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In Memoriam

John Alfred Dennis, Jr. Ph.D.

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A special thank you to all the students whose work was submitted to the Newman Awards Contest, to the instructors for their guidance, to the judges for their time and work in selecting our essays, to the Office of College Communications for their invaluable assistance with layout and printing, to Barry Horwitz for his indefatigable scrutiny, and to the Collegiate Seminar Program and the School of Liberal Arts for supporting *The Undergraduate* and the Newman Writing Awards.

—Torbie Phillips
THE NEWMAN JUDGES

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18th ANNUAL NEWMAN AWARDS

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Greek Thought
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Dear Reader:

As a writer and a student, I am honored to have been part of the Newman essay editing staff this year. Despite all the hard work, *The Undergraduate* was a pleasure to work on, especially with Torbie and associate editor Stephanie helping me all the way. These winning essays are fine representations of student analysis from both Greek and Modern Thought. Wayne Doyle’s essay, “A Suffering Hero Changes,” focuses on the moral development of Odysseus through *The Odyssey*; the drawn out journey transforming him into a better man. “Powerful Women of *The Odyssey*,” by David Breault, is an equally strong essay that analyzes the female characters of the epic. Keelia Murphy’s stirring analysis of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*, “Murder, Revenge, Retribution, Justice,” takes a look at the crimes committed by Orestes and Clytemnestra over the course of the trinity of plays and judges who is just. Thomas Reynolds’ “Paradise Found, Sanity Lost” is a powerful analysis on the legitimacy of the charges held against the Maenads in Euripides’ *The Bacchae*. For Modern Thought, Amanda Stump analyzes Franz Kafka’s *The

The careful reading and literary analysis required in Seminar provide challenging but invaluable tools for learning. Exploring the insights of my fellow students both in the classroom and in these writings has helped me not only to see the texts in new ways, but also to reexamine my own sense of humanity. The inquiry and discussion in Seminar have revealed that though time has changed questions about the human condition have remained. From the early Greeks to today, scholars and philosophers haven't stopped writing about what it is to live and be human. I hope that these essays inspire you to ask questions and to explore these definitions, also.

—Rosmeri Patterson
To the Reader,

The majority of you do not know who I am, but, despite our lack of personal acquaintance, we share common experiences. Like you, I have been in the Seminar program and have sometimes have been overwhelmed by the rapid pace of the difficult reading. As we discuss texts in Seminar, it is too easy to agree with our classmates, mistaking factual claims for opinions and ‘obvious’ arguments for originality—surrendering to what Torbie calls “the duh factor.” We have a choice between agreeing with the others or making a fearless argument of our own, one that is not just a nod to what our peers are saying.

At the beginning of my first term I was introduced to *The Undergraduate*, but (perhaps also like you) I did not have much interest in or pay much attention to it at the time. Editing these texts—reading these writers’ voices—has given me a clearer sense of what it means to explore a text motivated by one’s own sense of argument and what it means to be
unafraid of and confident in presenting and supporting a claim that actually inspires me.

It is appropriate that *The Undergraduate* is dedicated to John Dennis because of his constant approval of self-expression and his motivation to think for ourselves. Dr. D. stood for the understanding of who we are, what we think, and how we think it. This edition is a celebration of to the students who composed the essays as well as to the teachers who inspired them. John Dennis was one of the many professors who motivated us not only to trust our opinions but also to dig for deeper meaning.

Many thanks to the rest of *The Undergraduate* staff, who edited these works with me in order to publish these essays. The five essays here offer us the opportunity—the challenge—to excel as well. Read them, question them, and challenge the writers and yourself!

—Stephanie Webster
Congratulations to all the nominated writers:

...
In Homer’s epic poem *The Odyssey*, the hero Odysseus is forced to suffer both mentally and physically for twenty years until he is able to return to his native land of Ithaca. **Through his suffering, Odysseus is changed from a boastful man into a poor beggar and finally into a king with a sense of humility.** His suffering enables him to grow into the model of the
"perfect" king, husband, and man. His enlightened nature provides an example for all who hear the poem, so that we can strive to achieve his state.

