THE DIONYSIAC RUPTURE IN *EQUUS*: A NIETZSCHEAN PERSPECTIVE ON PETER SHAFFER'S MODERN TRAGEDY

KÜHEYLAN *ADLI OYUNDA DİONİZYAK YARILMA: PETER SHAFFER'IN MODERN TRAJEDİSİNE NİETZSCHE ÜZERİNDEN BİR BAKIŞ*

Gökhan ALBAYRAK
Öğr. Gör. Dr., Ankara Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, galbayrak85@gmail.com

Makale Bilgisi
Türü: Araştırma makalesi
Gönderildiği tarih: 21 Ağustos 2023
Kabul edildiği tarih: 20 Kasım 2023
Yayınlanma tarihi: 25 Haziran 2024

Article Info
Type: Research article
Date submitted: 21 August 2023
Date accepted: 20 November 2023
Date published: 25 June 2024

Anahtar Sözcükler
Peter Shaffer; Küheylan; Nietzsche; Apollo; Dionysos; Trajedi; Çatışma; Modern Özne

Keywords
Peter Shaffer; Equus; Nietzsche; Apollo; Dionysos; Tragedy; Conflict; Modern Subject

DOI
10.33171/dtcfjournal.2024.64.1.28

Abstract

This paper aims to explore Peter Shaffer's ritualistic play Equus (1973) by means of utilising Nietzsche's interpretation of ancient Greek tragedy which is based on the collision between the Apollonian impulse and the Dionysian impulse. Equus tells the story of Martin Dysart, a psychiatrist, who struggles to treat a young man, Alan Strang, who has a mystical fascination with horses and blinds six horses. This study argues that Alan represents the Dionsyian principle, while Martin embodies the Apollonian principle before his confrontation with Alan, and that the clash between these forces leads to tragedy in Martin's life as he comes to realise that he is divided between these two impulses. The Dionysian impulse is an urge towards obliteration of boundaries, dissolution of individual selves, excess, intoxication, and ecstatic experience of oneness whereas the Apollonian impulse gestures toward drawing and maintaining boundaries, individuality, distinction and discreteness. Alan is a Dionysian character who ecstatically experiences a sense of oneness with horses through bacchic frenzy. By contrast, Martin is an Apollonian character who attemtps to give a form to this chaotic force and whose sense of purpose as a psychiatrist is disrupted by his patient's mystical experience of primordial unity with horses. As an antagonistic force that shatters Martin's sense of meaning in life, Alan and his Dionysiac state compel Martin to rethink about his life and his profession. This paper contends that Martin is the protagonist of this play who, as the embodimentof the modern subject, experiences the battle between the Dionsyian impulse and the Apollonian impulse and thus undergoes a tragic moment in his life.

Öz

Bu makale, Peter Shaffer'ın Küheylan (1973) adlı rituelistik oyununu, Nietzsche'nin Apolloncu dürtü ve Dionysosçu dürtü arasındaki çatışmaya dayanan antik Yunan tragedyasına dair yorumunu kullanarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Küheylan atlara karşı mistik bir hayranlığı olan ve altı atı kör eden Alan Strang'i tedavi etmeye çalışan psikiyatrist Martin Dysart'ın hikâyesini anlatmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Alan'ın Dionysos ilkesini, Martin'in ise, Alan ile karşılaşmadan önce, Apollon ilkesini temsil ettiğini ve Martin bu iki dürtü arasındaki bölünmüşlüğünü fark ettikçe, iki güç arasındaki çatışmanın Martin'in yaşamındaki trajediyi doğurduğunu öne sürmektedir. Dionysosçu dürtü, sınırların silinmesine, silikleşmesine, bireysel benliklerin çözülmesine, aşırılığa, sarhoşluğa ve bütünlük hissinin esrikleştirici deneyimine yönelik bir dürtü iken, Apolloncu dürtü sınırları çizmeye, belirlemeye ve sürdürmeye, bireyselliğe, farklılığa ve münferitliğe yönelen bir dürtüdür. Alan, Baküs şenliklerine özgü coşkunluk aracılığıyla, atlarla bir olma duygusunu vecd halinde yaşayan Dionysosçu bir karakterdir. Buna karşılık, Martin bu kaotik kudrete bir biçim vermeye çalışan ve bir psikiyatrist olarak hayatındaki amaç duygusu, hastasının atlarla yaşadığı mistik, ezeli, kadim bir hemhal olma deneyimi tarafından alt üst edilen Apolloncu bir karakterdir. Martin'in hayattaki anlam duygusunu paramparça eden karşıt bir güç olarak Alan ve onun Dionysosçu durumu, Martin'i yaşamı ve mesleği hakkında yeniden düşünmeye zorlamaktadır. Bu makale, Dionysosçu dürtü ve Apolloncu dürtü arasındaki savaşı, modern özneyi tecessüm eden birisi olarak deneyimleyen ve böylece hayatında trajik bir an yaşayan Martin'in bu oyunun ana karakteri olduğunu iddia etmektedir.

Introduction

Conflict is vital to drama and it is usually conducted through opposing characters. In Peter Shaffer's plays, "*systems of opposition and conflict are located at the core*" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 101). In *Equus,* which earned Peter Shaffer a huge reputation, the dramatic clash is between Alan Strang, who embodies instinct, and Martin Dysart, who represents reason. Shaffer regarded the opposition between these two characters as the Nietzschean conflict between the Dionysian and Apollonian principles. Nietzsche's influence on Shaffer is quite evident in *Equus*, which is endowed with philosophical dimensions about the origin of tragedy, and which is also responsive to "*psychological interpretations*" (Woodward, 2015, p. 232). Shaffer's accommodation of his multi-faceted and intricately woven psychodrama within the context of the Dionysian and Apollonian impulses demonstrates that Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* is a reference point for the playwright. Shaffer describes these oppositional impulses as an internal battle in his psyche; he says that "a continuous tension between what I suppose I could loosely call the Apollonian and the Dionysiac sides of interpreting life" resides within him and adds that he feels within himself "*a constant debate going on between the violence of instinct on the one hand and the desire in my mind for order and restraint*" (in MacMuraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 103). The imbalance between instinct and restraint in Shaffer's mind corresponds to the clash between Alan and Martin, respectively. Therefore, this paper intends to analyse the two characters of *Equus* within the context of the Dionysian and Apollonian dialectic. The collision between Alan impelled by the Dionysiac power, and Martin, driven by the Apollonian power is central to this study. Critical attention that *Equus* has received appears to have primarily focused on the significance of Alan as the primary protagonist or the co-existence of two protagonists in this play. For instance, MacMuraugh-Kavanagh (1998) argues that Alan and Martin are "*two conflicting protagonists*" (p. 103). Similarly, Gianakaris (1992) claims that they are "*duelling protagonists*" (p. 18). However, I argue that Martin is the protagonist while Alan is the antagonistic force in *Equus*, as the initial conflict configured as a clash between these two characters morphs into the battle between rival impulses within the individual himself, that is, Martin in this play. Martin is cleft in twain; Shaffer's protagonists are usually split into dual forces. For Shaffer, whose twin brother is the famous playwright Anthony Shaffer, the pivotal question is as follows: "*Was I born one or two, different or same? What are the parameters of self, and what does it mean to be separate?*" (Hinden in Gianakaris, 1992, p. 159). For Shaffer, whose twin brother looked like him, the notion of having a unified or divided self is intriguing as having

a twin brother could blur the boundary between self and other. Therefore, the theme of having a unified or split identity is evident in Shaffer's plays. In their quest for a complete identity, Shaffer's protagonists are stripped naked, disrobed of their "*social and psychological shields*" and, as a result, they "*exist in pain and torment*" (Lounsberry in Gianakaris, 1992, p. 80). Accordingly, Martin, as the tragic character of this play, is split into two and therefore exists in pain. He is divided between the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses. Through the logical mind of the Apollonian Martin, the reader gains insight into the psychiatrist's interpretation of his patient's Dionysian experience. Since the Dionysian ruptures the Apollonian, Martin becomes a tragic character in this modern tragedy. The Dionysian ecstatic, bacchic and chaotic experience of dissolution is embodied through the Apollonian form of drama. Out of this ancient psychomachia between Apollo and Dionysus emerges an impeccable modern tragedy characterised by a dance macabre between Martin and Alan.

