

PETER SHAFFER'S OBSESSIONAL "MYTHS/RELIGIONS"

Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab
from a Psychoanalytic
Point of View

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Letters
and the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
of Bilkent University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts in
English Language and Literature

By

Maryam Soleimani Ardekani

September, 1992

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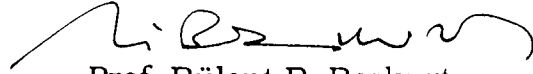
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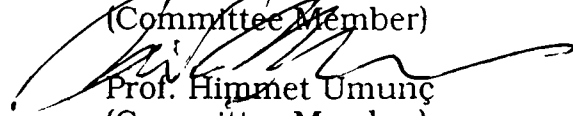
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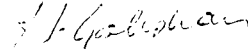
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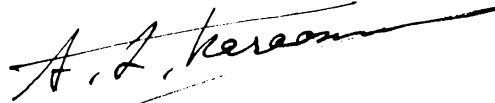


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ABSTRACT

PETER SHAFFER'S OBSESSIONAL "MYTHS / RELIGIONS"

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a Psychoanalytic Point of View.

Maryam Soleimani Ardekani

M. A. Thesis in English Literature.

Advisor: Dr. Laurence Raw.

September, 1992.

The notion of religion in the western world seems to have undergone a radical change in the twentieth century; the individual, instead of cherishing an orthodox belief in God, has rather preferred to develop a "private myth" of his/her own, which is in fact engendered by the individual's obsessions.

Peter Shaffer frequently displays such an obsession with myth/religion in his plays, especially in Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab. In these plays, Shaffer depicts the predicament one finds oneself in once the individual becomes an out cast, when this obsession becomes so eccentric as to make him/her unable to integrate with society.

ÖZET

Peter Shaffer'in oyunlarında İnanç Kavramı: Psikanalitik Açıdan Amadeus, Equus ve Yonadab'ın İncelemesi

Maryam Soleimani Ardekani
İngiliz Edebiyatı Yüksek Lisans Tezi
Tez Yöneticisi: Dr. Laurence A. Raw
Eylül, 1992

Yirminci yüzyıl Batı dünyasında din kavramı köklü bir değişime uğramış gibi görünmektedir; birey, ortodoks bir inanç sistemine bağlı kalmaktansa, kendine ait özel bir inanç geliştirmeyi tercih etmiştir.

Peter Shaffer'in oyunlarında genellikle bu tür saplantılar kişisel inanç kavramı çerçevesinde ele alınıyor. Bu kişisel inanç kavramı Peter Shaffer'in özellikle Amadeus, Equus ve Yonadab eserlerindeki baş oyun kişilerinde kendini açıkça gösterir. Her üç oyunda da, kişisel inançların saplantı haline gelmesinin bireyin toplumsal yaşantıdan soyutlanmasına yol açtığı düşüncesi işlenmektedir.

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.. O thou son of Sol,
But brighter than thy father, let me kiss,
with adoration, thee, and every relic
of sacred treasure in this blessed room.
Well did wise poets by thy glorious name
Title that age which they would have the best.
Thou being the best of things, and far transcending
All style of joy, in children, parents, friends,
Or any other waking dream an earth...
... Dear saint, Riches, the dumb god,
that givest all men tongues... The
price of soul; even hell, with thee to boot,
Is made worth heaven. Thou art virtue, fame
Honor and all things else. Who can get thee,
He shall be noble, valiant, honest, wise-

(extract from the opening monologue
of Ben Jonson's Volpone.)

FOREWORD

It has been suggested by R.A. Cave,¹ that one of the main concerns of twentieth century British dramatists is the human psyche, more specifically, human instincts, desires and emotions. Dr. Jules Glenn, a clinical associate professor and chairman of the child analysis section of the Division of Psychoanalytic Education, Downstate Medical Center, SUNY, claims that literature and art primarily involve human tensions, conflicts and fantasies.² Furthermore, the father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, has intimated that the need for human beings to release their instinct is a psychological fact. Yet being a social animal, man, in general, has to learn to curb instincts which may endanger his fellow citizens -- for fear of retribution. This idea is not, however, a modern one. In fact, it has its roots in Aristotle's Poetics, in which he suggests that such fear of retribution can be overcome through the cathartic effect of drama, that is to say, "the purification of the feelings of pity and fear." Today, such effects can be observed in a number of Peter Shaffer's plays, namely, Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab.

The central characters of Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab, create a sense of catharsis through their character flaws, which results in their inevitable downfall, even though they lack the grandeur of action necessary for a tragic hero. Modern western man, in general, has created private "myths/religions", through his/her subjective interests, which in turn, have at times given rise to "obsessional neurosis". If modern western man's obsessional myths/religions prove to be most eccentric, as for example, Strang's in Equus, or Salieri's in Amadeus, it may result in his/her "downfall"; as he/she fails to integrate with society and thus, is condemned to "exile". Observing such plays may in

turn enhance within the audience a sense of catharsis, due to the pity and fear it feels for the central characters of Shaffer's plays, and beneath a veneer of consciousness, for itself. This, moreover, helps the audience to acknowledge the importance of controlling instincts.

This thesis focuses on passions, desires and their consequences, in the central characters of Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab. The methodology adopted will be based upon the psychoanalytic theories of Freud, together with Jung's ideas about neurosis, and the work of the existential writer, Albert Camus, The Rebel, for obsessional and individual passions/religions, are bound to lead to a form of rebellion. Freudian theories appear appropriate because of his ideas on instincts and their repression, obsessional neurosis, dreams, and primitive religion--or totemism. This text will furthermore deal with (through Shaffer's Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab) the notion of private myths/religions, neurosis, and rebellion (in the theoretical sense), and the vicious circle that emerges from a combination of all three; that is to say, how some of the characters are neurotically obsessed with a concept, that turns into a "private myth." This, in turn, becomes a "religious obsession" for them, such as music becomes for Salieri, and Equus becomes for Strang.

Personalities who cannot control their instincts, and/or consequently become "neurotic" in the long run, can be said to be rebels. In the examination of the aspect of rebellion in Amadeus and Yonadab, some of Camus's ideas on a rebel have been used. Even though he is a mid-twentieth century writer and not Shaffer's contemporary, his ideas on rebellion can be said to refer to basic instincts of man, such as love and hate.

