

The Death of Tragedy Revisited

Stephen Brockmann

in memory of Al Bennett

For centuries western writers and critics have viewed tragedy as central to their cultural tradition. For almost as long, they have wondered whether tragedy has disappeared, and if so exactly why it disappeared. Wagner's attempt to revive tragic drama through opera was intended as a response to the purported disappearance of tragedy as an art form; and Nietzsche's youthful essay *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) is partly an exploration of tragedy's death and its supposed rebirth in Wagner's artwork of the future. In the United States, Joseph Wood Krutch declared the death of tragedy in his book *The Modern Temper* in 1929, arguing, "we write no tragedies today, but we can still talk about the tragic spirit of which we would, perhaps, have no conception were it not for the" tragedies of previous centuries.¹ George Steiner's 1961 study *The Death of Tragedy* demonstrates some of the ways in which western writers like Wagner and critics like Nietzsche have, over the centuries, sought to respond to tragedy's alleged disappearance. At times Steiner's book reads like a whodunit: Who killed tragedy? Is it really dead? Steiner shows that there are a great many possible culprits, even if philological detective work is unable to identify the murderer unequivocally. Of course almost as vocal as those declaring the death of tragedy have been critics, such as Kenneth Burke, who insisted in 1953 that "in the matter of the tragic spirit . . . there seems to be no essential abatement at all,"² or Thomas F. Van Laan, who argued in 1991 that "the myth [of the death of tragedy] had no business ever existing,"³ or William Storm, who, in his 1998 study of tragic theory, insisted that there has been no fundamental break in either tragic spirit or tragic drama, "which endures in our own time, and which will continue" for as long as human beings creatively respond to the fundamental dilemmas of life.⁴

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The belief that tragedy occupies a privileged position in the western cultural tradition goes back at least to Aristotle. In his *Poetics*, written in the fourth century BC, the philosopher gives pride of place to the tragic art form, calling it superior to the epic because it accomplishes a similar end with greater economy of means. Aristotle believes that “that which is more concentrated gives greater pleasure than that which is dispersed over a greater length of time.”⁵ In other words, the tragic drama is superior to the epic poem because, although just as powerful, it is shorter and hence more concentrated in its effect.

Aristotle also praises the way that tragedy combines drama and music with story-telling; here the philosopher anticipates the arguments that Wagner was to make over two millennia later about the superiority of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Whereas, Aristotle explains, the epic poem features story-telling alone, tragedy enhances story-telling with theatrical play-acting, which increases tragedy’s “vividness,” and “music, which intensifies our pleasure in the highest degree.”⁶ For all these reasons, Aristotle asserts, “tragedy is superior to epic poetry.”⁷

What makes tragic drama superior to comedy—even though the latter also contains theatrical and musical elements—is, for Aristotle, the fact that tragedy takes as its subject matter a higher, more serious-minded theme, whereas comedy appeals to the instincts of lower people. All art is based on imitation, since human beings have a natural instinct to mimic the world around them, Aristotle asserts; but some are drawn to imitations of base actions, while others are attracted to imitations of the serious and dignified. The philosopher claims that at some point in its historical development “poetry split into two kinds; for the graver spirits tended to imitate noble actions and noble persons performing them, and the more frivolous poets the doings of baser persons.” Tragedy appeals to poets with “graver spirits,” and hence—after relatively unexalted origins “in impromptus by the leaders of the dithyrambic chorus”—it ultimately came “to assume an air of dignity” as the greatest of western literary art forms.⁸ Perhaps the continuing fascination of western cultural critics with the problem of tragedy derives in no small part from the fact that Aristotle, the west’s first literary critic, devoted a large portion of his *Poetics*, his first work of literary theory, to the identification and description of tragedy. The “air of dignity” with which Aristotle credited tragedy in the fifth century BC has remained with it to this day.

That “air of dignity” was still very much present when Steiner, asserting that “we are entering on large, difficult ground,” began his study of tragedy and its purported death by stating that tragic drama—not only central but also unique to the western tradition—deals fundamentally with the unfairness and ungovernability of a world without “rational explanation or mercy,” in which “things are as they are, unrelenting and absurd.”⁹ Here Steiner is following Nietzsche, who had also asserted that tragedy provides an unflinching look at the real misery that lies at the foundation of human existence. In the same vein, Steiner asserts that tragedy

reminds man of his absolute powerlessness in the face of a cruel, unrelenting fate; it shows, the critic believes, that no matter how far man progresses, how much he learns, or how much power over the world he gains, such rises serve only to increase the depth of his inevitable fall. Steiner suggests, however, that tragedy's demonstration of man's absolute powerlessness ultimately, and paradoxically, ennobles him, for it is "in the very excess of his suffering" that "man's claim to dignity" lies. "Powerless and broken, a blind beggar hounded out of the city, he assumes a new grandeur."¹⁰ Here too Steiner is following Nietzsche, who had claimed that it is in bearing up to great suffering that human beings restore dignity and meaning to their lives. Krutch had also insisted that "it is only in calamity that the human spirit has the opportunity to reveal itself triumphant over the outward universe."¹¹ Van Laan refers to those who espouse this line of thinking as "affirmationists."¹²

It is this vision of human grandeur in the face of even the worst adversity that is lost with tragedy, and hence the urgency with which Steiner, like Nietzsche, seeks to identify the possible causes for tragedy's disappearance. That disappearance, for Steiner and others, is more than just an academic question of interest only to literary scholars. As Wagner had declared in 1849, "the downfall of Tragedy" marched "hand-in-hand with the dissolution of the Athenian State."¹³ Wagner, like many others, believed that the disappearance of tragedy is a primary sign of cultural decadence which correlates with and perhaps ultimately leads to the dissolution of an entire state or civilization. Likewise for Nietzsche, tragedy was the key to "the innermost life ground of a people," giving them strength of community feeling and patriotism.¹⁴ Krutch saw the death of tragedy as congruent with a general decline in man's ability to believe in his own greatness. "Distrusting its thought, despising its passions, realizing its impotent unimportance in the universe," Krutch insisted, modern society "can tell itself no stories except those which make it still more acutely aware of its trivial miseries."¹⁵ For Steiner and Krutch, no less than for Nietzsche, the death of tragedy opens up profound insights into western culture's path away from myth and religious belief and hence also away from tragedy as what Steiner calls "that form of art which requires the intolerable burden of God's presence."¹⁶ Given its centrality to the western cultural tradition, tragedy comes to represent western civilization itself; hence the death of tragedy implies the death of God and the decline of western culture more generally, just as its birth implies mythic renewal and cultural revival. As Susan Sontag argued in the 1960s, "modern discussions of the possibility of tragedy are not exercises in literary analysis; they are exercises in cultural diagnostics, more or less disguised." Moreover, the critic asserted, "the burial of a literary form is a moral act, a high achievement of the modern morality of honesty."¹⁷