Equus consists of two central characters in accordance with the concept of dramatic conflict that resonates with the dialectics of the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses: Alan, a seventeenth-year-old stable boy, who plunged a spike into the eyes of six horses, and Martin, a middle-aged psychiatrist who delves into the crevices of Alan's tormented mind to treat him. The patient as one of "*all real, precariously delicate and suffering individuals*" (George, 1999, p. 245) is the object of the psychiatric analysis while the psychiatrist is the object of the playwright's and the audiences' analysis. Martin confronts his own spiritual atrophy and subsequently achieves self-realization through Alan. By dint of this co-existence of the opposing characters, Shaffer dwells upon the causes and the consequences of the enactment and the repression of one's passions and instincts, respectively in the persons of Alan and Martin. Alienated from his contemporary society, Martin finds himself out of tune with its normative beliefs and value-systems. As Chaudhuri (1984) argues, he is "*the mid-century culture hero, disillusioned with modern civilization, uncomfortable with his role in it*" (p. 289). Yearning for the primordial, Martin shares Alan's aversion to the plastic present, yet is unable to discard it completely. This aggravates his sense of estragement as he recognizes that he is not courageous enough to "*jump clean-hoofed on to a whole new track of being*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 210). Martin is trapped in a society which he can neither fully reject nor fully accept. Therefore, *Equus* demonstrates an anarchic display of instincts and passion, which eventually challenges normative society through the clash between the Apollonian impulse and the Dionysian impulse. Rigid barriers in the normative domain of the Apollonian principle break asunder in the confrontation with the Dionysian force. As a result, Martin who loses

faith in the cognitive forms of the Apollonian realm, stands in perplexity before Alan's Dionysian "*superabundance of life*" (Nietzsche, 1999, p. 22).

Dysart is stuck in a disurbing position between Apollonian and Dionysian principles. He recognises the coexistence of both within his psyche; he is suspended between. Dysart undergoes an internal battle between reason and instinct. He is forced to sublimate Alan's instinctual, Dionysian existence. He is compelled to displace "*the instinctual aim in conformity with higher social values*" as Anna Freud notes that sublimation refes to this act of displacement (52).

Nietzsche's Discussion of Tragedy

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche investigates the clash between the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses to describe the origin of tragedy in ancient Greece. He argues that ancient Greek tragedy is based on the struggle between these two forces. He names each of these drives after an ancient Greek god. The Apollonian principle embodies "conscious forces of logic and rationality, order and control" whereas the Dionysian principle represents "*contrasting unconscious forces of instinct and passion*" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 103). For Nietzche, Apollo represents "*the drive toward distinction, discreteness and individuality, toward the drawing and respecting of boundaries and limits*" and therefore the Apollonian artist celebrates "*individuality by presenting attractive images of individual persons, things, and events*" (Geuss, 1999, p. xi). By contrast, Dionysus embodies "the drive towards the transgression of limits, the dissolution of boundaries, the destruction of individuality" and therefore the artistic expression of the Dionysian drive is "*quasiorgiastic forms of music, especially of choral singing and dancing*" (p. xi). The Dionysian dissolution finds its embodied expression in bachhic waves of dancing and singing.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche claims that ancient Greek drama is based on the collision of fundamentally antipodal principles, Dionysus and Apollo. Nietzsche's writing gestures toward the celebration of the Dionysian. Nietzsche argues that ancient Greek tragedy is "*bound up with the duality of the Apolline and the Dionysiac*" and that these two principles "*co-exist in a state of perpetual conflict interrupted only occasionally by periods of reconciliation*" (1999, p. 14). The tension between the two impulses is sometimes resolved into symbiotic union. The conflict between two Greek deities, Apollo and Dionysus, corresponds to an opposition between "*the Apolline art of the image-maker or sculptor*" and "*the imageless art of music, which is that of Dionysos*" (p. 14). These two drives "*exist side by side, mostly in open conflict,*" and they stimulate and provoke each other to "*give birth to ever-new, more vigorous*

offspring in whom they perpetuate the conflict inherent in the opposition between them" (p. 14). The clash between the two principles is perpetual, bringing about revitalised, reinvigorated and rejuvenated products. Nietzsche regards these two drives as "*dream and intoxication*" (p. 14). The Apollonian element corresponds to dream while the Dionysian element evokes intoxication. The Apolline realm of dream is amenable to images and forms while the Dionysian realm of intoxication is responsive to imageless musicality.

Nietzsche asserts that the Dionysian "*blissful ecstasy*" springs from "*the innermost ground of man, indeed of nature itself*" whenever the principle of individuation breaks down (1999, p. 17). As a result of ecstatic intoxication, boundaries are obliterated; human beings step out of their atomised selves and dissolve ecstatically. Human beings get "*a glimpse of the essence of the Dionysiac*" when their subjectivity vanishes "*to the point of complete self-forgetting*" (p. 17). By means of "*collapsing the conventional boundaries of perception,*" the Dionysian wine unites "*individuals, especially at a wine festival of the whole community*" (Seaford, 2005, p. 32). Nietzsche believes that the Dionysian drive renews the bond between human beings and nature, and champions "*her festival of reconciliation with her lost son, humankind*" (1999, p. 18). Human beings are united and reconciled thanks to the Dionysian "*universal harmony*" and "*the mysterious primordial unity*" (p. 18). The Dionysian dancers and singers yearn for such a primordial oneness. By singing and dancing, the Dionysiac man "*expresses his sense of belonging to a higher community*" (p. 18). In order to join this higher community, mundane selves are annihilated, the boundaries that define these ordinary selves dissolve and human beings transgress limits. The Dionysiac man is "*on the brink of flying and dancing, up and away into the air above*" and since he is enchanted, "*something supernatural*" springs out from within him (p. 18). The Dionysiac dancer "*moves in such ecstasy and sublimity as once he saw the gods move in his dreams*" (p. 18). Nietzsche believes that he "*is no longer an artist, he has become a work of art*", as "*all nature's artistic power reveals itself here, amidst shivers of intoxication, to the highest, most blissful satisfaction of the primordial unity*" (p. 18). The Dionysian dancer overwhelmes the Apollonian artist. The Dionysiac dancer disrupts the Apollonian drive towards drawing and perpetuating boundaries and achieving discreteness and distinction.

Nietzsche maintains that every artist is "*either an Apolline dream-artist or a Dionysiac artist of intoxication or finally - as, for example, in Greek tragedy - an artist of both dream and intoxication at once*" (1999, p. 19). The artist "*sinks to the ground*

in Dionysiac drunkenness," abadons himself mystically and "*under the Apolline influence of dream, his own condition, which is to say, his oneness with the innermost ground of the world, reveals itself to him in a symbolic (gleichnishaft) dream-image*" (1999, p. 19).

The Dionysiac festivals of ancient Greece are marked by "*an excess of sexual indiscipline, which flooded in waves over all family life and its venerable statutes*" (Nietzsche, 1999, p. 20). The family and its foundationalist values are shattered as the Dionysiac dancers and singers are unruly and uncontrollable. These Dionysian festivals were seen as "*days of transfiguration*" (p. 20). The Dionysiac revellers dance out of reality, step out of their bodies and morph into other beings. In these festivals, "*the very wildest of nature's beasts were unleashed, up to and including that repulsive mixture of sensuality and cruelty*" (p. 20). This disgusting element is unbridled on these merry-making days while it is restrained by the Apollonian organisation of society. Apollo is believed to protect ancient Greeks from these "*feverish stirrings*" and the "*crude, grotesque manifestation of the Dionysiac*" (p. 20). These festivals function as safety valves in ancient Greece. These festivals help ancient Greeks to release their repressed passions and thus thet function as a pressure refief valve and an outlet for tension. The Apollonian rationale allows the Dionysian tension to be released during these festivities for a certain period of time in a certain place and thus bring the Dionysian chaos under control. Hence, the Apollonian structure of society is preserved and sustained by permitting the otherwise unmanageable, tumultuous, turbulent spirit of the Dionysian revellers to gratify their desire for chaos and disorder.

The Dionysiac music shakes "*us to our very foundations, the unified stream of melody and the quite incomparable world of harmony*" (Nietzsche, 1999, p. 21). The Apolline consciousness conceals the Dionysiac world "*like a veil*" (p. 21). Nietzche claims that we have to "*dismantle the artful edifice of Apolline culture stone by stone, as it were, until we catch sight of the foundations on which it rests*" (p. 22). The Dionysiac foundations start convulsing and the Apollonian order is shaken.

The existence of the Apollonian human is predicated on "*a hidden ground of suffering and knowledge which was exposed to his gaze once more by the Dionysiac*" (Nietzsche, 1999, p. 27). Nietzche states that Apollo cannot exist without Dionysus. Therefore, these two impulses are interdependent. Without the Dionysian impulse, the Apollonian discipline cannot define itself. They are dialectically dependent on one another. Without the chaotic Dionysian element, the Apollonian principle would lose

its legitimacy; it cannot establish order, draw and sustain the boundary between order and disorder without the other, hostile Dionysian force that threatens to eradicate the order. The Apollonian rationale reinforces the boundaries of reason, law and order by keeping the lawless, disorderly Dionysian impulse beyond these boundaries. Thus, the Apollonian principle constructs itself as the rational order by demonising the irrational other.

Nietzche asserts that "*the ecstatic sounds of the Dionysiac festival, with its ever more seductive, magical melodies, entered this artificially dammed-up world founded on semblance and measure*" (p. 27). The Apollonian dam is inundated by the Dionysiac waves. Through these daemonic melodies, "*all the unmeasurable excess in nature found expression in pleasure, suffering and knowledge*" (p. 27). The Apollonian individual is "*submerged here in the self-oblivion of the Dionysiac condition*" (p. 27). Thus, the Dionysiac principle breaks through and suspends and annulls the Apollonian principle.