This work is divided into two sections. The first deals with the function of myth in the past and the present. It begins by sketching in the socio-anthropological background of myth as religion, by mostly referring to Henry A. Murray and Eric Fromm. It furthermore attempts to clarify why the public myths and religions of the past have been replaced by private, subjective myths today. The second section looks at Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab, and the private religions and/or totems inherent in them. A play-by-play comparison has been avoided to eliminate repetition: some aspects of all three plays need to be discussed in conjunction with each other, for example, totemism in Equus and Yonadab, or rebellion in Amadeus and Yonadab.

This analysis will demonstrate that Shaffer encourages his audience to identify itself with the "anti-heroes", Yonadab and Salieri. It is this fact that makes the condemnation of the central characters, who are anti-heroes, difficult.

Although Martin Gottfried has claimed that Shaffer's plays are "flashy but fake... irrelevant and forgettable,"³ it will become apparent that Shaffer's Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab express his achievement by which he unifies primitive religion/myths and psychoanalysis, the past and the future, the modern with the primitive. By doing so, his plays assume the status of rituals, involving the audience and the actors in a collective activity.

SECTION ONE

i) ETYMOLOGICAL GREEK MYTHS AND SCEPTIC CONTROVERSY

Ancient Greek myths are constantly reflected in the works of literature, art and music, but the reactions towards these myths have been ambivalent. The ancient Greek philosopher, Zeno of Citium (335 - 263) asserts that such myths are "edifying moral allegories and parables."⁴ Euhemerus (300), the ancient Greek traveller, claims that they are "providers of knowledge, however hyperbolic and distorted of great prehistoric personage."⁵ Thales of Miletus (early sixth century B.C.) thought they were "stories to be enjoyed and interpreted in ancient ways... entrancing fictitious narratives of the interplay of personified cosmic forces."⁶

The sceptical views of such myths that the ancient Greeks held, had their basis in the "Greek miracle" which occurred in the course of the seventh and eighth centuries B.C., when the mythopoeic view of the world which predominated Homeric poems, gave way to a mere rationalist approach. The "Greek miracle" was due to a number of factors, such as political instability, the need for new forms of discourse among proponents of opposing myths, and the emergence of new religious cults that attached more importance to the individual, rather than the community. This, in turn, helped to weaken the hold of traditional myths on the minds of their adherents.⁷

Centuries later the "Greek miracle" (the adaptation of mere rationalist approach, very different from the previous mythopoeic approach) helped to develop a rational view of myths. Sir James George Frazer, for instance, claimed that:

By myth I understand mistaken explanations of phenomena whether of human life or of external nature. Such explanations originate in that instinctive curiosity concerning the causes of things which at a more advanced stage of knowledge seeks satisfaction in philosophy and science, but being founded on ignorance and misapprehension, they are always false, for were they true, they would cease to be myths.⁸

Frazer believed that myth and religion could be perceived as in the development of the psyche, which put forward a series of beliefs about man's control of the natural universe. The first stage of the belief was magic, whereby a false relationship was seen between ritual practices and natural events. The second was religion, where a humble prayer was delivered to God. The third was science, through which the real reasons for natural phenomena were studied. Frazer's views were proven to be false by later anthropologists who showed that Frazer's "evolutionary parallelism" and "psychic unity" do not exist. These anthropologists also claimed that similar institutions may have very different origins.⁹

Another sceptical view of myths was put forth by Christian theologians, who believed that myths were "abominable pagan superstitions to be refuted and denounced."¹⁰ However, if one takes a closer look at the etymological Greek myths, it becomes evident that such myths are more than fables, and are in fact the antecedents of modern religion.

ii) GREEK MYTHS AND CHRISTIANITY

In Greek mythology, there exists a concept of the soul, heaven (Elysium) and hell (Hades). Greek myths carry within them the concept of prayer, worship and sacrifice; a notion that Christianity also includes in its doctrine. According to popular Christian belief, the son of God was resurrected three days after his crucifixion; in Greek mythology, too, there are several examples of resurrection. One is that of the God Dionysus, who, after being attacked by the Titans, torn into seven parts and roasted, was reborn by Zeus, who swallowed Dionysus's heart and gave birth to his son. Another is the myth of Proserpine, who according to Northrop Frye, in Murray's Myth and Mythmaking was in a sense resurrected every year: ... "We have, in myth, the story of Proserpine, who disappears into the underworld for six months of every year. The pure myth is clearly one of death and revival."¹²

It can be claimed, therefore, that such myths are the basis of Christianity. Yet one may ask oneself how the concept of religious belief originated. There are two major reasons why primitive man turned to the supernatural. One is that humans are creative and instinctively apply extraordinary answers to the simplest questions. In Myth and Mythmaking, Joseph Campbell quotes the example of Leo Frabenius:

A professor is writing at his desk and his four-year-old little daughter...(is playing with)...burnt matches...a considerable time elapses... suddenly the child shrieks... "take the witch away! I can't touch the witch any more"... an eruption of emotion is the characteristic of the spontaneous shift of an idea from the level of sentiments (*Gemüt*) to that of sensual consciousness (*sinnliches*)

Bewusstsein). Furthermore, the appearance of such an eruption obviously means that a certain spiritual process has reached a conclusion. The match is not a witch... the process therefore, rests on the fact that the match has become a witch on the level of the sentiments.¹³

The second reason why primitive man turns to the supernatural is that his/her life is filled with riddles which cannot be logically explained: why dark hair goes grey, why life comes to an end, or days change to nights. According to E. B. Taylor, it was this magical concept of the duality of life and nature (i.e. night and day, thunder and rain, the cycle of seasons, death; dreams and awakenings, anger; love, etc.) that first led to a belief in organised religion. He states that:

What the doctrine of the soul is among the lower races, may be explained in stating the animistic theory of its development. It seems as though thinking men, as yet at a lower level of culture, were deeply impressed by two groups of biological problems. In the first place, what is it that makes the difference between a living body and a dead one; what causes waking, sleep, trance, disease, death? In the second place, what are the human shapes which appear in dreams and visions? Looking at these two groups of phenomena the ancient savage philosophers probably made their first step by the obvious inference that every man has two things belonging to him, namely, a life and a phantom. These two are evidently in close connexion with the body, the life as enabling it to feel and think and act, the phantom as being its image or second self; both, also, are perceived as being its images or second self; both, also, are

perceived to be things separable from the body, the life as able to go away and leave insensible or dead, the phantom as appearing to people at all distances from it.¹⁴