When Odysseus starts his epic journey home, Homer repeatedly has him act out of his pride and his lust. In Book XII, after the hero and his crew escape from the lair of Polyphemus, the savage one-eyed son of Poseidon, the Ithacans have the ability to escape without anyone's ever knowing who they were. Odysseus is unable to handle the idea of not being remembered for blinding the great Cyclops, so he calls out his name, "Cyclops-if any man... should ask you / who shamed you so-say Odysseus" (IX, 558-560). Because of this act of pride, Odysseus is forced to endure the painful journey of The Odyssey: when Polyphemus prays to his father that Odysseus will "come home late/ and come a broken man" (IX, 592-593), Poseidon listens to his son's heartfelt prayer and repeatedly forces Odysseus off track. In addition, Odysseus is presented as an adulterer who sleeps with many different women during his voyage home. When his crew is transformed into swine by Circe in Book X, Odysseus works with Hermes in order to trick the goddess and free his men. Afterwards,
he willingly “mounted Circe’s gorgeous bed” (X, 385). After the nymph Calypso tells Odysseus that he will be freed from her island and be allowed to return to his native land, his pride reveals his current motivation for returning home: “I pine... / to travel home and see the dawn of my return” (V, 242-243). He then returns to his adulterous ways when he and Calypso “lost themselves in love” (V, 251). Odysseus is also warned by Circe of the dangers of the Sirens in Book XII, yet he still chooses to listen and his “heart inside...throbbed to listen longer” (XII, 209). These actions are not ones that would result from a man that was of sound mind and judgment and was not ruled by lust.

Odysseus is forced to face numerous trials on his journey home that over time change his character. In a purely physical sense, the hero’s body is punished numerous times. In Book V, Odysseus’ raft is ripped apart by the angry Poseidon, and Odysseus is almost crushed against the rocks of the coast of Phaecia. In Odysseus’ own house one of the suitors, Antinous, abuses Odysseus when he throws a stool that “struck Odysseus, just under the right shoulder” (XVII, 511). The physical suffering that Odysseus is forced to endure pales in compari-
son to the mental and emotional suffering that he is forced to bear. On the island of Calypso, Odysseus is in a constant state of sorrow with “his eyes never dry, his sweet life flowing away / with the tears he wept for his foiled journey home” (V, 168-169). The hero of the epic also must endure the pain of losing all of his shipmates through his journey, which never fails to make him “sick at heart for the comrades ... lost” (IX, 630).

O dysseus appears to suffer emotionally the most when he journeys to the Kingdom of the Dead and meets his dead comrade in arms, Agamemnon. Homer states that Odysseus “wept at the sight” of his old friend (XI, 448). The ghost of Agamemnon tells Odysseus of his betrayal and death at the hands of his wife and warns Odysseus to “never reveal the whole truth, whatever you may know / just tell her a part of it, be sure to hide the rest” (XI, 501-502). Agamemnon says this in reference to women, but Odysseus takes it to heart and applies it to all of his situations, such as in Ithaca when he refuses to trust anyone until he has tested their loyalty for a period of time. The suffering and knowledge that the hero gains from his journey to the land reserved for the dead ages
him the most of his experiences. It matures him
and leads him on the path to controlling his own
emotions, an essential characteristic for his quiet
entrance back to Ithaca.

The suffering that Odysseus bears assists him
the completion of his journey home. When
Odysseus is being tossed in the surf off of the coast
of Phaeacia, the goddess, Leucothea, takes pity on
Odysseus because he is “tormented so” (V, 370) and
gives him an immortal scarf that enables him to come
to land safely. Later in Book VI, the Phaeacian prin-
cess takes pity on him and says that he will “never
lack for clothing or any other gift” (VI, 211). Finally,
his loyal swineherd Eumaeus tells him that he will
treat Odysseus with kindness because in his words, “I
pity you” (XIV, 441). Without the pity that Odysseus
gained from his suffering, he would not have been
able to receive the help necessary for his return, mak-
ing his suffering essential to the story.