Nietzsche believes that cultivated ancient Greeks "*felt themselves absorbed, elevated, and extinguished in exactly the same way*" when they encountered "*the chorus of satyrs*" (1999, p. 39). He maintains that "*the first effect of Dionysiac tragedy*" falls upon state and society; "*indeed all divisions between one human being and another give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity which leads men back to the heart of nature*" (p. 39). Dionysiac tragedy disappears "*in an age of self-consciousness and enlightenment" since the age of enlightenment and consciousness is driven by the Apollonian force of reason and rationality; Nietzsche believes that "the obstacle to tragedy is the abandonment of irrationality*" (Roche, 2005, p. 58). Once the irrational is unleashed, the Dionysiac force eradicates all divisions. Nietzsche suggests that we derive solace from a tragic play that "*in the ground of things, and despite all changing appearances, life is indestructibly mighty and pleasurable*" (1999, p. 39). He believes that "*this solace appears with palpable clarity in the chorus of satyrs, a chorus of natural beings whose life goes on ineradicably behind and beyond all civilization*" (p. 39). The audience takes comfort in the appearance of riotous Bacchic satyrs; their chorus has a soothing effect on the spectators since they discern the imperishable merge of the rational and the irrational in human life. The perpetual co-existence of the Dionysian and Apollonian impulses is presented on the stage as an enduring image of the wholeness of human vitality and existence.

In the ecstatic state of the Dionysian principle, "*the usual barriers and limits of existence are destroyed*" and this leads to "*a lethargic element in which all personal experiences from the past are submerged*" (Nietzsche, 1999, p. 40). This "*gulf of oblivion*" separates the world of everyday life from the world of Dionysiac experience (p. 40). However, once "*daily reality re-enters consciousness, it is experienced as such with a sense of revulsion; the fruit of those states is an ascetic, will-negating mood*" (p. 40). As soon as the Apollonian principle predominates, human beings find the Dionysian excess is repulsive.

Nietzsche believes that the "*primal ground of tragedy radiates, in a succession of discharges*" (1999, p. 44). Therefore, "*the true spirit of Greek tragedy was wild and pre-classical, rather than serenely civilized*" (Bowlby, 2007, p. 37). Nietzsche adds that the Dionysiac state represents the "breaking-asunder of the individual and its becoming one with the primal being itself" (1999, p. 44). Nietzsche contends that in ancient Greek drama, the Dionysiac vision is embodied by the Apollonian impulse (p. 44). The Apollonian principle gives form to the Dionysiac dissolution. Nietzsche views Dionysus "the force behind form" while he thinks that Apollo embodies "the contrary principle that gives form to force" (Poole, 2005, pp. 63-64). The Apollonian principle organises the Dionysian discharges and arranges them in a dramatic form. By giving form to the Dionysian force, the Apollonian principle disciplines the Dionysian force that threatens to obliterate law and order.

Nietzsche discerns in Apollo and Dionysus "the living and visible representatives of two art-worlds which differ in their deepest essence and highest goals" (1999, p. 76). Apollo embodies "*the transfiguring genius of the* principium individuationis*, through whom alone release and redemption in semblance can truly be attained*" (p. 76). By contrast, "*under the mystical, jubilant shout of Dionysos the spell of individuation is broken, and the path to the Mothers of Being, to the innermost core of things, is laid open*" (p. 76). The "*gaping gulf between plastic, Apolline, art and the Dionysiac art of music*" (p. 76) reveals an immense opposition. Nevertheless, these two principles coexist in human nature although they are opposed to each other. Nietzsche believes that this tension between these two drives is creative. The conjoining of "*the Dionysiac singing and dancing of a chorus*" with "*the more restrained and ordered speech and action of individual players on a stage*" (Geuss, 1999, p. xi) leads to a productive relationship.

The Nietzschean Analysis of *Equus*

Shaffer turns a suspicious eye on the uninspected pretensions of civilization in a Nietzschean fashion. He identifies culture as something that has been bought at a terrible price, built upon the repression and sublimation of instinct and passion. He unmasks the pathology behind all the self-denying virtues that culture has agreed to glorify. Therefore, he turns upside down the Apollonian civilisation by means of the Dionysian disruption. The Dionysian mystical and ecstatic experience of Alan shatters the illusory world of the Apollonian Martin. Martin, once certain of his Apolline world, is confronted with an opposing worldview, one to which he is inextricably bound. Martin's "*unconscious doubts about his numb existence and professional purpose*" have been there for a long while. Once Alan enters his Apollonian world, his doubts are pushed into "*his conscious life in dramatic and shattering style*" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 90). The cultivated, accomplished psychiatrist unearths in his patient the projection of his fundamental lack.

Equus depicts Martin's attemtps to understand the cause of Alan's actions, and his wrestling with his own sense of purpose. The play unfolds through Martin's eyes and his retrospective narration. Martin seeks to find out why Alan has blinded his horses and uncovers that Alan is caught between the opposing ideologies of his mother's Christianity and his father's atheistic socialism, divided by "*Dora the religious and Frank the atheist polarization*" (Bal, 2022, p. 615). Besides, Alan is "*torn by his devotion to Equus" and by his adherence to "his mother's strict morals*" (Stacy,1976, p. 333). Martin understands that Alan has desired to escape in a highly personalised form of worship. Gazing at an image of Jesus that his mother had put on his bedroom wall, Alan as a child was immersed in the associations which the image set up in his psyche. When his father protested, the picture was removed and another image of a horse's head was substituted. Also, his mother told him mythic and biblical stories such as the belief that horse and rider were thought to be one creature. These images and mythic stories imprinted themselves on the mind of the susceptible boy and thus Equus is born. Alan becomes fascinated with horses and begins to develop an attraction to horses. The mythical image of the horse and the rider becoming one deeply influences Alan, who is in search of an imaginative space where he could be by himself, freed from his parents and the conflict between them. The image of the horse and the rider merging into another allows him to imagine that he has psychic integrity and he can sheltere himself from the opposition between his

parents that divides him into two. This image of doubleness and oneness at once mesmerises him as he could both claim his independence from his parents and enjoy the feeling of being double. For Alan, oneness corresponds to his singularity and his unity with Equus at once. No matter what he imagines in his mind in order to create a personal psychic space where he could be free and on his own, this psychic space has already been impacted by the biblical narratives that his mother has told him for years. In one of her stories, the rider who merges with the horse is Jesus on horseback and this image has seeped into his subconscious. As a result, Equus has become his god. Years later, at the age of seventeen, Alan blinds six horses one night in the stables where he works and is then sent to Martin to be cured. Martin finds out in their sessions that Alan is erotically fixated on a horse that he calls Equus, rides him, naked and bareback at midnight, and sexually climaxes as he rides the horse. Martin also understands that Alan is disturbed by the horse's eyes that are always watching him as his mother's god scrutinises everyone. Alan is bothered by the power that Equus exerts overs him and wants to disentagle himself from Equus. One can argue that Alan feels that Equus does not allow him to be intimate with someone else, so he attempts to liberate himself from the oppressive gaze of Equus and blinds six horses during a moment of sexual intimacy with a stable girl. He wants to free himself from Equus. Alan tells Martin that when the stable girl tries to seduce him, he is unable to have an erection. He feels that he is unable to engage in sex because of the jealous horse. Alan begs the horse for forgiveness since he sees Equus as a god-like figure who sees everything he does. In a fit of unrestrained anger and guilt, he blinds six horses. He is arrested and taken to Martin. However, Martin divulges his feeling that his treatment of the boy will rob him of his creative and instinctual vitality and believes that to adjust Alan back to normal life is to destroy his passion and return him to a dull life. He says that Alan's crime is extreme, yet he adds that such exremity is necessary to break free from the repressive chains of a plastic existence. Martin expresses his doubts about the purpose of his profession. He can treat Alan and restore him to normal life. However, he knows that he will take away the boy's unique experience of ectasy and passionate worship and reduce him to a mere husk. He is stuck in a limbo, vacillating between the numbness of modern society and the terrifying, yet liberating human passion. Staring out into the darkness, Martin reckons that the sharp chain of restriction will never come out of his mouth. The sharp chain of restriction in his mouth represents the repressive rigidity of the Apollonian principle in the modern, normative society. In contrast to this image of repression, Alan's ecstatic, orgasmic Dionysian experience of nocturnal rides on

Equus, bareback and naked, breaks through Martin, shattering his sense of self, the meaning of his arid existence and the purpose of his vocation.