In spite of the problem's recognized importance, there has been no attempt to link Freud's brief psychoanalytic account of the birth of tragedy in *Totem and*

Taboo (1913) with the aesthetic and cultural accounts given by Nietzsche, Wagner, Krutch, Steiner, and others. Indeed, Stanley Edgar Hyman's 1956 judgment that critics have done little to establish a connection between psychoanalysis and tragedy is still surprisingly valid almost half a century later.¹⁸ This has left a curious gap in accounts of the birth and death of tragedy, as if psychoanalysis, anthropology, sociology, and literary history and theory had little to say to each other on this important subject.

In what follows I would like to suggest an approach toward filling that gap. I am far from wanting to impose a strict Freudian interpretation of tragic drama and its development; however, I do want to suggest that the problem of tragedy and its history offer an ideal opportunity for mutual collaboration among the interpretive social sciences and the humanities. Freud offers a vital entry into such collaboration precisely because of his insistence on the importance of interpretation. The problem of tragedy is not accessible to quantitative or experimental method; however, it presents fruitful ground for the kind of interpretive synthesis at which Freud himself excelled. Although one may judge Freud to have failed on any number of counts, such failures should not induce one to remain silent about the larger questions Freud asked. Indeed, it is frequently more interesting to fail at answering a very important question than to succeed in answering a trivial one.

Although Steiner and several other analysts of the death of tragedy wrote at a time when many literary critics were strongly influenced by Freudian interpretations of literature, none of them sought to use Freud's work to help illuminate the problem of the death of tragedy. This is all the more remarkable since Freud himself was fascinated with tragedy and used the eponymous hero of Sophocles's most famous drama to designate the "Oedipus complex." Moreover, Freud explicitly connected the origin of tragedy to the birth of culture itself, suggesting that the history of tragedy is an important indicator of the way in which "the beginnings of religion, morals, society and art converge in the Oedipus complex."¹⁹ For Steiner, however, as for Nietzsche, tragedy was incompatible with the optimistic dictates of western rationalism, of which Freud himself was very much a product and primary representative. If, Nietzsche argues, tragedy expressed a brave and honest pessimism, then the "death of tragedy" lay in the "basic forms of" Socratic optimism.²⁰ "Optimistic dialectic," Nietzsche insists, "destroys the essence of tragedy," for, far from holding that the core of human life is unfathomable suffering, it believes that all mysteries are susceptible to rational explanation.²¹ Socrates, the prototype of the "theoretical optimist" for Nietzsche, has unlimited "faith that the nature of things can be fathomed," and he "ascribes to knowledge and insight the power of a panacea."²² For Steiner any form of optimism, whether based on rationalism or on religion, fundamentally contradicts the essential pessimism of tragedy. Hence, for Steiner, Freud's rationalist use of Greek tragedy

was simply one further proof of the inhospitality of the modern logical world to the mythic sensibility of tragic drama. As Hyman writes, "insofar as psychoanalysis is a branch of clinical psychology aimed at therapy, it is optimistic and meliorative," unlike tragedy.²³ However, whereas Hyman makes a distinction between Freud's more optimistic clinical work and his "gloomy, stoic, and essentially tragic" philosophy of life,²⁴ Steiner believes that the "great Jewish poet Freud" took the radically inexplicable irrationalism of tragedy and transformed it into something completely different: a clear, logical explanation of the human psyche.²⁵ Hence, Freud serves merely as a guidepost, not as a guide, in Steiner's account of the death of tragedy.

Although Freud's interpretation of the Oedipus complex as a phenomenon in the individual psyche and as the primary element in all neuroses may once have offered—and may still offer—a useful framework for analyzing specific literary works, from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* through Wagner's *Siegfried* to Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, that interpretation is not in and of itself helpful for those trying to understand either the nature or the disappearance of tragedy as an art form more generally. Hence, it is understandable that Steiner and others tended to ignore Freud's work on the individual psyche in their studies. However, Freud's broader, more speculative work on the development of human culture itself is potentially more valuable, since it poses precisely the kind of large questions about the general development of culture that are also at stake in the problem of the death of tragedy. Freud himself, in *Totem and Taboo*, expressed surprise at discovering "that the problems of social psychology," like those of individual psychology, "should prove soluble on the basis of one single concrete point—man's relation to his father."²⁶ It was precisely on that single point, however, that his own account of social psychology converged. As Freud declared over a decade and a half later in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), "the process of human civilization and the developmental or educative process of individual human beings . . . are very similar in nature, if not the same process applied to different kinds of object."²⁷ Why Freud's ambitious attempts to link psychology with anthropology and sociology in a generalized theory of human cultural history were generally ignored by Steiner and others—including Hyman—in their exploration of the problem of tragedy is an intriguing question. One possible answer may lie precisely in the ambitiousness of Freud's attempt to connect the individual with social psychology, thus making the Oedipus complex the key to understanding the history of not just the human individual, but also the human species. As Freud acknowledged, the history of civilization itself is a far more difficult abstraction than that of the individual human being, "and it is therefore harder to apprehend in concrete terms."²⁸ Another answer may lie in Hyman's critique of the relentless optimism of American culture, which he believes has affected even the interpretation of Freud himself, threatening

to turn psychoanalysis into just another form of self-help and amelioration in the manner of Norman Vincent Peale.²⁹

Freud's intent to shed light on the development of civilization itself by means of a monocausal explanation may have struck scholars in the second half of the twentieth century as impertinent or excessive. As the reception of Freud for the last century, up to the present moment, clearly shows, even Freud's attempt to provide an interpretive framework for understanding the development of the individual human psyche remains profoundly controversial; it is all the more audacious to make that monocausal framework one part of an even more grandiose picture, in which nothing less than a general explanation of human history is at stake. Freud's work on the development of human culture was very much a part of such a grandiose, historical picture. It was informed by the great sociological and anthropological projects of the turn of the twentieth century and undertaken at a time when European social scientists believed that by studying the customs and rituals of the most primitive peoples at the greatest remove from Europe—particularly the Australian aborigines, who appeared to anthropologists as a relatively pristine original people, untouched by the development of European civilization—they could study the fundamental structures and forces at work in the early development of all cultures, including that of Europe itself. Freud's project, in other words, was part of a generalized scientific optimism, which held that human cultures develop along a relatively clear path from the primitive to the more advanced, a path that, moreover, could be studied and understood.