Odysseus continues his state of suffering
when he finally arrives in Ithaca and is transformed
by Athena when she “shriveled the supple skin on
his lithe limbs [and] covered his body ... with the
wrinkled hide of an old man [turning] his shirt and
cloak into squalid rags/ ripped and filthy” (XIII, 493-498). These clothes are a direct opposite of his normal mode of dress with his “cape, sea-purple / in double folds, with a golden brooch to clasp it” (XIX, 260). Odysseus willingly wears the clothes of the beggar and does not demand clothes to fit his stature in society, which would go against the personality of the prideful warrior who had started on his journey twenty years ago. The changes in Odysseus are also shown by his ability to restrain himself, exemplified when Melanthius calls him scum and kicks him. Odysseus manages to control his rage by keeping “his mind in full control” (XVII, 260). This provides a severe contrast to the incident with the Cyclops. The only explanation for this dramatic shift in his personality is that the amount of suffering that he has endured on his journey transforms him into a man with more control over himself.

A strong example of a change in Odysseus’ personality due to his suffering can be shown by his interactions with the maids. Before his suffering, Odysseus was all too willing to succumb to the temptation of his lust. He bedded down with Circe and Calypso and chose to listen to the alluring call of the Sirens when he could have easily stuffed
his ears with wax. Through his suffering, however, and his journey to Agamemnon in the Kingdom of the Dead, Odysseus changes into a loving husband who despises adultery. While the maids sleep with the suitors who pine after Penelope, Odysseus contemplates if he should “rush them, kill them one and all/ or let them rot with their lovers one last time” (XX, 13-14). He later tells his son to “slash out all their lives / blot out of their minds the joys of love they relished/ under the suitors’ bodies” (XXII, 468-470). This is a dramatic change from the former Odysseus, who spent seven years having relations with the nymph Calypso.

On the other hand, it could be argued that all of the suffering and pain Odysseus endured actually did nothing to mature his character. When he encounters his frail father dressed in rags, he still subjugates the old man to tests that “cut him to the core” (XXIV, 266). In addition, at the end of Book XXIV when Athena commands peace, the families of the dead suitors try to run in fear but the goddess’ initial command has no effect on Odysseus, who “[loosed] a savage cry... / [and] swooped like a soaring eagle” (XXIV, 590-591). These acts make Odysseus appear to remained unchanged from at all since his encounter with the Cyclops when he
brazently called out his own name and doomed his journey home out of pride.

If one only uses this evidence to support that the suffering of Odysseus did not create change in his character, such a reader has not paid a close attention to the text as a whole. A deeper reading of the final passage shows that Odysseus obeys the commands of Athena when she speaks again and he is "glad at heart" (XXIV, 598). The Odysseus of the past, the Odysseus who blinded the Cyclops and called out his own name, the Odysseus that chose to listen to the lustrous call of the Sirens would not have been glad to halt his course of action or lay down his weapons. These actions go against the actions of a warrior and show that a change has occurred within Odysseus leading him to be a more enlightened and peaceful king.

In summation, the heroic character of Odysseus is forced to endure many episodes of mental and physical anguish that not only help further his journey home but also change his personality. Through his suffering Odysseus is able to gain the pity of both the mortals and the divine who assist him in his journey, such as the Phaeacians who
lend him a ship to speed him home to Ithaca. His personality changes from that of a fierce adulterous warrior into one of a peaceful and loving husband and king. Odysseus becomes a man who acts as the moral example for all other kings and husbands who follow him to admire. He grows into an enlightened nature that strengthens his family bonds and creates an era of peace on his small Grecian island.

**Work Cited**


_This essay was written for Rebecca Engle and Gus Guardado's Greek Thought Seminar._
Although Homer's *Odyssey* is primarily focused on the struggles of men such as Odysseus and Telemachus, female characters play an exceedingly significant role in the epic. Throughout the story, prominent female characters manipulate or influence the actions and
lives of the male character, shaping the events of the story. **Whether it be by forestalling, deceiving, or guiding the men of the epic, we can see how woman have powerful impact throughout The Odyssey.**