Gerald L. Berry, put forward a similar view in 1958:

The crises which early man had to face were the basic crises of life: birth, puberty, marriage, hunger, sickness, pestilence, harvest, war and death--and around these crises his religion was built.¹⁵

It can be claimed that because ancient Greek myths could account for the existence of natural phenomena to what Arthur Koestler called the "unsolicited gift"¹⁶ (the brain) of primitive man, they are the basis of traditional religion. In fact, for the ancient Greeks, myths *were* religions. But the rationalism of ancient Greek philosophers, such as Plato (and his distrust for senses) and Aristotle (and his claim that the senses are the source of all knowledge-a view that led to positive science which dominated the western natural philosophy greatly until the seventeenth century)¹⁷ helped to logically explain myths, and thus undermined traditional religion, as logic tends to bring about a dilemma within conventional beliefs.

The same trend can be observed in Christianity, which came under threat from science, technology and especially the eighteenth century rationalists, such as Descartes (and his Cartesian world founded on the premis "*cogito ergo sum*'), Sir Isaac Newton, Hume, and the nineteenth century rationalist, Hegel (and his higher criticism of the Bible). Other

doubts which gave rise to controversy as far as religion was concerned in the western Christian world, were George Eliot's translation of David Friedrich Strauss's The Life of Jesus Critically Treated and Ludwig Feuerbach's idea that God is a projection of man's desire and need. The French scholar Ernest Renan's famous Vie de Jesus (1863) claimed that Jesus was a peasant of moral genius, but one who suffered from grave illusions, while Darwin's Origin of Species (1859) explained that the appearance of man on earth was due to natural causes.¹⁸

Thus today, the mythic—religions of the past have altered to suit the demands of the modern era. One must not, however, scorn the primitive beliefs, for if myth did not exist, scientific research might never have achieved what it has today. W.B. Yeats, in a letter to Sturge Moore, seems to justify this statement. Yeats wrote: "Science is the critique of myths.... There would be no Darwin, had there been no book of Genesis."¹⁹ Ancient Greek mythology -- the basis of western religion -- has been redefined to suit modern taste, as Ralph Waldo Emerson has suggested:

a modern mythology would have to be industrial, mechanical, parliamentary, commercial, and socialist, moreover... its "mythogogic names" would be Astor, Fulton, Arkwright, Peel, Russell.²⁰

The fact that myths/ religions are today personal, does not mean that modern western man (in general) has forsaken the concept of worship. The object of his worship has merely transformed; it has become an object of personal interest. Modern man, in general, is aware that technology has not bestowed the gift of immortality on him/her.

Yet it has solved many questions concerning natural phenomena. Moreover, it has taught people to accept their limitations in nature. In his Psychoanalysis and Religion, Fromm states that:

... (man) .. remains subjected to death, age, illness, and even if he *were* to control nature and to make it wholly serviceable to him, he and his earth remain tiny specks in the universe. But it is one thing to recognize one's independence and it is something entirely different to indulge in this dependence, to worship the forces on which one depends. To understand realistically and soberly how limited our power is, is an essential part of wisdom and of maturity, to worship it is masochistic and self destructive. The one is humility, the other self humiliation.²¹

Modern western man has accepted his limits as far as nature and morality are concerned, yet this realization has not stopped him/her from expressing desires and obsessions. For some people, these desires may have ecclesiastical roots. Some others, though, may create other myths, and hence, other religions. Indeed, it is likely that everyone has his/her own private religions/myths, for as Fromm claims, it is perfectly permissible for man to choose any concept/object, as his/her religion. In his Psychoanalysis and Religion, Fromm suggests that:

Man may worship animals, trees, idols of gold or stone, an invisible god, a saintly man or diabolic leaders, he may worship his ancestors, his nation, his class or party, money or success. His religion may be conducive to the

development of destructiveness or of love, of domination or of brotherliness, it may further his power of reason, or paralyze it, he may be aware of his system as being a religious one, different from those of a secular realm, or he may think that he has no religion and interpret his devotion to certain allegedly secular aims like power, money or success as nothing but his concern for the practical and expedient. The question is not *religion* or *not* but *which kind of religion*, whether it is one furthering man's development, the unfolding of his specifically human powers, or one paralyzing them.²²

The reason for creating such religions is easily understood: Jerome Seymour Bruner (1915-), the American psychologist noted for his research and writing on the learning process, asserts that the basis of myth is happiness²³ (quoted by H. A. Murray). Freud, in his Civilization and its Discontents claims that the aim of man, living in a civilization, is amongst other goals to achieve happiness.²⁴ Thus, man in general creates such myths/religions, from his/her obsessions and desires, in order to find happiness. Yet in order to procure happiness, man should not endanger other people's happiness, and thus, must learn to curb his/her instincts.

iii) THE CURBING OF INSTINCTS

Fromm emphasizes that man, by origin, is a herd animal,²⁵ and must inevitably live in a society. If man seeks to find the ultimate happiness for himself/herself, the world would surely digress to its original form of chaos. Thus, s/he must learn to live in peace and

observe the laws of his/her society, which Freud claims, in his The Future of an Illusion, can serve to ensure "the fulfilment of the demands of justice, which have so often remained unfulfilled in human civilization." ²⁶

To achieve this, man, being an instinctive animal, must learn to tame his/her instincts. Most people succeed in this -- or at least seem to -- and create the phenomenon of *Untermenschen*: the passive sub-human creatures. The majority of human beings, who are perceived as mediocre because of their passionless nature and lack of creativity, follow (as many eminent figures such as Nietzsche, Carlyle and Fromm have suggested) the leaders -- *Übermenschen*: the passionate men who employ their passions creatively²⁷ - and thus manage to live moderately happily. If, however, the man of passion chooses to use his/her passion in a destructive or eccentric manner, s/he will consequently be led to his/her own downfall.

iv) THE OUTCOME OF ECCENTRICITY

As Fromm has suggested, man is, after all, only human, and hence, susceptible to impetuous actions. S/he is furthermore endowed with reason, which is by its very nature independent.²⁸ Thus, his/her actions can be determined by thoughts, regardless of whether or not the truth is shared by others. Such individuals who are perceived as outsiders, are aliens liable to destruction. Their destruction, however, creates an effect of catharsis, which warns humanity of the hazards of impetuosity. This trait is reflected in the ancient Greek tragedies (eg. Antigone), where the hero/heroine is often obsessed with a personal "myth" (in Antigone's case, carrying out the burial rites of her brother)

which they are unable to achieve. At this point, the emotional instincts take over the hero/heroine's reason, as they attempt to fulfil his/her obsession; and so, nemesis becomes inevitable.