The word primitive has, since the middle of the twentieth century, acquired a problematic colonialist tone; that problematization is itself probably a clue as to why, during the period following the end of World War Two, the social science projects of the beginning of the twentieth century were not considered applicable to the question of tragedy and its disappearance. After all, the war and the mass murders of civilians that marked its nadir fundamentally shook Europeans' belief in themselves as somehow more advanced than or superior to cultural primitives. The crimes committed in Europe in the first half of the 1940s were, as Freud's erstwhile colleague Carl Gustav Jung declared in 1945 from his neutral homeland Switzerland, "a blow aimed at all Europeans," who had, Jung asserted, previously been able to relegate such atrocities to the supposedly more primitive peoples of a mythic Asia.³⁰ As Jung's fellow countryman, the playwright Max Frisch, put it four years later, these crimes had been committed not by "a people from whom we expect the worst, because they don't have running water and can't read; but by a nation which possesses and creates at a high level what we have, until now, understood as *Kultur*."³¹ In fact, those crimes had to a large extent been committed by people raised in the same cultural tradition and speaking the same language as Freud, Jung, and Frisch.

Twentieth-century European history fundamentally shook the faith of European elites in the superiority of their own culture. Steiner, who was subsequently to devote part of his book *Language and Silence* to an exploration of the ways in which postwar culture responded to the Holocaust,³² duly noted the impact of twentieth-century history on contemporary culture and its apparent inability to produce tragedy as an art form; however, the very cultural break that Steiner invoked may, simultaneously, have prevented him from seeking an explanation for the death of tragedy—one of the central signs of that break—in the rationalist projects characteristic of the pre-Holocaust world. “The political inhumanity of our time . . . has demeaned and brutalized language beyond any precedent,” Steiner argues in *The Death of Tragedy*.³³ Hence he believes that artistic language is increasingly incapable of addressing historical reality. “Language seems to choke on the facts,” he writes.³⁴ In this radically new situation, the faith in reason invoked prior to World War Two probably seemed fundamentally misplaced.

For the social scientists of the turn of the twentieth century, the contrast between non-European primitivism and European cultural advancement was fundamental to their project. Emile Durkheim, whose 1912 study of religious life among the Australian aborigines informed Freud’s own work on *Totem and Taboo* a year later, defined the primitive succinctly when he wrote that a society is primitive if and when its “organization is surpassed by no others in simplicity.”³⁵ Thus the primitive and the simple correspond to each other in Durkheim’s view; and the simple must be sought in faraway places. Much as astrophysicists now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, are seeking to understand the origins of the universe by focusing their telescopes on the furthest regions of the sky—regions so remote that their light now reaching the earth was emitted billions of light years ago, toward the beginning of the universe—so European and American anthropologists at the beginning of the twentieth century sought to understand the development of their own culture by studying its presumptive past in the observable present of remote, primitive peoples. As Durkheim declared in justification of his study of religion among the Australian aborigines, these primitive tribes provided him with a clear picture of religion in its most basic, fundamental forms, uncorrupted by the subsequent complexities introduced, especially, in the advanced culture of Europe. In keeping with his definition of the primitive, Durkheim believes that “primitive civilizations offer privileged cases . . . because they are simple cases,” in which “all is reduced to that which is indispensable,” i.e., “that which is essential, that is to say, that which we must know before all else.”³⁶ Just as the physicist, “in order to discover the laws of the phenomena which he studies, . . . tries to simplify these latter and rid them of their secondary characteristics,” so too the sociologist, in seeking to understand complex social institutions like religion, studies primitive

societies, because “nature spontaneously makes the same sort of simplifications at the beginning of history.”³⁷ Freud makes essentially the same claim about the usefulness of primitive cultures for all attempts to understand more advanced ones when, at the beginning of *Totem and Taboo*, he asserts that the mental life of “those whom we describe as savages or half-savages . . . must have a peculiar interest for us if we are right in seeing in it a well-preserved picture of an early stage of our own development.”³⁸

In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud directly addresses the question of the birth of tragedy, but not that of its death. In his interpretation, the Greek origins of tragedy represent a moment in western culture not far removed from the primitive, totemic framework of the Australian aborigines. Drawing on the work of Salomon Reinach, the great French scholar of religious history, Freud suggests that the goat-song with which tragedy first began—and which is inscribed in the word itself—was none other than the formalized remnant of an archaic totemic ritual. For Reinach, Greek drama had arisen from Dionysian religious rites, which had originally “circled around the sacrifice of a totemic goat, otherwise Dionysos himself; his death was bewailed, and then his resurrection was celebrated with transports of joy. The lamentations gave birth to tragedy, the rejoicings to comedy.”³⁹ Reinach’s interpretation does not conflict with Aristotle or Nietzsche or many later accounts of the birth of tragedy. Nietzsche asserts that tragedy arose out of the religious rituals of the Dionysian cult, while Aristotle sees its origins in “the dithyrambic chorus.” As Storm points out, not only are the Dionysian and the dithyrambic frequently equated in the tragic tradition, but there is still widespread agreement in tragic scholarship that tragedy emerged out of Dionysian cultic rituals.⁴⁰

Freud elaborates on Reinach’s account by suggesting that the origins of tragedy lay in the primal totemic meal, in which the father of the primal horde is murdered and devoured by his sons. Tragedy, he writes, is one of the many cultural practices which emerge out of that original event. For Freud, the hero of the tragic drama “had to suffer because he was the primal father, the Hero of the great primaeval tragedy which was being re-enacted with a tendentious twist.”⁴¹ The “twist” lay in the fact that the chorus mourning the death of the tragic hero in the drama represented the very sons who, in remote reality, had murdered their father in the first place. Tragedy hence represents for Freud a “systematic distortion” and is “the product of a refined hypocrisy.”⁴² It is an organized, ritualized instantiation of chutzpah: murdering one’s parent and then bewailing the fact that one has been cruelly orphaned. It is also an exercise in blaming the victim. In the ritual of tragedy, the chorus projects onto the tragic hero its own crime—rebellion against paternal authority—thus vindicating itself and justifying the hero’s tragic fall. Simultaneously, the chorus mourns the hero’s downfall and identifies itself with him, thus paradoxically acknowledging his ongoing and renewed authority.