At one point in the epic, Circe influences Odysseus and his crew by lengthening their voyage home. With the use of food and drink, she lures them to stay with her. Circe is not blind to the fact that Odysseus and his men are down-trodden and exhausted from the war and their journey home. The opportunity to be “rubbed ... sleek with oil” (X. 497) and sit “at ease, / day in, day out” (X, 514-515) would be too good to pass up for men who had not seen the comforts of home in ten years. Throughout an entire year of Circe’s hospitality, Odysseus shares Circe’s bed. At the end of the year, Odysseus becomes so comfortable that his crew is forced to beg him to leave, by pleading, “‘Captain, this is madness! / High time you thought of your own home at last’” (X, 520-522). By forestalling Odysseus and his men, Circe gains a lover for a short time but also lengthens the men’s journey home and keeps them from their loved ones for another year.
The nymph, Calypso, also greatly delays Odysseus' return to Ithaca by using her power to stall and manipulate him. She "holds him [Odysseus] there by force. / He has no way to voyage home to his own native land ..." (V, 16-17). She manipulates Odysseus to stay with her by holding her power over his head. Odysseus is forced to become an "unwilling lover alongside a lover all too willing" (V, 172). He is trapped in an instance of unrequited love in which his life, and not his heart, hangs in the balance. While Odysseus yearns to go home, Calypso is happy to have gained a companion and lover. As if blinded by her so-called love for Odysseus, Calypso ignores Odysseus' desire to return to Ithaca and forestalls him for seven years. If not for the intervention of the gods, Calypso's love might have trapped Odysseus on that island for eternity.

While other women are busy manipulating her husband in far off lands, Penelope is deceiving the men who wish to take his place. In order to delay the choosing of a new husband Penelope hatches a clever scheme. She tells the suitors to "go slowly, keen as you are to marry me, until / I can finish this web ... / a shroud for old lord Laertes" (II, 106-109), forcing them to wait
until the burial shroud of Laertes is complete. This is where the deception begins; she would weave by day, and at night “she would unravel all she’d done” (II, 117). Although she appears to the suitors to work all day, she makes no headway is made in the three years that the suitors remain ignorant of Penelope’s plot. Through her deception, Penelope manipulates the suitors into delaying their advances. The three years of deception grant her time in which to await her husband’s return and delay choosing a new one.

Circe uses her deception in a much more sinister way than Penelope. “She ushered [Odysseus’ crew] in to sit on high-backed chairs. Once they’d drained their bowls she filled, suddenly, / she struck with her wand / all of them bristling into swine” (X, 256, 261, 263). First she deceives them with hospitality; then, she harms them with her magic. As if the men are toys, Circe plays with them by turning them into her pets. Through the use of her deception, she is able to use her power to harm the men and turn them into her personal trophies.

Similarly, through her guile, Athena de-
ceives Telemachus in order to coax him into a journey that will make a man of him. In the beginning of the epic, Telemachus meets a stranger who happens to be the goddess Athena in the form of a man, looking “for all the world like a stranger now” (I, 122). While in this form, Athena tells Telemachus that his father is, in fact, alive. She advises Telemachus to seek answers concerning his father’s fate in Pylos and Sparta, even though she knows very well the whereabouts of Odysseus. Athena uses her disguise cleverly because if she had appeared as a god to Telemachus, he would have sought answers from her and not in Pylos and Sparta. It was vital that he journey to far off lands in order to discover his manhood.

Although Telemachus does not notice it, Athena guides him through the steps he must take to reclaim his family’s palace and its power. She tells him to “reach down deep in your heart and soul / for a way to kill these suitors in your house, / you must not cling to your boyhood any longer (I, 338-341). Athena knows that Telemachus will need to become a man in order to help to his father in get rid of the suitors. Thus, she manipulates Telemachus and molds him into the
man he must become. Athena advises him to venture towards Pylos and Sparta “so he might make his name by sailing there” (XIII, 482). By spending a year on his own with a father figure such as Menelaus, Telemachus becomes a man and gains confidence. By the end of the epic, Telemachus states, “I’m alive to it all, now, / the good and the bad-the boy you knew is gone” (XX, 345-347). Because of Athena’s guidance, Telemachus realizes that he is no longer the boy the suitors do not respect. Athena takes a meek boy and shapes him into a bold prince capable of standing beside his father and taking back his family’s possessions.