By adopting this technique, the playwright may very well have the ability to release the audience's subconscious desire and allow them to deliver their instincts through the play. The audience usually identify themselves with the central character (for in him/her one usually observes the desires which are often hidden for fear of shame -- desires such as greed, envy, or the desire for something formidable); the alien who gets destroyed for practising his/her will against traditional beliefs in society. Such concepts appear particularly relevant in the discussion of Shaffer's plays, particularly the concept of the outsider. This will be more fully explained in the next section.

SECTION TWO

In one of the few published criticisms of Shaffer's plays, Dennis A. Klein²⁹ suggests a brief comparison between four of Shaffer's works. He detects a similar theme -- i.e. torment -- which manifests itself when the protagonists outline their internalized conflicts over which they must agonize for the rest of their lives. Klein states that the central characters in Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab are in despair, due to the burden they have to live with. Klein furthermore mentions that the three characters reveal their desperate state of mind both in the past and in the present. In addition, they experience some kind of spiritual "death" -- that is to say, they sacrifice their passion. Klein claims that Dysart experiences this spiritual death once he foresees Strang's normal life as "a life bereft of passion and grieves for his own life in darkness."³⁰ Salieri suffers a similar disillusionment:

Amici cari. I was born a pair of ears and nothing else. It is only through hearing music that I could worship. All around me men seek liberty for Mankind, I sought only slavery for myself. To be owned – ordered – exhausted by an Absolute. This was denied me, and with it all meaning. Now I go to become a ghost myself. I will stand in the shadows when you come here to this earth in your turn. And when you feel the dreadful bite of your failures – and hear the taunting of unachievable uncaring god – I will whisper my name to you; Salieri : Patron saint of Mediocrities! And in the depth of your downcastness you can pray to me. And I will forgive you. *Vi Saluto.* 31

Yonadab experiences a "death in life" as he resigns himself to indifference: "Yonadab hangs forever in Yonadab's world – attached to the tree of unattachment – who can cut me down?" ³²

Whilst accepting the validity of this argument, Klein overlooks the significance of the similarities between the characters, which inevitably bring about other similarities. This chapter begins by drawing out the significance Klein overlooks by showing how Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab are fundamentally similar in intention. This helps one to understand Shaffer's perception of the central characters, who all attempt to unify the psyche with their private myth/religion of the past and present.

i) REBELLION, IMPOTENCY AND OBSESSIONAL NEUROSES

A character's inability to live normally in his/her society, brings about three important concepts: impotency, rebellion and obsessional neurosis.

The act of rebellion signifies the potency of a character and his/her ability to submit to his/her instincts and deny repression, be it consciously or subconsciously. His/her inability to integrate with his/her society, however, suggests an impotency, which produces frustration in the character. His/her frustration, is directed either towards the society, or himself/herself, or both. This frustration inclines the character towards the need for creating a system of belief, be it what it may, in order for it to supersede his/her loss of society in one way or another. The character's belief in his/her creative system of belief, or myth/religion, depends on the degree of his/her alienation from the

society. The more of an outcast the character becomes, the more s/he depends on his/her system, in order to provide himself/herself with a *raison d'être*. If his/her dependability on his/her system reaches the extreme point of no return, the system turns into an obsessional neurosis that may provide his/her reason for existence. Rebelling against one's society, or God, or oneself, however is ultimately futile. Thus, at a certain stage the character may feel the need to compromise with the object of rebellion by repressing the initial instincts that gave rise to his/her rebellion, or by creating an alternative obsessional neurosis in order to be able to live more at peace with himself/herself and the outside world, if possible.

In Shaffer's Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab a similar trend, that is to say, a chain relationship of impotency, rebellion, creation of an obsessional neurosis, the need to compromise, futility and ultimate failure can be noted.

ii) IMPOTENCY

The central characters in Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab can be said to be anti-heroes, and are thus, to borrow Camus's phrase, "Sons of Cain", Cain being the initial existential anti-hero through his assertion of individuality. In Shaffer's characters, one can detect a lack of true love, that provides sensual as well as spiritual contentment. Moreover, their being childless re-emphasizes the notion of impotence that runs throughout the play. This sexual impotence is stressed by the fact that the characters experience passive "scopophilia", by witnessing "sexual" acts committed by others. Dysart looks upon Strang's miming his "sexual" experience with Jill. Salieri, in hiding, watches Constanze's

legs being measured by the Venticelli. He also witnesses Mozart flirting with Contanze. Yonadab, in secret, spies upon the rape of Tamar. The audience, in its turn, experiences scopophilia by looking upon these scenes and thus, participating in the impotence the characters go through.

The fact that the repression of sexual instincts underlie the characters' impotence can be more readily understood if one takes into account Freud's concept of the sublimation of instincts. The id (which satisfies the innate needs and desires of man) is repressed by the super ego, that provides a source of sensing danger, and gives protection, through repression. Thus, when a desire is extremely strong, it is controlled and/or displaced by something more acceptable: in Strang's case, one can say that his sexual desires have been sublimated by Equus. In Salieri's case, music fulfills a similar function. This can be further clarified with respect to Salieri's reaction to Mozart, when the former realizes that "the creature had had... (his) darling girl."³⁴ It is at this stage that Salieri concocts his plot of merciless revenge. Thus, Mozart's sexual potency provokes Salieri's hate for him, because Mozart yields to his sexual desires, whereas Salieri cannot, and feebly tries to repress and sacrifice his sexual instincts through musical study.