The concrete embodiment of the Apollonian impulse, Martin is an accomplished psychiatrist, highly respected, and married to a dentist, and his life seems to be in order and harmony. He seems to be an intellectually oriented person who reads cultural and artistic books. However, Martin suffers from a clash between the conflicting impulses within himself. As he delves into the mind of his patient, Alan, he comes into recognition that he is chained to his Apollonian side. Indeed, his Apollonian impulse turns out to be an inner constriction for Martin as it forces him to annihilate his Dionysian impulse. In other words, his Apollonian side reduces him to be merely a man of reason, obliterating his sexual impulses. "*To resist Dionysus*," Dodds argues, "*is to resist the elemental in one's own nature*" (in Goldhill, 1997, p. 342). Martin resists the Dionysian urge as he represses the primordial in his nature. Apollo embodies "*the man of culture*" who feels "*nullified in the presence of the chorus of satyrs*" who embody the elemental nature (Seaford, 2005, p. 32). As the Apollonian man of culture and civilisation, Martin seems to have annihiliated his Dionysian impulses. He has obliterated the elemental impulses in his body; for instance, he is rarely engaged in sexual intimacy with his wife; Alan mocks him in one of their sessions; he teases him by saying that Martin is unable to have an erection. It seems that his erotic desire has shrunken and his flaccid penis symbolises his dried up vitality.

His Apollonian impulse entraps him in "*spiritual incapacitation, removal from the Immediate Life*" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 104). His life is devoid of any genuine passion as he is enslaved in a mundane existence. He is severed from the life-affirming values of primordial passion, first-hand experience and extremity. He vicariously seeks to catch a glimpse of the immediate life through his art books, and, later on, through Alan's direct experience with the immediate life. Martin is a "seriously fragmented" character, wards off "*a confrontation with more underdeveloped parts," his "cognitive and affective processes seem arrested*" and, for him, "[*f*]*antasy and reality, self and other, past present and future often condense into amorphous, undifferentiated amalgams. Elements which in reality are clearly distinct are at times experienced as fused; organic totalities are perceived as composed of separate bits pasted together*" (Corello, 1986, p. 196). Thus, Martin confesses that his "*educated, average head is being held at the wrong angle*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 210), which indicates that he is restricted by the Apollonian values of cultivation and

moderation. Moreover, he speaks of his aversion to the Apollonian rejection of extremity: "*The extremity is the point*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 273). His mentioning of extremity points to the Dionysian desire for the attainment of the transcendent and the infinite, which the Apollonian impulse renders inaccessible. The Dionysiac excess or extremity reveals itself as "*the truth*" to Martin propelled by the Apollonian drive that represents "*measured limitation*" and "*freedom from wilder impulses*" (Nietzsche 27, 16).

Nietzsche regards tragedy as "*admonition, punishment, and critique*" (Poole, 2005, pp. 64-65). Martin's confrontation with the Dionysian Alan turns out to be a form of retribution for him; the figure of Alan functions as an admonisher who warns the psychiatrist about the restrictions of his arid life and a critic who reminds him of the limitations of his incapacitated existence. Poole notes that the Apollonian principle "*will tend to ever-increasing rigidity*" should it be "*left to its own devices*" and "*the more rigid the form into which it congeals, the more violent will be the revenge of the Dionysiac when it comes to shatter it, as it inevitably will*" (pp. 64-65). Therefore, Martin's encounter with Alan shatters his petrified life forcefully as it has been utterly inflexible and oblivious to the Dionysian experience of ecstasy, intoxication and metamorphose. This discloses the fact that all human structures in the Apollonian domain are fragile and therefore vulnerable in the face of the Dionysian chaos and terror. Hence, the rigidity of Martin's existence threatens the tenuous borders of his subjectivity. The more rigidly he is resistant to change, the more hazardously his life is liable to violent rupture. This line of thought marks tragedy as "*a means of conducting a radical critique of human products, structures, and artefacts*" (Poole, 2005, pp. 64-65). The Dionysian impulse that ruptures Martin's existence renders him a tragic character. The Apollonian principle embodied by Martin reigns over "*structure, over limits and contours and shapes*" whereas the Dionysian principle embodied by Alan reigns over "*the process of generation that makes forms possible, but also perpetually dissolves them*" (Poole, 20005, p. 64). The Dionysian dissolution is not utterly destructive as it leads to regeneration and revitalises the Apollonian forms that it has shattered. The Apollonian forms reinvigorated by the Dionysian dissolution and chaos cancel death (Karadas, 2020, p.162). Hence, tragedy celebrates "*this force of creative dissolution*" (Poole, 2005, p. 64). Therefore, the Dionysian shattering of the Apollonian structures in Martin's life causes these structures to be obliterated, which in fact enables him to redesign these disintegrated structures. Hence, the two faces of Dionysus confront one another: "*creative euphoria and lethal retribution*" (Cartledge, 1997, p. 22). The Dionysiac ecstasy leads to euphoric

recreation and reconstruction once it fatally destroys Apollonian forms and structures. Thus, the Dionysian ecstatic possession is "*transformative*" (Easterling, 1997, p. 37). The Dionysian experience begins to transform him, leading him to question his life, to realise that he must metamorphose himself, recreate himself. Hence, the Dionysian destruction is followed by reconstruction.

The repression of the Dionysian impulse cuts Martin off from an instinctual existence where he can worship "*a thousand local gods*" as he wishes (Shaffer, 1977, p. 254). However, his Apollonian side does not let him surrender to the primordial passion of worship. As a result, he feels suspended in the void, empty space of his being: "*Without worship you shrink, it's as brutal as that … I shrank my own life*" (p. 274). He is "*an intellectual caught in a Hamlet-like dilemma of thought versus action*" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 80). He is aware that he is spiritually incapacitated "*to the extent that he envies a frightened boy committed to a mental institution because he has at least known and experienced passion*" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 80). However, he is "*blocked intellectually*" thus, "*an overwhelming sense of futility and meaninglessness engulfs him*" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p.80). Following his tragic self-realization, Martin comes to detest his life devoid of any genuine passion and he turns out to be envious of his patient: "*that boy [Alan] has known a passion more ferocious than I have felt in any second of my life […] I envy it*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 274). Martin is restricted by an arid existence, which he loathes since his Dionysian impulse is eradicated by his Apollonian side. Alan's mystical experience of his ecstatic oneness with horses breaks through him and compels him to transform his idea of psychiatry and his sense of self. Martin realises that horses mean much more than worship for Alan. Klein (1993) calls attention to this fact: "*The horse was not only the object of his worship, but also his invitation to freedom and the source of his sexual release*" (p. 105). Shaffer employs the metaphor of equus to explore Alan's freedom; Knapp states that horses embody "*unbridled instinct, night (the mare as in 'nightmare') and terror*" and symbolise "*the unconscious world: imagination, impetuosity, desire, creative power, youth, energy and sensuality*" (in Chaudhuri, 1984, p. 293). These connotations of horses in psychological terms demonstrate that Alan's ecstatic experience with horses amalgamates the mythical qualities of the Dionysian impulse. Yet, Martin's life is lacking in all these Dionysian elements and therefore the Dionysian liberation from social norms and emancipation from Apollonian forms and structures shatter Martin's petrified existence although he is yearning for it.

The ancient Greek god Dionysus is the god of fertility; therefore, the Dionysian impulse is associated with the enactment of sexual instincts, regeneration and procreation. Martin's sterility, therefore, goes parallel with his Apollonian image in opposition to the Dionysian impulse. For Martin, his sexual impotency constitutes another constriction that he points to as one's "*area of maximum vulnerability*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 252). He feels extremely nervous when Alan mocks him, claiming that Martin does not make love with his wife: "*I bet you [Martin] never touch her. Come on, tell me. You've got no kids, have you? Is that because you don't fuck?*" (p. 252). Feeling vulnerable, Martin explodes and orders the boy to go to his room immediately and calls him "*wicked little bastard*" (p. 252). However, as he advances in self-realisation and his need for self-exposure increases, Martin confesses that he has not kissed his wife for six years (p. 275). Hence, Martin seems to be chained to his Apollonian side that disconnects him from his embodied existence, and he cannot enact his sexual instincts.

Due to his sterility, Martin is yoked by his too rigid Apollonian existence; he cannot step out of himself and dissolve into immateriality by means of being ecstatically engaged in a sexual encounter. As Dora, Alan's mother, argues, sexuality is not "*just a biological matter, but spiritual as well*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 227). Apart from the carnal pleasure of fleshly union, sexual intercourse also provides a sort of spiritual ecstasy through which one can transcend his atomised existence and liberate his soul from the Apollonian principle of individuation. Sexual ecstasy allows one to be annihilated, though temporarily, as the French phrase *le petit mort* that literally means "*the little death*" refers to the temporary loss or weakening of consciousness and "*the sensation of orgasm likened to death*" (OED). Once one is enraptured by sexual ecstasy, their sense of self dissolves in waves of orgasmic intoxication. In tune with this conception of erotic love, Shaffer makes Alan achieve spiritual transcendence through orgasmic rides, galloping free and naked on his horse that bears him away. Shaffer accentuates Martin's sexual numbness and spiritual stagnation through his patient's attainment of sexual and spiritual freedom. Martin, who covets Alan's passion, is not at all engaged in an orgasmic experience, which will reconnect him with his body and allow him to dissolve into immateriality and cosmic oneness through ecstasy. Martin is oblivious to Alan's ecstatic experience of becoming animal, "composing a body with the animal" and assembling "*a body without organs defined by zones of intensity or proximity*" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 274). Alan's erotically charged rides at night allows him to merge with the base instinct in his nature; he composes a unified bodily existence that is suggestive

of the oneness of the horse and the rider from his mother's stories. His embodied self is a body without organs in the Deleuzian sense as his erotic desire is not limited to the erogenous zones of the body and the sexually sensitive areas of his body; erotic desire is dispersed all over his body; organs traditionally linked with sexual desire do not predominate his sexual activity; he even ejaculates without touching his penis. The horse and the rider become one, their bodies merging into one another and thus re-composing, re-assembling the humanimal. His erotic desire is marked by the intensity that springs from the dissolution of the boundary between himself and Equus. Bodily proximity sexually stimulates him; his intense erotic experience is characterised by the sense of commingling, absorbing one another's sweat through the pores of their skins.