By advising Odysseus to journey to the underworld, Circe exposes him to the horrible realities of his journey home, causing him to learn distrust all those he encounters once he is home. Circe informs Odysseus that he “must travel down/to the House of Death / to consult the ghost of Tiresias” (X, 539-541). Upon speaking with Tiresias, Odysseus learns that the best he can hope for is that he and his crew will reach home “suffering all the way” (XI, 118). But, if he harms the cattle of the sun god he will return home “a broken man all shipmates lost” (XI,
Although the news is depressing, it does not sway Odysseus' determination to return to Ithaca. However, the conversation that Odysseus has with Agamemnon in the underworld makes a large impact on Odysseus and his view towards trust. Agamemnon says, "when you reach your homeland steer your ship / into port in secret... / the time for trusting women's gone forever" (XI, 516-518). Odysseus takes this information to heart and is very secretive once he does finally reach the shores of Ithaca.

Once Odysseus returns home, Athena becomes his roadmap back to his rightful throne. She advises him to hide his treasure and to remain unnoticed until the correct time, saying, "and to no one—not a soul—reveal that you are ... home at last ... in silence you must bear a world of pain, / subject yourself to the cruel abuse of men" (XIII, 350-353). Even though he is home after twenty years, he must stay anonymous in order to discover the true thoughts and actions of his people. This advice that allows Odysseus to probe and find the ones whom he can trust. Through this, he finds that the suitors must be killed. It is also his disguise that allows him to surprise those
whom he intended to kill and to exterminate them all at one time.

Throughout *The Odyssey*, women exert great influence over the male characters. Some female characters use a direct approach, such as Calypso’s keeping Odysseus on her island or Circe’s using her magic on his crew. Others use a more indirect approach to their influence, as in Athena’s verbal guidance or in Penelope’s deception. Whether it be direct or indirect, the deception, stall tactics, advice, and sometimes a combination of these exert strong influence on the actions and decisions of male characters such as Odysseus and Telemachus. When the women of this epic manipulate and influence men, it is either because they have something to gain from them or because they wish to assist the men. Calypso and Circe gain a lover in Odysseus; Penelope buys herself some time; Athena guides her favorite Greek, Odysseus, back to his throne. No matter the reason for their actions, women shape the lives and actions of the male characters whom they manipulate and influence. By shaping the actions of men, the female characters of *The Odyssey* shape the events of the epic.
WORK CITED

This essay was written for Michael Lisanti's Greek Thought Seminar.
Aeschylus' Oresteia is full of murder, revenge, retribution, and justice. An innocent girl is sacrificed. A distraught mother avenges her daughter's death. A war hero is murdered. A man seeks revenge for his father's execution. All of these acts are committed with seemingly justifiable intent but at some
point we must draw the line between which murders are defensible and which are unforgivable. When closely examined, Orestes’ act of matricide (the murder of his mother, Clytemnestra) comes across as being more pardonable than Clytemnestra’s act of matricide (the murder of her husband, Agamemnon). Orestes’ crime proves more legitimate than that of Clytemnestra mainly because of the difference between their motives, means, reactions, and their relation to Justice.

The most obvious difference between the crimes of Orestes and Clytemnestra is the difference in their respective motives. Although both parties claim that they had reasonable motives to back their crimes, further investigation finds that Orestes’ offense is more defensible. Clytemnestra claims seek revenge against her husband Agamemnon, who killed their innocent daughter, Iphigenia. This defense is understandable; Clytemnestra, the distraught mother, believes that Agamemnon must “die for the deaths / he brought to pass” (“Agamemnon” lines 1364-1365), because he “had the heart / to sacrifice his daughter” (“Agamemnon” 223-224). She seeks revenge for her daughter’s innocent life taken.
The validity of this argument falls short, however, when we give light to the fact that Agamemnon murdered his daughter out of obligation to his comrades; he needed to “stop the winds with a virgin’s blood” so that his fleet could sail to Troy unharmed (“Agamemnon” 214). Agamemnon was forced to ask himself, “Pain both ways and what is worse? / Desert the fleets, fail the alliance?” (“Agamemnon,” 213-214). It is clear that Agamemnon’s chooses to murder Iphigenia out of obligation and duty. Also, this motive is an empty one because it is said that even Iphigenia holds no grudge against her father, that she “will rush to meet him / first at the churning straits. . . / she'll fling her arms around her father, / pierce him with her love” (“Agamemnon” 1583-1587). We must also take into account Clytemnestra’s other motive; namely, to gain power with her adulteress lover, “Aegisthus, / her partner in murdering” (“Libation Bearers” lines 138-139). In her eagerness to gain power, she kills Agamemnon and then forces her daughter Electra to “go like a slave / and Orestes driven from his estates while [she and Aegisthus] / roll in the fruits of all [Agamemnon’s] labours” (“The Libation Bearers” 141-142).
Clytemnestra’s real motives make her seem less like a devastated mother with a just reason for murder and more power-hungry, manipulative, and unjust. For Clytemnestra, truly, “the lust for power never dies,” so much that she must kill her husband and exile her children in order to obtain power (“Agamemnon” 1355).