Mozart and Salieri are in many respects identical. Both believe themselves to be geniuses in their own field. Both are instinctive personalities. Yet their main difference is that Mozart cannot sublimate his instincts; his downfall is inevitable, as Freud implies: "immediate and unheeding satisfaction of the instincts, such as the id demands... (can)... often lead to perilous conflicts with the external world and to extinction."³⁵

Mozart's downfall may be inevitable, but he is also attractive in his frivolousness, naivety and his willingness to rebel though "fighting" against the society is ultimately futile. This, as C.J. Gianakaris claims in his article, "A playwright looks at Mozart : Peter Shaffer's Amadeus"³⁶, is especially true in a society that at Mozart's time had reached the peak of the Enlightenment era. The age of reason included extreme faith in what the contemporaries regarded as the universally valid principles that governed humanity, nature and society. It also had supreme faith in the rational man. Salieri was the epitome of that man. The standard of his musical aesthetics was of the typical rational man of the Enlightenment. His music emphasized order -- all things in their proper place. Mozart, though, representing the dawn of romanticism, violated such order on two planes: his unsettling demeanor and his challenging music. Therefore, C.J. Gianakaris states that: "a threat to Salieri personally, to Viennese music generally, and to the pervasive attitudes of the Enlightenment metaphysically, Mozart had to be deterred".³⁷

iii) THE REBELS

What is a rebel? It can be claimed that a rebel is a person who fails to integrate with his/her society, be it for the better, or for the worse. In Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab, all the significant characters lack integrity with their society and are therefore rebels.

To begin with, Salieri, who lives in a mediocre society and who eventually realizes that he is also mediocre, rebels against his own mediocrity. In order to avoid this he sets a norm of absoluteness -- Music -- and attempts to reach its core, for his society is so mediocre, that he needs to escape from it, by aspiring to something great. The fact

that he fails causes his norm of absoluteness to become an obsession. Indeed, his obsession is due to his denied desire to become the God of music. Yet being the strongest rebel, he does not at this stage, surrender. He instead rebels against his initial obsessional neurosis, by becoming obsessed with an idea opposing it: to become the God of mediocrity. This is done for a number of reasons; one is because he could not aspire to his "absolute", and is therefore frustrated. Another is because Mozart, who is the "prophet" of music, is destroyed by a mediocre society; thus, Salieri strives to compromise with mediocrity in order to eliminate the possibilities of his own extinction. His second obsession, therefore, becomes an alternative for his first. The society he inhabits however, responds by mediocrity to Salieri's demand to be its "patron saint." Thus, Salieri can be nothing but a particle of mediocrity of his society.

Strang, too, as Salieri does, endeavours to become identical with his pagan/Christian obsession. The development of Strang's obsession is the product of the frustration Strang experiences through his society. In fact, his obsessional neurosis is engendered by society: his society is one void of passion, imagination, and intuition. In order to protect the passion within him, Strang retreats from his society, by an act of rebellion which creates his obsessional neurosis. Society, needless to say, is the more capable rival, and condemns Strang to insanity. Strang, however, as Salieri had done, compromises with his society by agreeing to undergo medical care and to eliminate the passion within him.

Yonadab's rebellion, though futile, is more admirable than that of Salieri or Strang, for he refuses to compromise with his society as did Mozart. What Yonadab fights against is the system of belief his society

holds as true. What he can offer to society is physical gods -- dictators that society would never accept, because of the omnipotence of Yaveh. Yet Yonadab himself does not fully believe in his own alternative system. Thus, through his rebellion, Yonadab finds despair, for he is unable to alter his society's belief system and also fails to achieve an alternative system of his own. Indeed, Yonadab's quest for his unknown God, or system of belief, is very much like the search of the Camusian metaphysical rebel for *his* God. According to Camus, the metaphysical rebel is one that protests against his own condition, and is frustrated by the universe. He is furthermore not an atheist, but merely a blasphemer; he does not deny the existence of a God, but merely condemns the religion of his society. According to Camus, when the metaphysical rebel dethrones the God of his society, he must: "create the justice, order, and unity that he sought in vain within his own condition and in this way, to justify the fall of God." ³⁸

Yonadab is a metaphysical rebel for these very reasons; he fights against the God of his society: he blasphemes against Him, yet he is in constant search for another system of belief (as reflected by his dreams) to replace that of his society. This he fails to do, both in his own terms and in those accepted by the society. The reason for the former is that the concept of the immortal sun-gods he had within his mind (Amnon, Absalom and Tamar) proved to be not only mortal and ungodly, but also destructive. These gods were also denied by society because of their origins, which is incest, and thus a taboo for David's society.

Yonadab is in despair because he cannot attain his system of value. Salieri, too, is in despair because his God is unjust, which ultimately proves that he does not exist. Thus, both Yonadab and

Salieri are in fact in despair because they lack a system of belief. Salieri, however, is not a metaphysical rebel: Camus's concept of master and slave as set forth in The Rebel can be used to illustrate Salieri's predicament further. In Camusian terms, Salieri is the slave, and Music, his master. In such cases, the slave obeys his master for many years and keeps calm even if he is inwardly in despair. But ultimately his master issues a command that he feels he cannot obey, giving him the "right" to rebel. In Salieri's case, this "right" lies in the fact that for years he had obeyed the God of music, in vain, in the hope of receiving some reward. Consequently, the slave challenges his master, and in Camus's words, "turns and faces him. He chooses what is preferable to what is not... he... demands that he should be treated as an equal... the slave suddenly adopts an attitude of All or Nothing." ³⁹

Salieri decides to crush the talent he seeks from his God - music:

I know my faith. Now for the first time I feel my emptiness as Adam felt his nakedness... *Grazie Signore!* You gave me the desire to serve you, then saw to it the service was shameful in the ears of the server... you gave me the desire to praise you... then made me mute... until this day I have pursued virtue and rigour... *You know how hard I've worked.* And my only reward... is to be the sole man alive in this time who shall clearly recognize your Incarnation. This I swear: To my last breath I shall block you on earth, as far as I am able.⁴⁰

Salieri reaches a point of no return, where, as Nietzsche claims, (quoted by Camus) one desires "no longer to pray, but to give one's blessing."⁴¹ His desires become so intense, that he is willing to die rather than repent. As Camus claims, it is, "better to die on one's feet than to live on one's knees."⁴² Because he feels he has "rights", and is loyal to them, Salieri will accept even pain, rather than at this stage compromise with society.