For Freud, then, tragedy represents at the level of civilization and its development the same phenomenon that the Oedipus complex represents at the level of the individual and his psychological development: an early response to the primal crime, which is the murder of the father. However, whereas tragedy itself as a cultural phenomenon is still close to the primal crime, the Oedipus complex as a phenomenon of individual psychological development repeats itself symbolically in each generation, up to the present. Although it initially emerged from the literal murder of the father, the Oedipus complex subsequently revolved around the mere desire to murder the father. Whereas western civilization itself has grown old, individual members of that civilization continue to be born and to develop from infancy to adulthood. Hence tragedy may have been a cultural phenomenon that occurred during the youth of western civilization and now no longer occurs, but the Oedipus complex as part of each person's psychological development continues to occur.

Freud had attempted in *Totem and Taboo* to connect Reinach's explanation of the origin of tragedy with his own theory of the Oedipus complex as the prime mover in the evolution of human civilization, and he had undergirded that connection with the findings of anthropologists and sociologists on totemic cultures in Australia and the Americas, from Reinach and Durkheim in France to James G. Frazer and Robertson Smith in Britain. Tragedy represented for Freud a relatively early stage in the development of western civilization, a moment sufficiently close to its origins that it could be fruitfully compared with the contemporary primitive cultures of non-European regions like Australia and the Americas.

When he returned to broader anthropological and sociological questions in *Civilization and its Discontents* at the end of the 1920s, Freud was significantly more pessimistic about the distinction between the primitive and the advanced in human culture. World War One and its horrors separated the two studies from each other; and the year in which *Civilization and its Discontents* was published marked not only the beginning of the world economic crisis known in the United States as the Great Depression, but also a moment of political turmoil in Austria and Germany, as Central Europe began its descent into Nazism and further war. In other words, Freud had good reasons to be more pessimistic in the latter book than in the former. The central question of *Civilization and its Discontents*—why modern human beings are unhappy in the civilization they have created—shows that the clear contrast between European civilization and non-European barbarism, while still intact, has lost all traces of smug European self-satisfaction. Freud wonders why there is so widespread a belief throughout Europe “that what we call our civilization is largely responsible for our misery, and that we should be much happier if we gave it up and returned to primitive conditions.”¹⁴³

While Freud does not return to the problem of tragedy in this study, his conclusions on advanced European civilization suggest a possible route for explaining the death of tragedy, just as his earlier conclusions on primitive European civilization had explicitly laid out a theory of tragedy's birth. Indeed, the absence of tragedy from *Civilization and its Discontents* would seem to correspond to its absence as an art form from advanced civilized life, just as its presence in *Totem and Taboo* had suggested its fundamental presence in earlier civilized life. Hence, the presence or absence of remnants of totemic culture, such as tragedy, would seem, for Freud, to be a function of the relative distance of a society from its origins: the more primitive a society, the more obvious will be the remnants of totemism, while the more advanced the society is, the more it will be difficult to find such remnants. Since Freud explicitly drew on his work from *Totem and Taboo* in his elaborations in *Civilization and its Discontents*, there is no reason to suppose that his views on the origin of tragedy had changed in the intervening years.

Freud's fundamental conclusion in *Civilization and its Discontents* about unhappiness in civilization is that the path from primitive cultures to advanced cultures is one from a state in which the individual is relatively guilt-free to one in which the burden of guilt becomes increasingly intolerable. It was his intention, Freud wrote, "to represent the sense of guilt as the most important problem in the development of civilization, and to show that the price we pay for our advance in civilization is a loss of happiness through the heightening of the sense of guilt."⁴⁴ Guilt, Freud believes, is nothing more than introjected aggression, i.e., aggression that, instead of being directed at other persons, is directed within, against the individual himself. For civilization to succeed at all as an organized community of multiple individuals, such introjection of aggression is necessary, and without it community would be impossible. Just as the individual child gradually learns to control his aggressions by developing a superego, part of whose function it is to serve as his conscience, so too society itself slowly moves from a more primitive state of naked individual aggression to a state in which individual aggression is controlled in the first instance by physical coercion and, in the second instance, and even more importantly, by the development of cultural institutions such as religion, education, and art that function as a kind of collective superego, and that offer individuals productive outlets for releasing, as well as means of controlling, their pent-up energies. In the individual child the development of the superego is also the result of a process of introjection, through which the absolute external physical power of the father and his representatives or surrogates comes to be replaced by an internal but even more powerful substitute which serves three functions: ego-ideal, observer, and punisher. The ego-ideal represents what the child would like to be; the observer is the instance that keeps him under surveillance;

and the punisher acts when surveillance shows that the child has done something wrong. Through the process of introjection all of these functions, previously located in the living father himself or his surrogates or representatives, become a fundamental part of the child's psyche. In the history of civilization, the primal father is similarly replaced; after his murder and quite literal ingestion by his sons, he becomes the totem animal of primitive religions and, ultimately, the omnipotent father of monotheistic religions. As Freud suggested in both *Totem and Taboo* and in *Civilization and its Discontents*, as well as in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), even the advanced monotheistic religions of the west, Judaism and Christianity, cannot hide the original rebellion against the primal father in which they have their roots. Indeed, he writes in *Totem and Taboo*, "we can trace through the ages the identity of the totem meal with animal sacrifice, with the anthropic human sacrifice, and with the Christian Eucharist."⁴⁵

Combining Freud's discussion of the origin of Attic tragedy in *Totem and Taboo* with his account of civilizational development as leading ultimately to a hypertrophy of guilt as introjected aggression in *Civilization and its Discontents*, it is possible to identify the emergence of tragedy in western civilization as occurring at a moment when aggression has not yet been introjected, i.e., in which it is still, for the most part, directed externally rather than internally. In other words, tragedy emerges at a moment when the guilty conscience of the individual is not at all or only partially developed. The process of cultural refinement that ultimately leads to a decrease in social violence has not completely succeeded, and the social world is still full of naked, brutal aggression. The violent individual in Aeschylean tragedy does not feel any approximation of what one might call, with respect to a character in a modern drama, guilt. Punishment for crimes in Aeschylean tragedy—the earliest tragedies known to us—comes directly or indirectly from the gods and directly from those whom the tragic hero has wronged.⁴⁶ Agamemnon is killed by his wife Clytemnestra; Clytemnestra is killed by her son Orestes; and Orestes is pursued and tormented by the Eumenides, who seek to punish him for his murder of his mother. Not one member of this human family—father, mother, or son—is troubled by feelings of guilt. In the world of Aeschylean tragedy, it is not the role of the individual human being to guarantee moral order. Instead, the moral authority of the universe is guaranteed by the gods themselves, whose power is unquestioned. As the chorus in *Agamemnon* declares, the course of events is underwritten by Zeus, "first cause, prime mover./For what thing without Zeus is done among mortals?/What here is without God's blessing?"⁴⁷ If all things come about through the will of the gods, then so too vengeance belongs to them:

The gods fail not to mark
 those who have killed many.
 The black Furies stalking the man

fortunate beyond all right
wrench back again the set of his life
and drop him to darkness.⁴⁸

Murder is a crime, and it is punished by the gods. Likewise, no man has the right to excessive fortune, and those men “fortunate beyond all right” will be punished. The implication is that excessive fortune is almost certainly a sign that those who enjoy it are criminals and that, in and of itself, it constitutes a crime against the gods, exciting their envy. Hence, the chorus implores: “Let me attain no envied wealth,/let me not plunder cities.”⁴⁹

The invocation of the gods as entities who can prevent such misfortune is more than just a grammatical construction. Describing what she calls the original tragic audiences’ “surreal” or “super-real” world, Ruth Padel writes that the universe of Attic drama is “crackling with temperamental, potentially malevolent, divinity,” gods “permeating and disturbing all things, acting through the world’s solid fabric.”⁵⁰ The furies of vengeance are no mere figments of the imagination, as modern rationalism would interpret them to be; they are real forces with physical consequences in the world. After he has murdered his mother, Orestes is tormented by women who “come like gorgons,” wearing “robes of black” and “wreathed in a tangle of snakes.”⁵¹ When the chorus—perhaps anticipating the arguments of contemporary rationalism—assures Orestes that what he is seeing is a figment of his imagination, he replies, “These are no fancies of affliction. They are clear,/and real, and here; the bloodhounds of my mother’s hate.”⁵² And Orestes is absolutely right that he is being pursued by the Furies; it is they who follow him to Athens, where he is put on trial. In *The Eumenides*, it is the gods themselves who take center stage in the drama, relegating Orestes to insignificance. As Cassandra had predicted shortly before her own and Agamemnon’s murder, “We two/must die, yet die not vengeless by the gods.” Orestes, Agamemnon’s son, would come as a tool of divine vengeance, she foretold: “For this is a strong oath and sworn by the high gods,/that he shall cast men headlong for his father felled.”⁵³ And Athene tells the angry furies at the end of the *Oresteia* that Orestes, far from wronging the gods by visiting vengeance upon his mother, has done nothing but carry out their will; Apollo, “who spoke the oracle was he/who ordered Orestes so to act and not be hurt.”⁵⁴ Even Orestes himself acknowledges that he committed his crime “by order of this god, here.”⁵⁵ In Aeschylean drama there is no inner world of a character that is at odds with an outer world; rather, the outer world determines and to some extent even creates whatever interiority there is. As Ruth Padel succinctly argues, “We think of emotion coming from inside. Greek does not.”⁵⁶

What is most striking about the *Oresteia* from the point of view of modern drama is the complete absence of psychology. The unimportance of psychology is neither coincidental nor a flaw, as it would be in an age in which character

development is believed to occupy the center of dramatic art. Aristotle had defined action itself as the primary element in tragic drama and declared character to be secondary. "What happens—that is, the plot—is the end for which a tragedy exists," he had declared. "What is more, without action there could not be a tragedy, but there could be without characterization."⁵⁷ In Attic, and particularly Aeschylean, tragedy, it is not so much the characters themselves as what they do that is central to the drama. Viewers of the *Oresteia* have no clear impression of who Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Orestes are or of how they came to be the way they are. We know little about their childhoods, day-to-day activities, hobbies, or sexual proclivities. We do not know how Agamemnon and Clytemnestra treated Orestes as a child. All such details would seem to be unimportant and, hence, we can do without them. These characters are, in effect, the sum of their actions, and all of their actions have significance.

This means that there are no actions in the drama that do not signify. Steiner notes that Greek tragedy is devoid of the detailed attention to everyday habits so characteristic not only of comedy but also of much serious modern drama: "There are no lavatories in tragic palaces, but from its very dawn, comedy has had use for chamber pots. In tragedy, we do not observe men eating, nor do we hear them snore."⁵⁸ By way of contrast, the second act of Miller's *Death of a Salesman* begins precisely with a breakfast scene: "Wonderful coffee. Meal in itself," Biff says to his mother, to which she replies: "Can I make you some eggs?" Although he does not talk about snoring, Biff does discuss how soundly he has slept: "like a dead one."⁵⁹ Such banal actions and discussions about them are part of the realistic quotidian world of many contemporary plays, but have no place in Attic tragic drama, particularly in the tragedies of Aeschylus. In Aeschylean tragedy, it is action which carries significance; in comedy, and in many modern dramas, as Krutch has pointed out, actions frequently declare their insignificance, and thus the insignificance of the people who carry them out. As Biff says to his morose father Willy shortly before the latter's suicide, "Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you!"⁶⁰

If Aeschylean tragedy is fundamentally about action and not about character, then it is *not* about the individual's own growing sense of his own guilt, and it is not about the ways in which an individual visits punishment upon himself for that guilt. Sophocles's King Oedipus, who blinds himself upon learning that he has killed his father and slept with his mother, has, by punishing himself, already taken a step away from Aeschylean tragedy and toward modern drama and character formation; however, in keeping with the general tendency of Attic tragedy, he is also acting primarily as a surrogate for divine retribution. Oedipus's act of self-mutilation, along with the nature of his crime, makes him the ideal template for Freudian psychoanalysis. However, in their original Attic context Oedipus's actions were not meant to be symbolic; they were seen as all too real.