Orestes’ murderous motives, however, are more defendable than Clytemnestra’s. His main motive in killing Clytemnestra is a comparatively honorable one; his goal is to avenge what he believes is Agamemnon’s wrongful murder. He condemns and hates his mother for “plot[ting] this horror against her husband” (“Libation Bearers” 983) and for “dar[ing to] entomb [him] unwept, unsung” (“Libation Bearers” 422). Orestes seems sincere in his desire to avenge his father, even praying desperately for assistance in a matter that he believes the gods should support: “Dear god, let me avenge my father’s murder / fight beside me now with all your might” (“Libation Bearers” 21-22). Orestes also has divine motives in his crime of matricide; he is spurred on by the fact that the god Apollo “charges [him] to see this trial through,” (“Libation Bearers,” 273-274), forcing him to “hunt [his] father’s mur-
derers, cut them down” (“Libation Bearers” 278). Apollo threatens Orestes to “go through with this and... go free of guilt / Fail and be punished” (“Libation Bearers” 1028-1029). Orestes’ crime is more justifiable than Clytemnestra’s especially because he was “commanded ... to kill his mother/ [and] to avenge his father” (“Eumenides,” 200-201) by the god Apollo, whereas Clytemnestra did the deed to benefit herself.

The legitimacy of Orestes’ and Clytemnestra’s murders can be determined when examining the way in which they executed their plans. Although both goals were obtained deviously, Orestes’ crime still comes across as being more honest than Clytemnestra’s. Clytemnestra’s actions seem more deceitful and unjust because she deluded Agamemnon before she killed him, claiming how she “love[d] the man” (“Agamemnon” 843) and calling him her “dearest” (“Agamemnon” 897). She claims that once he returned, Agamemnon would “find her true at hall, / just as the day he left her, faithful to the last,” when actually she had been sleeping with Aegisthus and plotting Agamemnon’s murder (“Agamemnon,” 602-603). She completely
deceives Agamemnon into thinking that she has missed him and that she has been faithful.

We must also take into account Clytemnestra attacks on Agamemnon while he was vulnerable and bathing. She “gores him through/and [makes] the bath swirls red” (“Agamemnon” 1129-1130) and kills Cassandra—an innocent captive. Orestes’ commits the murders of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, although equally deceitful, seem less dishonorable than those of Clytemnestra. Although Orestes disguises himself “like a stranger / . . . try[ing] / for the native tones of Delphi” (“Libation Bearers” 547, 551), he does so because it is the only way he can infiltrate the palace and fulfill his plan. He also gives a good reason for his deception: “They killed an honoured man by cunning, so / they die by cunning, caught in the same noose” (“Libation Bearers” 543-544). Given an “eye for an eye” philosophy of justice, Orestes’ crime is righteous—while Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon to gain power with her lover, Orestes is merely settling the scores for his mother’s crime.

In addition, Orestes’ reactions to his deeds reveal his victimization at the at the levels of his
mother; while she only claims to be a “victim.” Clytemnestra does not seem to have regret about the murders she has committed, but rather she brags about how long she has waited to carry out her plans:

I brooded on this trial, this ancient blood feud
year by year. At last my hour came.
Here I stand and here I struck
and here my work is done.
I did it all. I don’t deny it, no.
He had no way to flee or fight his destiny –
(“Agamemnon” 1396-1401)

She even admits, “I revel .../ I glory” (“Agamemnon” 1412, 1417) after committing the murders of Agamemnon and Cassandra, his captive. She feels triumphant and powerful after accomplishing her task, telling Aegisthus, “They’re impotent. You and I have power now” (“Agamemnon” 1707). Only after she becomes plagued by “bad dreams/. . .groping through the night” does she begins to feel her guilty conscience (“Libation Bearers” 510-511). In essence, she tries to fix what is already broken, “send[ing] the libations for the dead, / an easy cure she hopes will cut the
pain” (“Libation Bearers” 525-526). Her cry for redemption, however, comes too late.