The concept of rebellion for Camus is essentially positive. Yet it is clear that Salieri's rebellion is negative -- not in terms of society, but vis - a - vis his relationship with God. It is, however, less futile than Yonadab's rebellion, for Salieri can always compromise with mediocrity. Yonadab, however, remains perpetually alienated through his failure. This is the outcome of Yonadab's inability to repress at least *some* of his instincts. Salieri, on the other hand, is able to control his immediate desires. Because of this flaw, ironically, Yonadab, the "metaphysical" rebel, in fact fights a more futile battle than the master/slave rebel, for all he gains is his spiritual wreck and the destruction of the sceptic illusion of a Utopian society he had in mind (i.e. a society alternative to that which David inhabits). Indeed, Dan Jacobson's Yonadab openly admits that it was this scepticism which brought about his impotency and thus, his inability to have faith.⁴³ Shaffer has claimed that it is an inescapable fact to him that a life without a sense of the divine is perfectly meaningless.⁴⁴ Yonadab clearly depicts this meaninglessness, through his fall.

iv) THE NEUROTICS

Because Yonadab, Salieri and Strang are all fervently obsessed with an idea and because the failure to gain their concept results in their spiritual death, they can be said to be neurotics. In order to accept this statement one needs to understand Jung's concept of neurosis, which is "primarily a suffering of the soul."⁴⁵ Although many people can be classified as "neurotics", many do not experience neurosis, for they are often satisfied with a mediocre, passionless life. Others, however, feel dissatisfied with their existence and may experience neurosis. Jung states that:

To be normal is the ideal aim for the unsuccessful, for all those who are still below the general level of adaptation. But for people of more than average ability, people who never found it difficult to gain success and to accomplish their share in the world's work - for them the moral compulsion to be nothing but normal signifies the bed of Procrustes - a deadly and unsupportable boredom, a hell of sterility and hopelessness - consequently there are just as many people who become neurotic because they are merely normal as there are people who are neurotic because they cannot become normal... To be a social and adapted person has no charms for one to whom such an aspiration is child's play.⁴⁶

Neurosis, Jung claims, can only be cured by a physician who has undergone a similar experience:

only the wounded physician heals, to cure wounds he has to be wounded first... what happened to the patient must now happen to the doctor so that his personality shall not react unfavorably on the patient.⁴⁷

Jung also emphasizes that a patient who is faithless experiences the kind of neurosis that is most difficult to heal:

a psychoneurosis must be understood ultimately as a suffering of a soul which has not discovered its meaning and form to the confusion of his soul.... The neurotic sees that he has no love, but only sexuality, no faith, because he is afraid, no hope, because he... is disillusioned by the world and by life; and no understanding because he has failed to read the meaning of his own existence... and it is only meaning that liberates.⁴⁸

But being neurotic is not necessarily negative : as Jung asserts, "neurosis is not for the sake of disunity and unhappiness, but for the sake of unity and happiness."⁴⁹

Strang, Salieri and Yonadab's "neuroses" are very different from one another. Salieri, as Dysart does, suffers from being "normal". He is aware of his state of mediocrity and envies the genius in Mozart. Strang, on the other hand, is neurotic because of the various sources of guilt he experiences; one is the fact that the act of fornication takes place in the stables, in the sight of Equus, (also a substitute for his father), another is his inability to fornicate (because of the subconscious fear of castration he experiences on perceiving Jill's genitals). Yet another is

his fear of retribution by Equus, and lastly because he blinds Equus. Eyes often symbolize the accusatory self, that is, the super ego. In his blinding the horses' eyes, therefore, one notes Strang's self-condemnation and yearning for punishment. Strang's impotency may also be because of his feeling that he is constantly being watched:⁵⁰ according to Frederick Sontag, it is this that drives Strang to blind the horses. By doing so, Strang, according to Sontag, symbolically cuts off the humiliating observation of those who inhibit him from being himself.⁵¹

v) STRANG'S TOTEMISM

Strang's God, Equus, is a totemic God; a God constructed as a way of overcoming impotence and repression. According to Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary,⁵² a totem is, "an object... serving as the emblem of a family or clan... something that serves as an emblem or revered symbol."⁵² Strang's "revered symbol" is Equus. Freud, in his Totem and Taboo, asserts that totemic religion originated from the guilt primitive man bore when he killed the original father, that is, the original "conqueror" of the mother (and thus ultimately his rival, due to the Oedipal complex every man experiences.).⁵³ A similar tendency can be observed in Strang's totem, which is composed of Christ and Equus, the former, being the initial source for the generation of the latter. Strang's father is also contained within Strang's totem; besides the fact that parallels are drawn between Strang's father's eyes and the eyes of the horse which Strang rode as a five-year-old,⁵⁴ there is the fact that neurotic children often *do* identify their father with their totem. According to Freud, "psychoanalysis has revealed that the totem animal is in reality a substitute for the father."⁵⁵

This was substantiated by the experience of Freud's own patients, amongst them, little Hans, who was frightened of horses even though he admired them as soon as his anxiety began to diminish. At the same time, Hans began to identify himself with the dreaded creature. Freud claims that:

The same part is played by the father alike in the Oedipus and castration complexes—the part of a dreaded enemy to the sexual interest of childhood. The punishment which he threatens is castration, or its substitute, blinding.⁵⁶

Freud would have probably claimed that such totemism in Strang was the result of fixation of infantile sexuality. Yet Strang's totem also derives from his vision of the crucifixion of Christ and the subconscious guilt he, as a sinful human being, bore for His murder. Although the picture of Christ is later replaced by that of a horse, the biblical myth of the resurrection of Christ inculcated in Strang by his bible-loving mother, affects his perception of the horse. What enhances this holy link and assures Strang subconsciously of his choice, is his experience with the overpowering horse he suffers as a five-year-old.