However, Martin cannot get in touch with the animal within him. Hence, Martin's sterility causes his vitality to be shrunken and him to be imprisoned in the realm of repression. He is immersed in the enrapturing spirit of Dionsysus that encompasses "*ecstasy in its essential freedom from individuation and its union with nature and humankind*" (Daniels, 2013, p. 42). Martin is also entrapped in his marital life since he has a sterile, fruitless relationship with his wife and he feels alienated from his wife. He recounts a typical evening: "*she sits beside […] fireplace, and knits things for orphans in a home she helps with. And I sit opposite, turning the pages of art books on ancient Greece*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 253). This family picture indicates how indifferent they are to each other and how arid their relationship is. Martin feels estranged from his wife; he attempts to share his fondness of ancient Greek civilisation with his wife, yet she is far from feeling what he feels when he talks about ancient Greek culture: "*Occasionally, I still trail a faint scent of my enthusiasm across her path. I pass her a picture of the sacred acrobats of Crete leaping through the horns of running bulls – and she will say, 'Och Martin, what an absurred thing to be doing!'*" (p. 253). However, Dysart craves for a fellow person to share with his deep interest in ancient Greek culture and art: "*I wish there was one person in my life I could show. One instinctive, absolutely unbrisk person I could take to Greece*" (p. 254). Due to her briskness and indifference to his field of interest, he comes to detest his wife and calls her "*the familiar domestic monster. Margaret Dysart: the shrink's Shrink*" (p. 253). Martin becomes incarcerated in his marital life which turns out to be another constriction for him. Books about ancient Greece is an Apollonian representation, a symbolic form that is a substitute for the Dionysian instinctual life that is lacking in Martin's life. Martin's flees from "*the rigours of his profession by absorbing himself in books on Ancient Greece, fondly believing himself to be in some way connected with*

that primitive culture in contrast to his antiseptic wife" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 91). Hence, he is in contact with the mytical world of ancient Greece on "*an intellectual level having absorbed its stories, rituals and traditions*" (p. 91). Alan's ecstatic experience makes him realise that cognitive knowledge and embodied experiene are completely different. He comes to recognise that he ideally adores the abstract notion of primordial forces of ancient Greece and that he has never experienced these forces on an embodied, visceral level. He understands that Alan is not knowledgeable about the elemental forces of ancient Greece, yet the mythical realm has permeated Alan body and soul, the Dionysian ectasy has penetrated him flesh and blood. He becomes conscious of the fact that he has not been in touch with the elemental in human nature that is embodied by Alan's horses, a symbol of "*the animal component in man*" (in Chaudhuri, 1984, p. 292). Martin suffers from the "anguish" that may result from his attempt to transcend the animal within himself (Berger, 1991, p. 12). This attempt to transcend the animal in human is, Berger argues, a symptom of the alienation between human and animal in the Western modernity. Human and animal are no longer harmoniously integrated in Martin's subjectivity. Martin is a modern subject who looks at the animal component in human from afar, becomes aware of its loss and lack within himself as he comes to realise the integration of human and animal in Alan's subjectivity. He is agonised since his rigidly Apollonian side eradicates the Dionysian melange of human and animal.

Martin's Apollonian impulse renders his instinctual plea for passion and worship inattainable, and, in a way, his Apollonian side denies and attempts to control Martin's Dionysian impulse. The dialectical opposition between the Apollonian side and the Dionysian side can be distilled into a confrontation between the conscious and the unconscious respectively. One becomes whole, integrated, calm, fertile, and happy when these two principles have learned to live at peace and to complement one another. The duelling forces of the conscious and the unconscious should be reconciled to ensure a harmonised existence. Dysart's Apollonian characteristics align him with the conscious mind while the unconscious forces are projected onto the Dionysian Alan. As the modern psychiatrist, Martin is in charge of transforming the irrational into the rational, transmuting the incomprehensible into the comprehensible. Yet, in Martin's case, the Apollonian force attempts to exterminate the Dionysian impulse which stands for the unconscious, and the former refuses to be mutually accommodated with the latter. Hence, Martin's consciousness

turns out to restrict him as it enslaves him and seeks to dissociate him from his unconscious state.

The dichotomy between the Apollonian impulse and the Dionysian impulse opens up the way for the perennial opposition between the mind and the body respectively. The mind stands for intellectual cultivation whereas the body represents the fulfilment of sexual desires in this dualistic drama. Martin's intellectual overactivity results in his physical incapacitation. His books of art and culture reflect his cerebral existence while his infertility is a marked sign of his physical incapacitation. Martin confronts the fact that his being is meaningless since his existence is divorced from his bodily being and reduced to the mind. He exists on an intellectual level and is unable to grasp the genuine sensation of being an embodied self. His intangible intellectual knowledge is not complemented by the substantial, tactile experience. Martin worships the idea of primordial forces of human nature rather than act on them and experience them physically. With regards to the conflict between the body and the mind, MacMurraugh-Kavanagh (1998) points out that Martin convinces himself that he is "*at heart a 'primitive' creature*" since he takes pleasure in "*annual fortnights wandering around Mediterranean ruins*," but comes to realise that this experience is "*sick joke*" as he looks at "*pages of centaurs trampling the soil of Argos*" (p. 94). Being in "*some Doric temple – clouds tearing through pillars – eagles bearing prophecies out of the sky*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 254), Martin seeks to plunge into the realm of genuine passion, yet he worships the ideal picture of ancient Greece that exists in his mind, which drives him into spiritual and physical numbness and mediocrity. Hence, his mind, in parallel with his Apollonian side, becomes a repressive force for him since it condemns him to stagnation.

Martin is besieged by social norms constructed in the Apollonian realm. Owing to societal constrictions, he suffers from the fragmentation of identity. He is split into private and public selves. In order to conform to the codes of society, he assumes an artificial existence. He appears to have "*settled pallid and provincial*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 274) as he himself confesses. The society stamps its strong image on Martin's public identity. He succumbs to the limitations of the community in which he was born and raised. Married couples are conventionally expected to have children, so Martin, to adhere to social norms, lies that he and his wife do not have children because his wife is "the puritan" although they cannot have children because of his sterility (p. 274). Hence, Martin is bridled by social norms and he feels that there is a sharp chain in his mouth, which is never removed (p. 301).

Martin flounders between his public self and private self. The hidden man beneath the socially constructed public face tries to abandon the tight reins of the prescriptive society. By means of his private identity, Martin attempts to strip himself off his superficial being established through "*socially sanctioned channels*" (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 94). Indeed, his private self is shrouded by a web of illusions that has been spun by himself. He recedes into the dream-world of classical Greek antiquity, an imagined world of vitality, in order to divorce himself from the lackluster modern society. As Plunka (1988) suggests, "*thumbing through his art books on ancient Greece*," Martin envisages "*a world of adventure, wonder, ecstasy and excitement*" and every year he "*trudges off to seek the primitive ancient Greek culture*" for which he yearns (p. 164). In order to dissociate himself from the shrunken shaped by the normative society, Martin makes "*such wild returns*" into "*the womb of civilisation*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 274) and he dreams of being by "*the great sea*" on the Mediterranean shores where ancient Greeks gods "*used to bathe*" (p. 279). Fluctuating between his public and private selves, Martin suffers from "*psychic disintegration*" as MacMurraugh-Kavanagh (1998) claims (p. 58). His public and private beings are not permitted by social norms to be harmonised. Due to societal constrictions, he cloaks his true self in illusions and artifice.