No doubt one of the reasons Steiner is unable to integrate Shakespeare's *Hamlet* into his theory of the tragic is that its hero, although a distant relative of the Greek Orestes as an avenger of his father, is also a precursor of the modern western individual. He is a fully-depicted, sonorous character whose personality, famously, tends toward indecisiveness, self-reflection, and lack of action: a character, in short, who would have been impossible in Aeschylean tragedy, but who is already en route to the world in which Arthur Miller's characters live, a world in which the final verdict on the deceased protagonist, spoken by his son, is: "He never knew who he was."⁶¹ Aeschylus's figures seek no such knowledge, and even when Cassandra wishes to give it to them, they refuse to listen. Self-knowledge is inimical to the action that they desire. As Nietzsche wrote of Hamlet, "knowledge kills action; action requires the veils of illusion." However, Nietzsche is wrong in thinking that self-knowledge connects Hamlet to the tragic hero of Aeschylean drama; it is precisely this self-knowledge that separates him from them, for Orestes and his family neither have nor seek such self-knowledge. It is post-Attic drama that, as Storm writes, "turned increasingly to the complex constitution of the human soul."⁶²

Modern theater, in other words, tends to be self-reflexive and self-conscious, whereas Aeschylean drama did not. In his influential study *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (1963), which concurs in the judgment that tragedy is dead, but which suggests that tragedy's demise offers tremendous theatrical opportunities, Lionel Abel also refused Hamlet admission into the pantheon of tragic heroes, calling him instead a "towering figure of" self-referential, self-reflexive "Western metatheatre"—modernity's creative response to unself-conscious, unpsychological tragedy. In Abel's view, the modern "Western playwright," unlike his Attic precursor, "is unable to believe in the reality of a character who is lacking in self-consciousness."⁶³ Modern drama's search for self-knowledge implies a disjunction between interiority and exteriority that did not exist in the Attic world. In Attic drama, there was no need to explore the mysteries of the human soul, because any secrets were immediately apparent in the character's own actions and in the outside world itself. Freud cites Hamlet's famous line that "conscience does make cowards of us all" as an indication of the way in which civilization tends to coincide with an increase in individual feelings of guilt.⁶⁴ However, Shakespeare was probably not using the word conscience in the same way that Freud intended it: for Shakespeare, it probably meant simply knowledge or the effort to gain it. For Shakespeare, it is ratiocination itself that makes us cowards; but the characters in Aeschylean drama have no desire to be cowardly, and hence they seek neither ratiocination nor a Freudian conscience.

Although Steiner rarely draws explicitly on Nietzsche in his account of the development of tragedy, his title *The Death of Tragedy* suggests that his own book is intended as a kind of response to Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*; and it is

highly unlikely that the well-read Freud, who was clearly interested in the origins of tragic drama in Greece, would have been unfamiliar with Nietzsche's essay.⁶⁵ Over half of Nietzsche's essay is devoted not to the birth, but to the death, of tragedy, which, he, like Steiner later on, attributes in large measure to the growth of rationalism in Greek culture and the attendant death of the gods. In the course of his account of the difference between traditional and modern art, Nietzsche suggests that the fundamental distinction between the two lies in the measure of belief invested by artists in the figures they create. Whereas traditional aesthetic practice tended to endow the visions of art with what Steiner would later call real presence, contemporary rationalism tends to view art as merely allegorical. "For a genuine poet," Nietzsche writes, "metaphor is not a rhetorical figure but a vicarious image that he actually beholds in place of a concept."⁶⁶ In other words, poetic vision is a kind of madness, or, to use Krutch's term, a "tragic fallacy" that is highly productive: the more the poet sees in his images actual realities, the better he will be as a poet; whereas, the more he sees them as stand-ins or substitutes for something else, the less poetic he is. For Nietzsche, the world of Greek tragedy is precisely a poetic world in which the process of psychological individuation that accompanies civilization is reversed; "the dithyrambic chorus" of the tragic drama consists "of transformed characters whose civic past and social status have been totally forgotten."⁶⁷ Indeed, for Nietzsche, this "magic transformation is the presupposition of all dramatic art."⁶⁸

The arguments put together so far suggest that western civilization at the birth of tragedy is characterized by the following fundamental elements: 1. the belief in the constant active presence and intervention of divine powers; 2. an emphasis on action rather than character; 3. an accompanying absence of psychological characterization generally, and specifically of signs of an individual conscience or consciousness of guilt, which presupposes Abel's self-consciousness. Finally, we can add a fourth stipulation: no matter how radically the heroes of tragedy may challenge social consensus, tragic drama in its Attic form shows a unity between the individual world and the social world. This last point is worth further emphasizing, for it helps to explain why the heroes of tragic drama must be kings, queens, and princes, i.e., the rulers of society. It is not so much that "the higher they rise, the further they fall," i.e., that tragic drama requires a fall from great heights—what in German is called *Fallhöhe*—to increase its dramatic effect. Rather, the really crucial point is that tragic drama, like religion in Durkheim's account, is an instantiation of society itself, and specifically of a form of society in which the individual does not yet differentiate himself from the social whole. The king and the queen are the most powerful emblems of this identity between individual and society: their fate is precisely not the trivial fate of the modern, disengaged individual, who, even if he is a President or Prime Minister, is still differentiated from the social whole in both literature and life. Rather, it is the fate

of the entire social collective. Indeed, the Aeschylean story of Orestes and his judgment is simultaneously the account of the foundation of the Athenian collective and of Athenian justice.

In contrast, the world of most modern drama is a world in which tragedy could not have been born and cannot be sustained. First and foremost, it is, as Steiner suggests, characterized fundamentally not by the presence but by the absence of God. Steiner was not the first to suggest this. Nietzsche had already insisted that the proclamation of the death of Pan is analogous to the proclamation that "Tragedy is dead!" and that "Poetry itself has perished with her!"⁶⁹ When Steiner noted in 1961 that "our words seem tired and shopworn" and that "where the modern scholar cites from a classic text, the quotation seems to burn a hole in his own drab page," Nietzsche had already declared ninety years earlier: "Away with you, pale, meager epigones! Away to Hades, that you may for once eat your fill of the crumbs of our former masters!"⁷⁰ And Krutch had voiced similarly disparaging remarks about modern drama. For both Steiner and Nietzsche before him, the reason for the purported lack of linguistic and aesthetic force in contemporary art and language is none other than the disappearance of God, as a result of which man is banished to a world without mythology. In this godless world, man is no longer the tool of divine forces, as he is in Aeschylean tragedy. Rather, he is now a character in and of his own right; he has acquired unprecedented freedom, but with that freedom comes a horrific responsibility. As Abel clearly shows, one need not accept the disparagement of modern drama as inadequate in order to share the underlying conclusion that modern and ancient drama are indeed different.