In Totem and Taboo, Freud asserts that in an attempt to identify with his totem, primitive man either dressed up as his totem or ate his/her totemic animal.⁵⁷ Strang undergoes a similar process during the rituals he carries out once every three weeks. He rides Nugget in the nude (for his God, Equus is naked, too) and craves to become one with his God through sexual intercourse. The fact may be sinful according to the mother's religion, but the boy gains spiritual and sexual pleasure from the union between himself and his God.

However, such pleasure is doomed to be transient. When Strang realizes that his father watches erotic films for sexual fulfilment, he is disgusted that his father could have earthly desires. The disgust gives place to pity when Strang realizes that his mother, through her adherence to the Bible, had repressed sexual instincts in both his father and himself. In an attempt to overcome such repression, he hesitantly accepts Jill's offer to commit a "sacrilegious" act: making love to him in Strang's "Shrine" (the stables). This act inevitably provokes guilt within him. He comes to believe that he had committed a sin by wanting, but ultimately failing, to fornicate.

Equus's invisible eyes remind Strang of his father's eyes, glaring at him, as he longed to fornicate. As such, they have to be "removed". This may have driven Strang to blind Equus. But this act fails to purge Strang of his guilt, which springs from a fear of loss of love. Strang, however, is not fully aware of his guilt, for his guilt is "evidently a portion of the resistance contributed by a super ego that has become particularly severe and cruel... all that matters is that the patient should be miserable." ⁵⁸

The remorse Strang experiences inwardly for the various reasons of his guilt is conveyed to the doctor -- and to the audience -- through the nightmare Strang has of his totem, which leaves him shrieking "Ek." This nightmare is a sign that tells the viewer of the subconscious wish Strang has, to be forgiven, for according to Freud, all dreams, even nightmares, are fulfilments of wishes. ⁵⁹

Dysart is capable of curing Strang, for he, too, has experienced the impotence Strang experiences. Dysart has no sexual intercourse with his wife; he is impotent. Yet, as Jeffrey Berman suggests in his article,

"Equus: 'After Such Little Forgiveness, What Knowledge?'"⁶⁰ Dysart wishes to become sexually potent. This, Berman suggests, is reflected when one analyzes Dysart's dream of knives, i.e., phallic symbols. According to Berman, the accusatory stares in Dysart's dreams, are the reflection of the guilt he suffers through his psychic self-castration.⁶¹ The glares, though, may also symbolize the envy Dysart feels towards Strang: Strang is what Dysart always longed to be. As Albert E. Kalson points out:

Martin Dysart, coldly surrounds himself with books on ancient Greece and looks at pictures of centaurs, while the boy is himself wildly becoming a centaur in a Hampshire field and reliving the myths which the doctor can only read about.⁶²

Thus, Dysart, through his dream, subconsciously fulfils a wish by destroying the heads of children; similar to Salieri, Dysart experiences a form of resentment (because of the fact that he is a mediocre person) when he perceives the passion he lacks in an adolescent, and hence, wants to destroy it; just as Salieri wanted to destroy the "God" in Mozart.

Dysart treats Strang through, as Dr Jules Glenn states, "abreaction or catharsis",⁶³ which, in turn, clears the minds and purifies the pity and fear previously created within the audience.

vi) SALIERI, MOZART, AND THE GOD OF MUSIC

Salieri's relationship with his God is quite different from that of Yonadab's with *his*. Salieri, as the Romans did at times with their gods, looks upon his religion as the fulfilment of a contract⁶⁴. Salieri's God, however, breaks the "contract" and betrays him. Thus, Salieri feels (as the Camusian slave-rebel does) that he has a "right" to rebel, and engages himself in a vendetta with "the son of God", Mozart. For his part, Mozart perceives Salieri as a substitute for his father. After Leopold Mozart's death, Mozart experiences uncontrollable grief; in Freudian terms, this is due to the fact that he has subconsciously wished for his father's death (the nightmares he experiences indicate his fear of reprisal). Salieri can be said to be Mozart's totem, for he symbolizes the resurrection of Leopold Mozart. Thus, there develops a vicious circle of Mozart reaching for *his* totem (Salieri) and Salieri, reaching out for his God (Mozart's intuition). Both characters become an obsession for each other, and thus, a "mythic god". In his Psychoanalysis and Religion, Fromm claims that "we can interpret neurosis as a private form of religion, more specifically, as a regression to the primitive forms of religion, conflicting with officially recognized patterns of religious thought." ⁶⁵

Hence, in one way, Salieri becomes Mozart's "private religion", the phantom of which destroys him. Strang's loss of religion, i.e. his being treated for his neurosis, leads to the termination of his passion. Salieri's inability to be accepted in his "religious sect", Music, leads to his madness. Yonadab is also incapable of attaining the religion he is in search of. Therefore, because he cannot compromise, he is led to an excess of despair and indifference, which turns the "metaphysical

rebel", into an eternal wanderer; one who cannot find an alternative system of belief. Fromm, in his Psychoanalysis and Religion, comments on man in such circumstances by stating that:

.... having lost paradise, the unity of nature, he has become the eternal wanderer... he is compelled to go forward and with everlasting effort to make the unknown known, by filling in with answers the blank spaces of himself and of the meaning of his existence. He is driven to overcome this inner split, tormented by a craving for 'absoluteness', for another kind of harmony which can lift this curse by which he was separated from nature, from his fellow men and from himself.⁶⁰

vii) YONADAB'S DESPAIR

Yonadab's desire for an "absolute" has a totemic quality, although it is not a revered totem, but a blasphemed one, befitting the character of a "metaphysical rebel." His totems are Tamar and Absalom; his imaginary sun-gods. Under the conventions of David's society, Yonadab's tempting Amnon to commit such an act of incest, in Yonadab's terms, is justifiable, for he does it for the sake of guarding his totems. Yonadab dreams of Absalom and Tamar becoming sun-gods, and himself looking up to them. If dreams are fulfilments of wishes, then it is clear that in tempting Amnon to commit incest, Yonadab is in fact wishing for the birth of sun-gods, and thus, a birth of a system of belief within himself. Strang proceeds in a similar act. Yet what Strang does is to create a religion in order to retreat from society. In this way, he can compromise with society. Yonadab, on the other

hand, seeks to find an alternative religion for his society; a society that deeply believes in the power of Yaveh. Ultimately, he fails, and when his hope for achieving some kind of an alternative truth in life vanishes, he loses all fears of breaking taboos: ... "understand it. I worked it all. Your daughter ruined. Your son speared like a boar! And nothing stopped me! *God did nothing!* Just kept you blind and left me to do it! *Understand it.*"⁶⁷ Yet ironically, David's curse on Yonadab is effective, and the latter suffers all his life, endeavouring in vain to find the illusion of completeness David worships. And so: "always on me the curse of that man... tell me – is He not proven to exist, a god whose priest - king can work this?"⁶⁸

