instead of asserting communal norms and laws the lovers operate outside the margins of society. As Kathe says, not unlike proud Clytemnestra who was prepared to accept her fate for the murder of her husband, "I'm not going to--not any more--try to escape...I'd rather--yes--keep my dignity" (310). Society can not provide a refuge for the couple either for their crimes or for their pleasures.

Reader Response and Shamanic Texts

The rituals of sparagmos and omophagy are more for the reader of the text than for its characters, for the characters only exist in so far as they are experienced during the reading act. As stated earlier, the initiates of ritual catharsis, in this case the reader, are in a "fallen" state; they are afflicted--whether through mental, emotional or physical symptoms of psychosomatic disorder. The restrictions of our cultural structures, our position in the world as discontinuous beings, and the process of socialization all can prove dangerous for the human psyche. The ritual experience of romance provides a form of homeopathic healing. The transformation of the reader through the textual encounter is akin to the ecstasy that celebrants of ritual experience. Healing within the ritual paradigm "occurs when an organism finds a satisfactory relationship with its environment in all spheres of existence" (Booth 13). Ritual, whether textual or actual, is designed to address psychosomatic-rooted illness. Because the ritual subject of romance is the solitary reader, the reading act takes the form of a homeopathic-dramatic interaction between the text and the afflicted reader.

The shaman is what we might term a psychotherapist who uses dramatic mimesis to effect the healing process. For the shaman "medicine and religion are two sides of the same coin" (Hultkranz 1). Health becomes a matter of harmony between the human subject and the "supernatural" world, what we would now term as the

psychological world. In other words, "ritual, no less than medicine and therapy, translates and affects psychosomatic rooted symbolization" (Grimes 123). The primitive shaman uses trance, induced by drugs, torture, starvation, meditation, fatigue, repetitive music and dance etc., to effect the cure both in himself and his subject; this might indicate where the author, the characters, and the reader come together in textual rituals. The modern shamanic text induces a trance state, which is the medical term for the religious concept of ecstasy, through drama. This is why the first task of most fiction is to make the reader willingly suspend disbelief, even if only moment by moment. The practice of using texts as rituals is not a huge leap from the practices of primitive societies; one only has to look at the elaborate ritual productions such as the Cree shaking-tent ceremonies or Sinhalese ritual exorcisms to see the profound connection between ritual mimesis and artistic mimesis. Mircea Eliade in describing the shamanic seance portrays what is essentially drama:

We refer not only to the sometimes highly elaborate "staging" that obviously exercises a beneficial influence on the patient. But every genuinely shamanic seance ends as a spectacle unequalled in the world of daily experience...a world [is created] in which everything seems possible...where the "laws of nature" are abolished, and a certain superhuman "freedom" is exemplified and made dazzlingly present. (Shamanism 511)

The fully participatory reader of romance should undergo an inversion and transformation much along the line of Alan Desland: s/he should be temporarily transmuted by The Girl in a Swing from an Apollonian critic into a Bacchic celebrant. The characters in romance are designed to function as models for the reader,

encouraging a transition from critical detachment to a fully emotional response. In The Girl in a Swing, this response is triggered by and involves a mother's murder of her own child. Kathe's act of horror is strategically withheld in order to allow the murder's linkage with the erotic relationship; if that linkage is not made, only revulsion is produced in the reader, and therefore the reader will not participate fully with the text. The text itself can never explain the fusion of death and life, creation and destruction, but it can make the experience "present" for the reader. Shamanic texts, because they are primarily participatory, disseminate emotions not ideas. Success or failure depends on the ability to create liminal states of trance where new relations with the reader's psychic environment can be explored.

In the earlier case of tragedy I discussed the communal aspect of a large audience response in dramatic production. In romance the response is much more personal; the text fully depicts and operates as a "private" medium. Ironically, the private nature of the reading experience makes it more ritualistic because it is more participatory. We might even dare to call the reader of the romantic text its lover. In the case of The Girl in a Swing, Alan's retrospective narration enables him to combine once more with another human, not physically but textually. He states that the absence of "telling has set me apart, solitary as the sleepless King of Grove (363). Alan becomes a vehicle through which we participate in hierogamy. We come to wear the "mask" of Alan. We join with his development and crises if only fleetingly from moment

to moment. In ritual, "doing is believing" (Meyerhoff 151); in romance, reading is enacting.

It could be argued that the couple, the focus of romance, as opposed to "communal" literature such as tragedy, perpetuates the illusion of binary structure. If this is true, it may be because our sexuality has developed along these lines. In rituals of hierogamy, attraction arises from otherness, from separation. Nevertheless, hierogamy is omophagic in content, for it breaks down the barriers of binary structures, the barriers that separate individuals. The omophagic erotic experience is typified by its struggle to merge, and dissolve into what is numinous, awesome, alien. Hierogamy becomes the ultimate act of self-"destruction."