Porter (2005) argues that Nietszche thinks that "*the modern world must define itself in relation to tragedy*" and claims that Nietzsche capitalises on "*a peculiarly modern set of desires and fears*" (p. 69). Nietzsche believes that tragedy needs myths, and that modernity has banished them both (Eagleton, 2003, p. 224). Therefore, Nietzsche brings back the Dionysian principle to tragedy, redefining it as "*the essence of modernity*" (Bushnell, 2005, p. 3). Shaffer revisits ancient Greek tragedy to deal with a modern incident. Alan's Dionysian passions ruptures Martin's modern rigidity. Martin's illusory realm of privacy is invaded by the modern world. In a sarcastic manner, Martin explains how he recedes into his personal domain of primordial passions, gods and genuine worship: "*Three weeks a year in the Peleponnese, every bed booked in advance, every meal paid for by vouchers, cautious jaunts in hired Fiats, suitcase crammed with Kao-Pectate! Such a fantastic surrender to the primitive*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 274). Thus, Martin feels choked by the intrusion of the modern world images such as cars, suitcases, vouchers and reservations even in the dreamy world of ancient Greece, which has an intrinsic value to him. According to Eagleton (2003), Nietzsche believes that "*myth will be reborn on an epic scale at the heart of the modern epoch. Only in this way will an atomized social order be furnished with the collective symbolic resources of which it is in need*" (p. 225). The modern individual is

disenchanted with ancient myths and needs to be reenchanted according to Nietzschean understanding of tragedy. Therefore, the Greek god of wine, excess, ecstasy, chaos, transfiguration and intoxication "*must return, countering a barren individualism with an ecstatic dedifferentiation of the self, dissolving the autonomous subject back into its blissful pre-conscious union with Nature*" (Eagleton, 2003, p. 225). The autonomous modern subject has been demystified and is not invested in an ecstatic experience of being one with nature. Similarly, Weber (2004) notes that "*in principle, then, we are not ruled by mysterious, unpredictable forces, but that, on the contrary, we can in principle control everything by means of calculation*" (pp. 12-3). He adds that the modern subject needs "*no longer have recourse to magic" as opposed to "the savage for whom such forces existed*" (p. 13). The rational modern subject has been disenchanted with the world. Yet, Dionysus strikes back at the modern subject and the autonomous subject becomes a tragic subject according to the Nietzschean interpretation of tragedy.

Neither his arid public identity devoid of any genuine passion nor his illusory private identity offers Martin the opportunity to be immersed in the real sensation and exuberance of living passionately. Moreover, he is reduced to the state of a voyeur by social constrictions imposed on him. Voyeurism, MacMurraugh-Kavanagh (1998) argues, is "*an attempt to appropriate another's experiences and thus to live vicariously*" (p. 62). A voyeur is not indulged in first-hand experience since he is disconnected from the immediate contact with life. A voyeur participates in life at second hand; in a way, he is a parasite-like creature feeding on another's passion. Accordingly, Martin hopes to catch what he longs to possess by bearing witness to Alan's genuine passion. MacMurraugh-Kavanagh (1998) further claims that "*the 'blink game' which Martin persuades Alan to play is motivated by the psychiatrist's desire to penetrate his patient's experience in a voyeuristic manoeuvre*" (p. 63). Hence, Martin capitalises on Alan's Dionysian passion.

Repressive social norms enslave Martin through his profession; therefore, his profession turns out to be another constriction for him. He is forced by social norms to restore Alan to normality in order to ensure civic health, peace and social order. Sarcastically Martin calls his profession as "*the adjustment business*" since he is assigned by the society to convert the irrational into the rational and the acceptable (Shaffer, 1977, p. 213). Since Martin is chosen to uphold the normal, he is expected to devitalise the Dionysiac trespasser who intrudes upon the normal. Martin is charge of the "*emasculation*" the transgressor whose Dionysian madness threatens

normative society (Taylor, 1974 p. 29). His profession compels him to mould "*individuals into a contingent but unquestionable concept of normality*" (Mac-Murraugh-Kavanagh 90). Martin is asked to normalise what is marginal and pushed to the periphery of the society. As MacMurraugh-Kavanagh asserts (1998), it is the task of the psychiatrist to "*murder Alan's replacement deity and return Alan to the 'normal world' from which Dysart himself longs to escape, and which, finally, he no longer believes*" (p. 95). Martin has to enact the sacrifice required of him by the society to the great god of normality, yet he is not willing to annihilate the primordial and free spirit of his patient whose existence he finds more meaningful than his own punitive, shrunken self (Shaffer, 1977, p. 254). As Martin advances in self-recognition, he comes to question his profession and the concept of normality: "*The Normal […] is also the dead stare in a million adults. It both sustains and kills – like a God. It is the Ordinary made beautiful, it is also the Average made lethal*" (p. 257). As Martin observes that the normal is only ensured through the obliteration of extreme passions for the sake of the sustenance of the society, he comes to detest the notion of normality prescribed by social norms. He loathes his profession so much that he confesses that he "*would like to leave this room and never see it again*" in his life (p. 279). He is so much disturbed by his treatment of Alan that his illusory realm of privacy, ancient Greece, is marred by the image of human sacrifice in his nightmare. His profession functions as a constriction on Martin as it transforms his idealised ancient Greece, the domain of his beloved deities, into a "*self-constructed hell*" where he is haunted by his conscience (MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, 1998, p. 57). Martin discloses his nightmare:

> I am a chief priest in Homeric Greece. I'm wearing a wide gold mask […] holding a sharp knife [….] The sacrifice is a herd of children […] I fit in the knife and slice [the children] elegantly down to the navel […] I've started to feel distinctly nauseous […] I redouble my efforts to look professional […] the damn mask begins to slip. (Shaffer pp. 216-17)

Martin is repulsed by his professional role that forces him to murder Alan's Dionysian self. His affective response which is manifest in his nightmare demonstrates that he has been alienated from his profession. The Apollonian psychiatrist becomes aware that his profession compels him to obliterate the Dionysian chaos that convulses beneath the Apollonian veil of illusions. The Dionysiac element must be repressed as it is regarded as "*a threat to civic life, disrupting the Greek from his serene participation in the city, as opposed to earlier, foreign influences of the Dionysiac that Homeric art could easily deflect by denouncing*

as barbaric" (Daniels, 2013, p. 43). Martin's nausea indicates that he is unwilling to dissect children and accordingly he is unwilling to eradicate Alan's sense of passion and worship by restoring him to normality. MacMurraugh-Kavanagh (1998) contends that his nightmare "*in which he feels his ceremonial mask slipping as he disembowels sacrificial victims fully reveals his crisis of professional and personal identity*" (p. 62). Martin comes to recognise that the frenzy of Dionysus is "*inaccessible to human logic*" (Sourvinou-Inwood, 2005, p. 21). The Dionysian madness reveals that disorder is good. It discloses that "*the exclusion of disorder*" is madness (p. 21). This chaos is inspired by Dionysus. This Dionysiac impulse threatens human rationality.

Martin becomes aware that what he is doing clinically is wrong ethically. As his professional constriction arrives at its peak, he comes to feel that "*the job is unworthy to fill*" him (Shaffer, 1977, p. 217). He realises that to cure Alan is to erase his sense of passion and to supplant it with a shrunken form of worship that dominant social forms deem normal. To cure Alan is to paste "*Band Aids on him*" (Corello, 1986, p.196). Thus, Martin comes into recognition that to cure Alan means regarding him as an "*object-to-be-changed*" rather than "*a-person-to-be-accepted*" (Plunka, 1988, p. 112). Curing is a disservice to Alan as Martin notes that "my desire might be to make this boy an ardent husband – a caring citizen – a worshipper of abstract and unifying God" and adds that "*my achievement, however, is more likely to make a ghost*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 299). Psychiatric treatment will set Alan "*on a nice mini-scooter and send him puttering off into the Normal World*" (p. 299). Martin does not desire to give Alan "*Normal places for ecstasy*" and he refrains from making Alan feel his "*private parts*" as "*plastic*" (pp. 299-300). He fears that he may destroy Alan's genuine passion. Martin comes into recognition that his treatment of Alan will exterminate his joy and ecstatic enthusiasm, and imprison him in the plastic, shrunken modern world. Therefore, Martin's profession becomes a great constriction for him, as he no longer has faith in it. He does not want to extinguish the fire of life in Alan that he longs to have, and to drive his patient into a mundane existence he is seeking to flee. Since he finally utters that he will deliver Alan from "*madness*," the sharp chain of constriction will never come out of his mouth (p. 301).

Conclusion

At the heart of *The Birth of Tragedy* lies the opposition between the two Greek gods, Apollo and Dionysus, who stand for two antagonistic aesthetic principles that are complementary and vital to the production of tragedy. Nietzsche posits these gods as the mythological personifications of two fundamental human drives. Peter Shaffer's

Equus embodies the clash between these two principles through Martin and Alan, representing the Apollonian and the Dionysian impluses respectively. Walter Benjamin's most often quoted saying runs: "*There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism*" (1969, p. 256). The conflict that Benjamin finds between the document of civilisation and the document of barbarism corresponds to the clash that Nietzsche finds between the Apollonian impulse and the Dionysian impulse. The Apollonian impulse gives form to the Dionysian chaotic, ecstatic and bacchic frenzy that convulses beneath the Apollonian surfaces. Similarly, according to William Butler Yeats (1961), "*tragedy must always be a drowning and breaking of the dykes that separate man from man*" (p. 241). The breaking of dykes that Yeats finds at the origin of tragedy dovetails with the psychological state of Martin whose boundaries are annihilated and whose sense of self dissolves. Once he undergoes the collapse of boundaries and suffers the disintegration of the self, he becomes a tragic character. He is engulfed by the flood of the Dionysian force and his limits are inundated by the Dionysian waves that are unleashed by Alan's mystical, ecstatic experience. Likewise, Nietzsche claims that there are "*no beautiful surfaces without a terrible depth*" (in Sallis, 1991, p. 37).