The "accomplisher" between these (to use Benedict Nightingale's phrase) "envious outsiders"⁶⁹, then, is ultimately the mediocre Salieri, for he can manage to survive without losing much; he had aspired to something greater, yet something that lacked within him. Thus, when he compromised with the society and reluctantly accepted his status as a mediocre one, he was reluctantly accepting himself. Thus in him, one observes the defeat of the master/slave rebel, for he, like the metaphysical Camusian rebel, "refuses to accept the condition in which he finds himself."⁷⁰ In his defeat, however, lies his victory of his ability to become integrated with his society.

Strang's rebellion is not totally destructive, for although he compromises with society by sacrificing his passion, he, in the long run, will be acknowledged, and thus, will integrate with his society.

Shaffer's plays often hold within them what he loosely calls the "Apollonian and the Dionysiac sides of interpreting life."⁷¹ The plays,

however, do not condemn either side of interpreting life. What one does understand by his plays, is that neither side of interpreting life has triumph over the other. In Amadeus, Equus and Yonadab, one witnesses the vanquishment of both prudence (as observed in Yonadab, and Salieri) and passion (as reflected through Strang and Mozart). One may conclude that the presence of both extremities causes destruction. In Shaffer's plays, it is the "Apollonian" characters that tend to destroy "Dionysiac" ones. Yet in doing so, as Robert Asahina suggests in his article in the Hudson Review in 1981,⁷² by murdering their impassionate counterparts, the "rational" characters in fact murder humanity within themselves. This accounts for their spiritual death.

CONCLUSION

Anthropologists, such as Frazer and Taylor, predicted that in the future human kind would not need religion, since science would provide all the explanations and society would be maintained by rational institutions.⁷³ This prediction may be true for future scientists who are preoccupied with their field of study, for as Goethe claimed in the nineteenth century, "he who possesses science and art also has a religion, but he who possesses neither of these two, let him have religion!"⁷⁴ Yet it seems that the majority of mankind is not absorbed in science and art, and so, must "have religion", in order to achieve happiness.

The idealistic philosopher, Freidrich Nietszche, believed that God was dead, and this removed the meaning of existence. He believed that the modern western world was meaningless and chaotic. Although he was hostile towards religion, he thought science could not provide a meaning for human existence.⁷⁵

The individual God for each man, however, is not dead. Its role has merely veered. Man's "religion" lies in his/her private myth, or obsessional neurosis. Some forms of such "religions/myths", have been suggested by Jung as "slogans of liberation, freedom, peace, elimination of social conflict, abolition of classes, perfect justice and final and utopian terrestrial bliss."⁷⁶

Other forms, according to Antonio Moreno, author of Jung, God and Modern man,⁷⁷ are "the obsession for success, wealth, efficiency, fulfilment..."⁷⁶ Today, as Moreno claims, man does not imitate the

deeds of gods, but the deeds of God's human vicereagents on earth, for it is they who can fulfil man's dream and give meaning to his/her life. Indeed, man's God today may be any individual, from an artist to a political leader, to any form of abstract or concrete concept. According to the anthropologist Margaret Mead; "The old perfectly realizable puritan imperative for the moment 'work, save, deny the flesh' has shifted to 'a set' of unrealizable imperatives, 'be happy, be fulfilled, be the ideal.' " ⁷⁸

In his The Future of an Illusion, Freud states that religion is an "infantile obsessional neurosis."⁷⁹ He furthermore claims that the truly mature individual does not need a substitute for the father figure of his childhood. In addition, he hopes the human race will become mature and independent of such illusions in the future. In his Civilization and its Discontents,⁸⁰ Freud maintains that man's problems and his/her inability to become happy have their foundations in sexual repression. Consequently, one can declare that if all repressed sexual desires in man were to be fulfilled, there would be a chance for him/her to be happy. One may further assert that for Freud, an orgasm leads to pleasure, and hence, happiness. The myth of Psyche may confirm this view. Psyche was a happily married wife to her unknown, invisible husband, Cupid. Her distress when she loses him, and her eventual gain of happiness through a "purification of sorrow and trouble"⁸¹, leads one to the conclusion that in satiating sexual instincts, man's appetite for happiness is also satiated.

In order to find an essence for life and being, one is in need of a satisfactory "orgasm", yet this has to be psychic or spiritual; it is man's obsession of a private myth/religion that can bring about this

gratification. Thus, with hope, western modern man seeks to find a meaning for his/her life. If s/he is unable to create a myth, or if his/her myth is contrary to the norms of the society, then he/she turns to seek his/her myths in drama. In Totem and Taboo, Freud argues that:

In only a single field of our civilization has the omnipotence of thought been retained, and that is in the field of art. Only in art does it still happen that a man who is consumed by desires performs something resembling the accomplishment of those desires and that what he does in play produces emotional effects... just as though it were something real. People speak with justice of the 'magic of art' and compare artists to magicians. But the comparison is perhaps more significant than it claims to be. There can be no doubt that art did not begin as art for art's sake. It worked originally in the service of the impulse which are for the most part extinct today. And among them we may suspect the presence of many magical purposes.⁸²

One can uphold, therefore, the claim that one major function of a play resembles the function of a dream, in that it forms a cleft for the sake of abreaction, and thus, to an extent, protects the individual from becoming a neurotic. In order to achieve this, a playwright should not remain content simply to write a play. As Harry Levin, in his essay, "Some Meanings of Myth", states, "the most powerful writers gain much of their power by being myth makers, gifted... at catching and crystallizing popular fantasies."⁸³

It is precisely this that Peter Shaffer achieves in his plays. By creating such "crystallized" private myths/religions, Shaffer exemplifies his genius to the audience, and to his readers.

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