What is that process of character formation or of individuation that Nietzsche decries, and that he sees as having been overcome in Greek tragedy? It is precisely in helping to shed light on this question that Freud can be of service. Whereas Nietzsche had suggested that the gods simply die, Freud suggests that, far from dying, they leave their former residence in the world outside the individual psyche and take up residence within, where, as the individual's superego, they carry out their task of surveillance, punishment, and serving as an ego-ideal. They become the individual's conscience, which is simply the judicial aspect of the self-consciousness that Abel identifies as distinguishing modern from ancient theater. If the *Oresteia* had ended with the trial of Orestes by the gods, modern drama tends to feature the trial of the contemporary individual by his own conscience. However, if the Greek gods, although powerful and stern, had ultimately declared Orestes innocent of all crimes, the modern conscience is relentless in its pursuit and punishment of the wayward individual. It tracks him down and all too frequently kills him. Once the furies of vengeance have taken up their residence inside the individual psyche, they exercise a regimen that is even sterner and more fearsome than the rule of the gods previously. Orestes goes free and ultimately becomes a king in his own country. But Willy Loman, who certainly longs to be a prince, and

whose crimes are surely far less severe than those of Orestes, exercises the most brutal judgment upon himself when he commits suicide.

It follows from this that suicide, so much a presence in modern drama, is, as Storm has suggested, fundamentally not part of the world of Aeschylean tragedy and "more characteristic of the contemporary era."⁷¹ If suicide represents the individual's accession to three primary judicial roles—judge, executioner, and executed criminal—that had previously been located beyond the purview of any one individual, then it, too, is part of the general process of introjection which Freud believes to lie at the root of cultural progress. If so much of modern drama revolves around suicide or the possibility of suicide, whereas ancient tragedy did not, then perhaps this change reflects a world in which, as Freud suggests, individuation and the attendant consciousness of guilt have become virtually intolerable and in which, as Emile Durkheim suggests with reference to what he calls "egoistic" and "anomic" suicide, the human individual no longer finds himself in union with the social networks that had previously integrated him into a community. For Durkheim, paradoxically, to free man "from all social pressure is to abandon him to himself and demoralize him."⁷² This sociological perspective on suicide converges neatly with Freud's account of introjection and guilt, as well as with the history of western drama. For all his crimes, Orestes is still very much at one with the social world around him; but for all his acceptance of its values, Willy Loman and many of the other primary figures of modern drama are fundamentally isolated from it.

One could perhaps simplify this construction by suggesting that Aeschylean tragedy is about murder, whereas modern drama is about suicide. In Aeschylean tragedy, the hero acts as a tool of the gods in order to avenge himself upon those who have wronged him. This can lead to a cycle of murder and betrayal, as avengers visit vengeance on other avengers. Modern psychological drama short-circuits the process by centering everything in and around the individual himself. He acts in accordance with the dictates not of gods who reside outside himself but of the stern taskmaster within, and the vengeance he carries out is frequently against himself alone. Hence, when he dies, there is, it would seem, no need for him to be avenged. And yet Willy Loman leaves his sons with a stern legacy and an ego ideal that they can hardly succeed in living up to. Although Miller's play ends with Linda Loman's observation that "we're free and clear" because Willy's debts have now finally been paid off, that financial freedom by no means translates into a moral or ethical freedom. Financial debt may be gone, but Willy's legacy of guilt doubtless remains. And when Biff and Happy inevitably fail to be the princes Willy had imagined them to be, Willy's physical absence from the house will not guarantee his psychological absence from the conscience of his sons. Whereas the criminal Orestes had confidently declared "My father will aid me from the grave," Biff and the sadly named Happy will not be so lucky.⁷³

This account also suggests an explanation of the radical provocation posed by Bertolt Brecht to the development of modern drama. Although Brecht labeled his theater non-Aristotelian, he was theoretically in agreement with Aristotle on the relative lack of importance of character development and psychology. At least theoretically, Brecht would have agreed with Aristotle that what is really important is what characters do, not what they think or why they think it. Hence, Brecht's plays are fundamentally about a social, not an individual world. Paradoxically, Brecht's creation of the epic theater as a modern response to the crisis of drama in the twentieth century returned at least in this way to the origin of tragedy itself, even if, in many other ways, Brecht may represent elements of Abel's self-reflexive "metatheatre." Brecht's apparent opposite pole in modern theater, Samuel Beckett—who drove the typical isolation, fragmentation, and alienation of the modern individual to its logical extreme in his plays, at times replacing whole bodies with mere body parts—in fact also tends to eliminate psychology and character development from his theater, thus paradoxically restoring an almost Attic balance between the riven individual on the one hand and a broken world on the other. Both Brecht and Beckett would suggest that the most advanced practitioners of modern and postmodern drama in the twentieth century sought to overcome the bind into which modern psychological drama's emphasis on character development had driven them. Hence, one must make a distinction between the psychological realism of modern drama in Ibsen and O'Neill, for instance, and the rejection of psychological realism by modernists like Brecht, Beckett, and Artaud. It was entirely appropriate for Steiner to include Brecht among his witnesses to the possible continuation, or rebirth, of tragedy.⁷⁴ The radically anti-psychological thrust of much advanced modern and postmodern drama does indeed point to a possible convergence with ancient tragedy, even if avant-garde theater does not always succeed in escaping psychology. However, in most of the western world, including the United States, mainstream theater continues to be dominated by psychological realism. This suggests that we live in a world characterized by a mainstream theater in which tragedy is still dead and an avant-garde theater which is making serious attempts to escape from psychological realism and, hence, to return to tragedy. If Freud had written *Civilization and its Discontents* as a response to a dissatisfaction with modern culture so great that it culminated in the belief "that we should be much happier if we gave it up and returned to primitive conditions," then contemporary avant-garde theater, precisely in its frequent embrace of the "primitive conditions" that prevail in tragedy, is surely a prime example of dissatisfaction with modern culture. However, it should be remembered that, for Freud, the progress of civilization, for all its problems, was nevertheless positive; even hypertrophic guilt was preferable to a state of utter lawlessness. If the tendency of avant-garde theater to discard psychology goes beyond mere "discontent" and represents an actual desire to return "to primitive conditions," then Freud would no doubt have

disapproved of it. In this sense, Freud and Ibsen are similar: they both know the problems and pain of contemporary existence, and of contemporary psychology, but neither of them has a better alternative. Far from joining Wagner, Nietzsche, and Krutch in mourning the death of tragedy, Freud would have welcomed it as a sign of difficult but, nevertheless, praiseworthy progress.