The above-mentioned terrible depth that he refers to is the Dionysian excess and dissolution fleshed out in the person of Alan, wheras the beautiful surface that he points to is the Apollonian impulse embodied in the person of Martin. Eagleton (2003) states that "*the soothing balm of the Apollonian is applied to the primordial wound of the Dionysian*" (p. 52). The Dionysian wound is embalmed in the Apollonian form of tragedy. Eagleton puts forward that the Dionysian man "*will mischievously offer us the satyr, those mocking, aboriginal, libidinal creatures of Nature who are eternally the same, who have seen civilizations come and go*" (p. 54). Accodingly, Alan ridicules Martin by making fun of his impotency and his lack of libidinal energy. Martin confronts a frenzy, chaos, excess and terror that enjoys both creation and destruction that is unbridled by Alan and his experience of jouissance which transgresses boundaries. Readers feel both "*rapture and repulsion*" in the Dionysian experience (Eagleton, 2003, p. 54). Alan's ecstatic ride on the horse enraptures readers while his blinding of six horses repulses them. His bacchic ride springs from the bliss of Dionysus as he desires to become at one with the primordial nature. However, Eagleton reminds us that one also desires to tear himself the "*orgiastic embrace*" and "*communal bliss*" of the Dionysian impulse (p. 55). Hence, Alan blinds six horses to tear himself from such ecstatic embrace.Thanks to the Apollonian principle, this bachhic frenzy is transformed into a tragic play that frames,

moderates, formalises and sublimates the Dionysian experience of jouissance.The Dionysian abysmal underworld is metamorphosed into a dramatic illusion and a theatrical representation in the domain of the Apollonian impulse. The Dionysian impulse is discharged into the Apollonian realm of forms, images, limits and boundaries. Alan's ecstatic experience of oneness with nature is embodied by Dionysus since he is "*a collective divinity*" while Martin as a psychiatrist attempts to change the Dionysian experience into an understable, comprehensible form in the Apollonian domain as Apollo is "*individuated*" divinity (Lenson, 1987, p. 35). The Dionysian impulse breaks through Martin as he strives to break it down into repsentable images and forms. The Dionsyian abyss that is "incomprehensible and full of terror for the Apolline individual" shatters Martin's reified identity as a psychiatrist and destroys "*the occluded foundation of the calm and beautiful image world he has constructed*" (Burnham and Jesinghausen, 2010, p. 50). Thus, the Dionsyian impulse allows one to reconstruct, revitalise and rejuvanete himself. Dionysus wells up through the mediating power of Apollinian appearances; his essential being is individuated by taking on a spectacular presence. Dionysus brings madness: "*All tradition, all order must be shattered. Life becomes suddenly an ecstasy - an ecstasy of blessedness, but an ecstasy, no less, of terror*" (Otto, 1965, p. 78).

To conclude, the Dionysian Alan represents the enactment of one's passions and instincts whereas the Apollonian Dysart embodies self-postponement and repression of desires and impulses. Dysart's bluntness is rendered intolerable by the sharpness of Alan's passion. Dysart realises his hollowness as he hears "*the creature's voice*" which is calling him "*out of the black cave of the Psyche*" (Shaffer, 1977, p. 267). Dysart feels "*lost*" and "*desperate*" and he attempts to "j*ump clean-hoofed on to a whole new track of being*" (p. 210). The Dionysiac wells up within himself to kill and resurrect himself. Yet, he cannot jump because "*my own basic force – my horse power, if you like*" is too feeble, "*too little*" (p. 210). Dysart remains reined up by the sharp chains of inner, societal, professional, marital constrictions that suffocate him. He is stuck in a limbo between the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses. Social norms divide him into two selves; his public self is severed from his private self in order for him to conform to social norms. He takes refuge in illusions to camouflage his true self, yet his realm of privacy is intruded upon by repressive social norms. His illusory personal space is confiscated by his profession that causes him to annihilate the primordial passion and the free spirit, which he glorifies as the genuine passion he comes across in Alan. Owing to these multiple constrictions,

which entrap him, Martin laments in an elegiac tone that there is "*now, in my mouth, that sharp chain. And it never comes out*" (p. 301).

This is how the play ends; Martin hears the call of the Dionysian, but fails to summon up his courage, to die and revitalise himself. Shaffer's play does not allow for a complete catharsis for Martin; it does not offer a purification that leads to spiritual renewal or release from tension. Martin treats Alan by utilising a method that is based on emotional discharge, "*abreaction or catharsis*" (Glenn, 1976, p. 482) and thus brings Alan's joy and terror to consciousness and affords it expression. However, the lack of a complete catharsis in the case of Martin, the embodiment of the modern subject, renders him a tragic character in the modern age. His surname is Dysart; his Apollonian self dies hard. Martin gazes into the Dionysian abyss and the abyss also gazes back into him, compelling him to take action in order to metamorphose himself. Nietzsche believes that the clash between the Dionysian drive and the Apollonian drive leads to a new birth by "*a process of reciprocal intensification*" (1999, p. 28). Martin journeys into the uncharted territories of ecstatic and bachhic experience by means of delving into the dark regions of Alan's psyche and the Dionysian "*unaccountable territories*" where Alan performs his nocturnal rituals with horses (Murray, 1995, p. 11). Martin tragically realises that the Apollonian drive and the Dionysian drive are complementary impulses, yet fails to resolve them into a symbiosis. As a tragic character who appears to be fully aware of his tragic flaw at the end of the play, Martin, who cannot liberate his passions which transgress the surveillance of repressive and normative society, evokes a sense of pity and fear in readers. Shaffer's modern tragedy communicates the idea that Martin's misforunte could befall every modern subject who fails to release the elemental self, and to militate against the rigidity of social order that wears him down, and who is dissociated from the life-affirming excess and extremities of instinct and passion, swamped by a sense of alienation and drifting like a ghost. In tandem with the Nietzschean synthesis of Apollo and Dionysos in tragedy, Shaffer transforms Alan's Dionysian experience of madness, frenzy and ecstasy into an Apollonian form, a modern tragedy, which could be seen as the playwright's call to the human beings living in the modern age to descend into the Dionysian depths of chaos and terror only to be dismembered, annihilated, metamorphosed, reinvigorated and to rise up again in the domain of the Apollonian principle and thus to change, reconstruct and revolutionise the symbolic realm of forms, images and boundaries constructed by the Apollonian impulse. The Dionysian principle symbolises "*change and dynamism, in contrast to the calm, still serenity of Apollo*" (Daniels, 2013, p. 47). The Dionysian urge

cannot be repressed or expelled out of existence in any individual without incurring immense penalties. The Apollonian principle ensures culture and civilisation and the Dionysian principle ensure primordial passion; these conflicting impulses must be conjoined. Once Dionysian impulses are utterly annihilated, the Apollonian force will be eventually exterminated; they intensify one another. Shaffer weaves this ritualistic clash into the heart of *Equus* and suggests a mutual accomodation to cure the modern subject. To glimpse into the nocturnal cave of the Dionysian for the modern subject is lethal, but liberating. Porter (2005) believes that Nietzsche regards tragedy "*a touchstone of the future, and consequently of paramount importance for the present*" (p. 69). The future will be reconstructed following the Dionysian dissolution if the Apollonian subject summons up his courage to look into the primordial Dionysian abyss that is both deathly and emancipatory, and thus destroy the present. As a consequence, experiencing such an ecstatic transmutation through tragedy is in the last analysis thoroughly life-affirming and immensely rejuvenating.

References

Bal, M. (2022). Peter Shaffer's *Equus* and equine-assisted psychotherapy (EAP). *Litera: Journal of Language, Literature and Culture Studies*, 32 (2) , 601-620. DOI: 10.26650/LITERA2021-1028065.

Benjamin, W. (1969). *Illuminations: essays and reflections*. (H. Zohn, Trans.). New York: Schocken Books.

Berger, J. (1991). *About looking*. New York: Vintage.

Bowlby, R. (2007). *Freudian mythologies: Greek tragedy and modern identities.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burnham, D. and Martin J. (2010). *Nietzsche's the birth of tragedy: A reader's guide*. London and New York: Continuum.

Bushnell, R. (2005). Introduction. In R. Bushnell (Ed.), *A companion to tragedy* (pp. 1-4). Oxford: Blackwell.

Cartledge, P. (1997). 'Deep plays': theatre as process in Greek civic life. In P. E. Easterling (Ed.). *The Cambridge companion to Greek tragedy* (pp. 3-35). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chaudhuri, U. (1984). The spectator in drama/drama in the spectator, *Modern Drama*, 27, 281-323.