The lovers as characters do not exist except in the responses, the arousal of the audience. They are a form of literary succubae working at the behest of a shamanic text. These succubae work through the dream-state of the reader's textual trance to seduce us from ourselves. These divine-demonic spirits of sensuality, such as Alan and Kathe, create for the reader an experience of renewal through dissipation and dismemberment of individuality in the erotic-textual act. They are illusory and "artificial" as any nightmare; still, the experience of this artifice has real effect upon the reader.

Nevertheless, the shamanic text working through the spiritual possession of its subjects has a temporary nature. It is a controlled possession in that it has the definite structure of beginning, middle and end. If it were not structured so, it would

embody madness and not ecstasy, chaos and not the cyclic pattern that characterizes cosmos. Of course, the rational observer viewing the moment of possession can interpret it only as mental illness. Pentheus in Euripides's The Bacchae, afflicted with Apollonian rationality, interprets the Maenad's actions with profound alienation. Similarly, a reader unable to suspend disbelief while reading a romance would interpret this theory of textual ritual as insanity. However, Dionysus, as the "mad" god, drives readers to understand through participation and not interpretation.

Conclusion

Overall, the genres of tragedy, horror, and romance perform as rituals in that they have definite structures aimed at producing ecstatic effects in their audience. By now we have encountered a variety of different views on what ritual can accomplish: the defusing of familial and societal violence by the homeopathic experience of violence; the appeasement of the guilt of killing; the experience of dread and thereby defeating the denial of death; the inversion of day-to-day hierarchies and power structures; the performance of a type of sympathetic magic in order to recreate the emotions of the cosmogonic act; the enactment of a social rite of initiation that passes the reader through a state of liminality. These functions are not exclusive; all of them could very well be performed simultaneously. Furthermore, all these functions are similarly enacted in the modified media of literary genres and not solely in primitive communal rites. Within a ritual paradigm, artistic expression in these three genres can now be seen as part of a wider social-sacred activity and not simply as secularized aesthetic artifacts.

As specific ritual configurations, sparagmos and omophagy bring value to ecstatic madness and violence--things seen as pariahs in literary studies and in traditional moral systems. In

the chapter on tragedy, we have seen how the ecstatic madness and violence of Dionysian rituals formed the basis for the historical development of tragic drama; the darker elements that we have so long tried to "purge" from our art are shown to be not only an integral part of these artistic idioms but actually necessary in their development. Sparagmos and omophagy are to tragedy, horror, and erotic romance what Bahktinian carnival is to comedy. Furthermore, while involving similar inversions of status as carnival, sparagmos and omophagy allow for actual violence and real social change; therefore, the genres of tragedy, horror, and romance become more revolutionary than the comic genres.

Throughout this thesis special attention has been paid to the reader's/spectator's responses to the genres of tragedy, horror, and romance. These three genres enact our greatest fears and desires; as Pablo Picasso once observed about a different artistic genre: "Painting isn't an aesthetic operation; it's a form of magic designed as a mediator between this strange, hostile world and us, a way of seizing the power and giving form to our terrors as well as our desires" (7). For example, every central character in these texts shares vital fluids--blood, semen, tears, etc.--in a way that becomes especially disturbing amidst the contemporary paranoia around bodily fluid exchange in this post-AIDS world. Reader's response becomes central to literary studies when we view the literary artifact as a performance with specific social functions. Within ritual studies of literature, performance--the interaction of text and reader--becomes more important than the

text as an isolated, completed product: ritualized art only exists as it is experienced. Overall, textual rituals have a vital and current role to play within our present social structures; sparagmos and omophagy are not outdated, primitive phenomena but exist in modified forms adapted to contemporary circumstances.

When the reader's responses become the locus of the artistic experience, then the reader can also be seen in the role of a ritual subject undergoing a shamanic trance. In this way ritual texts form a variation of holistic therapy. Medicine, religion, and art become bound together in the experience of the shamanic text. Images of renewal through dissolution and death permeate tragedy, horror, and romance; this occurs because it is this very process of transformation that these genres attempt to enact in their relationship to the reader. These texts allow for a direct experience of the vital connection between death, the erotic, and life. Sacrificial texts are designed to affect our psychological and cultural selves; enacted sparagmos elicits emotional responses that dissolve barriers between text and reader to allow for an omophagic merging of the reader with the text. It is in these moments of suspended disbelief where new relations of the self and environment can be formed. Any "pleasure" derived from the experience of "darker" fictions arises, not from the reader's sadistic pleasure in the portrayal of the pain and suffering of others, but from the transformative aspect of these type of fictions.

By reading texts as rituals, we bring cultural anthropology,

philosophy, religious studies, classical philology and psychology to literary texts. Texts then can be read in more of a polyphonic manner. By opening up the textual artifact and linking it with its cultural functions, we now can bring the closed environment of literary studies in contact with the social world. A text no longer constitutes an isolated artifact but becomes part of a wider field of human interaction. At the same time, texts become pertinent to fields of study outside that of literary criticism. Moreover, the interdisciplinary methodology that this thesis employs embodies the overall intent of rituals of sparagmos and omophagy; sparagmic critical practice breaks down the barriers between disciplines. Subsequently, these disciplines can then be brought together in a unified omophagic manner. In this way, literary criticism can become a ritual act.

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