My account of the fundamental distinction between archaic tragedy and modern psychological drama as lying in the gradual development of a guilty conscience exemplified particularly in the phenomenon of suicide draws eclectically from Aristotle, Nietzsche, Durkheim, Freud, Krutch, Steiner, and Abel. The central insight into the role played by guilt in modern civilization comes from Freud. However, this insight is not necessarily dependent on the complete historical accuracy of Freud's lurid account of the totem meal and the anthropological origins of the Oedipus complex. Certainly the references to cannibalism in the *Oresteia* and elsewhere in ancient Greek tradition suggest that Freud's explanation may not be completely impossible. Moreover, Storm's recent emphasis on *sparagmos*—dismemberment—and *omophagia*—the consumption of raw flesh—as lying at the origin of tragic drama concurs entirely with Freud's account. Although Storm stresses the tendency of *sparagmos* to occur metaphorically in modern drama, he focuses on its physical occurrence at the origin of tragedy.⁷⁵ However, it is impossible to know for sure; and at any rate, the actual origin of human feelings of guilt may not be as important as the fundamental fact of their existence. All that is necessary for the account of the death of tragedy is a recognition of the central role of guilt itself in the development of culture, no matter how that guilt may originally have come about. My account of modern drama as centering on the psychological dismemberment of the protagonist dovetails with Storm's theory of tragedy; however, unlike Storm, who sees more continuity than discontinuity, I make a clear break between Aeschylean tragedy and the later development of drama, particularly modern psychological drama. It makes a difference if a drama is about an outer world that, however torn or conflicting, is in fundamental agreement with an inner world, or if, instead, a drama is about an inner world that cannot be brought into agreement with an outer world. A drama that focuses on the impossibility of individual happiness is very different from a drama that focuses on the cosmic rifts in the world at large. Analysis of Aeschylean drama and of Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* would suggest that there are indeed, empirically, fundamental differences between Attic tragedy and modern psychological drama and that one of the primary differences lies in character development or lack thereof and, particularly, in the consciousness of guilt. Sociologically, Durkheim's account of modern societies as leading to the phenomena of social anomie, rootlessness, and disturbingly high rates of suicide corresponds to Freud's own account of the

frequently intolerable burden of guilt in modern culture. Both suggest a theoretical explanation for the empirical findings in the analysis of Aeschylean and modern drama.

Notes

1. Joseph Wood Krutch, "The Tragic Fallacy," *Tragedy: Vision and Form*, ed. Robert W. Corrigan (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965) 271-283; here, 272.
2. Kenneth Burke, "On Tragedy," *Tragedy*, ed. Corrigan 284-286; here, 285.
3. Thomas F. Van Laan, "The Death-of-Tragedy Myth," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 5.2 (Spring 1991): 5-32; here, 6.
4. William Storm, *After Dionysus: A Theory of the Tragic* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998) 7.
5. *Aristotle's Poetics*, trans. James Hutton (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982) 78.
6. 78.
7. 79.
8. 48, 49.
9. George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996) 3, 9.
10. 9-10.
11. Krutch 274.
12. Van Laan 12.
13. Richard Wagner, "Art and Revolution," *The Art Work of the Future and Other Works*, trans. W. Ashton Ellis (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1994) 21-65; here, 35.
14. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy, The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1967) 29-144; here, 124.
15. Krutch 277.
16. Steiner 353.
17. Susan Sontag, "The Death of Tragedy," *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Dell, 1969) 138-145; here, 138.
18. Stanley Edgar Hyman, "Psychoanalysis and the Climate of Tragedy," *Tragedy*, ed. Corrigan 287-301, especially 287.
19. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1950) 156.
20. Nietzsche 91.
21. 92.
22. 97.
23. Hyman 290.
24. 290.
25. Steiner 7.
26. Freud 157.

27. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989) 104.
28. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* 104.
29. Hyman 298.
30. Carl Gustav Jung, "After the Catastrophe," *Civilization in Transition*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (New York: Pantheon, 1964) 194-217; here, 200.
31. Max Frisch, "Kultur als Alibi," *Der Monat*, 1.7 (April 1949): 83-85; here, 84. My translation.
32. George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1967).
33. Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* 315.
34. 316.
35. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Free Press, 1965) 13.
36. 18.
37. 21.
38. Freud, *Totem and Taboo* 1.
39. Salomon Reinach, *Orpheus: A History of Religions*, trans. Florence Simmonds (New York: H. Liveright, 1930) 100.
40. Storm 12-17.
41. Freud, *Totem and Taboo* 156.
42. 156.
43. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* 38.
44. 97.
45. Freud, *Totem and Taboo* 154.
46. In focusing primarily on Aeschylus, not Sophocles, I am following Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*.
47. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon, Oresteia*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1953) 33-90; here, 83.
48. 48-49.
49. 49.
50. Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992) 140.
51. Aeschylus, *The Libation Bearers, Oresteia*, trans. Richmond Lattimore 91-131; here, 130.
52. 131.
53. Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 76.
54. Aeschylus, *The Eumenides, Oresteia*, trans. Richmond Lattimore 133-171; here, 163.
55. 156.
56. Cited in Storm 114, from Ruth Padel, *Whom Gods Destroy: Elements of Greek and Tragic Madness* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995) 179.

57. Aristotle's *Poetics* 51.
58. Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* 247-248.
59. Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (New York: Penguin, 1976) 71.
60. 132.
61. 138.
62. Storm 50.
63. Lionel Abel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963) 77.
64. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* 97, footnote 1.
65. Antony Tatlow claims that Nietzsche was "so hypersensitive a psychologist that Freud . . . simply took over his theories, themselves reactions to Schopenhauer, so that passages in Freud map straight onto Nietzsche." Tatlow, "Saying Yes and Saying No: Schopenhauer and Nietzsche as Educators," *Where Extremes Meet: Rereading Brecht and Beckett, Brecht Yearbook* vol. 27 (2002) 9-42; here 27.
66. Nietzsche 63.
67. 64.
68. 64.
69. 76.
70. Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* 314; Nietzsche 76.
71. Storm 177.
72. Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (New York: Free Press, 1951) 389.
73. Aeschylus, *The Eumenides* 156.
74. Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* 344-349; 353-354.
75. Storm 19.