Corello, A. V. (1986). *Equus*: The ritual sacrifice of the male child. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 73 (2), 191-211. PMID: 3092264.

Deleuze, G. and Félix G. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. (B. Massumi, trans.). Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Daniels, P. R. (2013). *Nietzsche and the birth of tragedy*. New York: Routledge.

Eagleton, T. (2003). *Sweet violence: The idea of the tragic*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Easterling, P. E. (1997). A show for Dionysus. In P. E. Easterling (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Greek tragedy* (pp. 36-53). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Freud, A. (1966). *The ego and the mechanisms of defense*. Madison: International University Press.

George, G. D. (1999). The disruption of health: Shaffer, Foucault, and 'the normal'. *Journal of Medical Humanities*, 20(4), 231-45.

Gianakaris, C. J. (1992). *Peter Shaffer*. London: Macmillan.

Glen, J. (1976). Alan Strang as an adolescent: A discussion of Peter Shaffer's *Equus*. *International Journal of Psychoanalytic Psychoterapy*, 5, 473-87. PMID: 955799.

Goldhill, S. (1997). Modern critical approaches to Greek tragedy. In P. E. Easterling (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Greek tragedy* (pp. 324-47). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Geuss, R. (1999). Introduction. In R. Geuss and R. Speirs (Eds.), *The birth of tragedy and other writings*. (R. Speirs, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Karadas, F. (2020). Weaving and the tarot as Apollonian repressive mechanisms in Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" and Carter's "The Lady of the House of Love". *Söylem Filoloji Dergisi*, 5 (1), 160-75.

Klein, D. A. (1993). *Peter Shaffer*. New York: Twayne Publishers.

Lenson, D. (1987). *The birth of tragedy: A commentary*. Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers.

MacMurraugh-Kavanagh, M. K. (1998). *Peter Shaffer: Theatre and drama*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Murray, A. S. (1995). *Who's who in mythology: Classic guide to the ancient world*. London: Bracken Books.

Nietzsche, F. (1999). *The birth of tragedy and other writings*. (R. Speirs, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Otto, W. F. (1965). *Dionysus: myth and cult.* (R. B. Palmer, Trans.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Oxford English Dictionary. (n. d.). Le petit mort. In *oed.com dictionary*. Retrieved August 20, 2023, from https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=petit+mort

Plunka, G. A. (1988). *Peter Shaffer: Roles, rites, and rituals in the theatre*. Ontario: Associated University Press.

Porter, J. I. (2005). Nietzsche and tragedy. In R. Bushnell (Ed.), *A companion to tragedy* (pp. 68-87). Oxford: Blackwell.

Poole, A. (2005). *Tragedy: A very short introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Roche, M. W. (2005). The greatness and limits of Hegel's theory of tragedy. In R. Bushnell (Ed.), *A companion to tragedy*. (pp. 51-67). Oxford: Blackwell.

Sallis, J. (1991). *Crossings: Nietzsche and the space of tragedy*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Seaford, R. (2005). Tragedy and Dionysus. In R. Bushnell (Ed.), *A companion to tragedy* (pp. 25-38). Oxford: Blackwell.

Shaffer, P. (1977). *Equus*. New York: Penguin.

Sourvinou-Inwood, C. (2005). Greek tragedy and ritual. In R. Bushnell (Ed.), *A companion to tragedy* (pp. 7-24). Oxford: Blackwell.

Stacy, J. R. (1976). The sun and the horse: Peter Shaffer's search for worship. *Educational Theatre Journal*, 28(3), 325-37. doi:10.2307/3206422.

Taylor, J. R. (1974). *Peter Shaffer*. London: Longman.

Weber, M. (2004). *The vocation lectures*. (R. Livingstone, Trans.). Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

Woodward, A. (2015). Becoming-animal in Shaffer's *Equus*. *Deleuze Studies* 9 (2), 231-56. doi: 10.3366/ dls.2015.0184.

Yeats, W. B. (1961). *Essays and introductions*. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Summary

In Equus, the dramatic conflict is between Alan Strang, who represents instinct, and Martin Dysart, who stands for reason. The clash between these characters is based upon the Nietzschean opposition between the Dionysian and Apollonian impulses. Nietzsche's impact on Shaffer is quite manifest in Equus. Therefore, this article aims to explore the two characters within the context of the Dionysian and Apollonian dialectic. The conflict between Alan and Martin is fundamental to this study. It has been asserted that Alan and Martin are two clashing protagonists. I argue that Martin is the protagonist while Alan is the antagonist in Equus, as the initial conflict configured as a battle between these two characters changes into the opposition between rival impulses within the individual himself, Martin in this play. Through the rational mind of the Apollonian Martin, the reader is given insight into the Dionysian experience of Alan. As the Dionysian ruptures the Apollonian, Martin emerges as a tragic character in this modern tragedy. The Dionysian ecstatic experience of disintegration is expressed through the Apollonian form of drama.

The Dionysian Alan in this play feels no tension between clashing forces within himself: only the Apollonian Martin is besieged by such torments. Devoid of intellectual development, the Dionysians have no capacity for such rational analysis and they feel no need for it because they are well established within their own visions and belief-systems. Besides, the playwright, a Western intellectual, is obviously more intruiged by the limitations of Apollonianism than the limitations of an impulse he clearly cherishes. Martin voyages into the unconscious levels of impulse that have hitherto remained unrecognised within him. Therefore, the Apollonian man is compelled to abandon his rational position and acknowledge that his own impulses are not as unambiguously rational as he had always assumed.

*Equus has two fundamental characters in tandem with the notion of dramatic conflict that accords well with the dialectics of the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses: Alan, a seventeenth-year-old boy, who plunged a spike into the eyes of six horses, and Martin, a middle-aged psychiatrist who descends into the crevices of Alan's tortured psyche to cure him. The patient is the object of the psychiatric investigation while the psychiatrist is the object of the playwright's exploration. Martin faces his own spiritual numbness and subsequently gains self-realization through Alan. By means of this co-existence of the antipodal characters, Shaffer examines the reasons and results of the enactment and the suppression of one's passions, respectively in the persons of Alan and Martin. Estranged from his contemporary society, Martin finds himself at odds with its norms and value-systems. He is disillusioned with modern civilization. Longing for the primordial, Martin, like Alan, loathes the plastic society, yet fails to discard it completely. This increases his sense of alienation as he realises that he is not bold enough to "*jump clean-hoofed on to a whole new track of being" *(Shaffer p. 210). Martin is imprisoned in a realm which he can neither fully repudiate nor fully embrace. Therefore, Equus evinces an anarchic flow of instincts and passions, which eventually turns upside down conventional norms through the conflict between the Apollonian impulse and the Dionysian impulse. Rigid boundaires in the normative world of the Apollonian principle are shattered in the confrontation with the Dionysian power. As a consequence, Martin who no longer believes in the cognitive forms of the Apollonian realm, is muddled by Alan's Dionysian vitality.*

*To sum up, Alan embodies the liberation of one's passions and instincts whereas Dysart represents self-effacement. Dysart's bluntness becomes even more intolerable in the face of the sharpness of Alan's passion. Dysart recognises his emptiness as he listens to the primordial creature's voice which is summoning him to get "*out of the black cave of the Psyche" *(Shaffer p. 267). The Dionysiac bubbles up within him to murder and regenerate himself. Yet, he fails to do so because his "*horse power*" has been weakened (Shaffer p. 210). Dysart is yoked by the chains of constrictions that choke him. He is stuck in a dilemma between the Apollonian and Dionysian impulses. Social norms force him to have two selves; his public self is divorced from his private self in order for him to conform to social norms. He takes shelter in illusions to conceal his true self, yet his realm of privacy is invaded by oppressive social norms. His illusory personal space is flooded by his profession that leads him to eradicate the primordial passion and the free spirit, which he values as the true passion he sees in Alan. Owing to these various constrictions, which imprison him, Martin grieves, saying that there is "*now, in my mouth, that sharp chain. And it never comes out*" (Shaffer p. 301).*

This is how the play comes to an end. Martin hears Dionysus's call but is unable to summon up his courage. Martin looks into the Dionysian abyss and the abyss also looks back at him, forcing him to transform himself. Martin goes into the unknown territories of ecstatic and bachhic experience by means of journeying into the unlit gardens of Alan's psyche. Martin tragically comes to see that the Apollonian drive and the Dionysian drive are complementary principles yet is incapacitated to unite them. As a tragic character who seems to be fully conscious of his tragic flaw at the end of the play, Martin, who fails to emancipate his passions which challenge the surveillance of modern society, arouses a sense of pity and fear in people who come across him. Shaffer's modern tragedy puts forward the idea that Martin's tragedy could happen to every modern subject who cannot release the primordial self, and to fight against the oppression of social order and who is severed from the Dionysian excess and extremities of instinct and passion, who is suffocated by a sense of estrangement and floating like a ghost. In accordance with the Nietzschean interpretation of Apollo and Dionysus, Shaffer makes Alan's Dionysian experience of madness, intoxication and ecstasy into an Apollonian form, a modern tragedy.