On the other hand, Orestes feels anxious about his crime even before he commits it, admitting that he “dread[s] to kill [his] mother” but does so anyway because of his obligation to Apollo (“Libation Bearers” 886). He feels guilt after killing his mother, so much so that the chorus has to try to convince him not to “burden [himself] / with bad omens, lash [himself] with guilt” (“The Libation Bearers,” 1044-1045). The citizens of Orestes’ city seem to be thankful killing Clytemnestra and Aegisthus, as well, claiming, “You’ve set us free, the whole city of Argos, / lopped the head of these two serpents once for all” (“Libation Bearers” 1046-1047). There seems to be a consensus among the supporting characters of the play that Orestes makes the correct decision. However, Clytemnestra’s actions were met with hostility by the public:

Woman! - what poison cropped from the soil or strained from the heaving sea, what nursed you, drove you insane? You brace the curse of Greece.

You have cut away and flung away and now the people cast you off to exile,
broken with our hate.

(“Agamemnon” 1431-1436)

The *Oresteia* takes us through a journey toward justice, where both scandal and retribution coincide. From Agamemnon’s murder of his child to Orestes murder of his father, we see how these old testament murders are frowned on by society. When it comes to murder, revenge, and retribution in the stories of Agamemnon, Orestes, and Clytemnestra, justice plays a very important role in the decision of whose murder was more controversial. Although the killing of one’s mother was not an acceptable practice in Greece and it was considered a crime to “destroy one’s flesh and blood” (“Eumenides” 210), there is a question in *The Oresteia* of whether matricide is justifiable in Orestes’ case. According to the laws of Justice, “each charge meets counter-charge / . . . the killer pays the price / . . . the one who acts must suffer” (“Agamemnon” 1588, 1590, 1592). In this case, Clytemnestra deserved what happened to her, and Orestes was proven (even by the jurors of Athens in “The Eumenides”) to be innocent, although guilty. We must then remember that there are two sides to
every story, and that it is not fair when “two sides are here, and only half is heard” (“Eumenides” 440). We are left with the question: How can we determine justice, without delving deeper into detailed deliberate and investigate research?

WORKS CITED

This essay was written for John Dennis’ Greek Thought seminar.
What is innocence? Some define it as the absence of transgression "The Bacchae" or a lack of guilt. Some might say it is ignorance of reality, like the people in the shadows of Plato's cave. None of the characters in Euripides' "The Bacchae" seem to be innocent. All of them, particularly Pentheus,
have wronged each other. Despite a history of malice in the play, innocence does exist amongst the characters.

Dionysus' spell, the enchantment of the women that undoes Pentheus' government, reveals an ugly human trait—the animal without law. The wild abandon of the ensorcelled women, represents mankind's basic urge to consume and destroy. Most people would say this exemplifies the basic human urge of hedonistic, mindless gratification without virtue. At its worst, freedom from reason leads the revelers to commit acts against nature. Dionysus quickly becomes the infamous man "who infects [the Theban] women with this strange disease" ("Bacchae" lines 353-354). Cattle and men alike are slain by women performing "awful miracles" (717). Astounding as these wonders are, they are still perversions of decency and law. It could be argued that this reckless inhibition is the ultimate evil.

However, none of these women are guilty of their crimes. The Bacchae, having lost their senses, have also lost their moral standards. Without a basis for judgment, what can be considered "right" or "wrong"? The Theban women, in their madness, are shameless in word and deed. Since
they have no concept of morality while under the spell, their acts are not sincerely evil. If a person cannot recognize her transgression, then she is unable to truly do wrong. The Dionysian revel of The “Bacchae” inaugurated a new Eden of innocence, precursory to today’s insanity defense, and drags us into a world without moral boundaries and concept of sin.

The Messenger’s description of the bacchanal’s beginnings shows how, left to their own devices, the enchanted women are content to lounge. They aren’t committing heinous acts of crime, but are simply “resting on boughs of fir ... sleeping / where they fell ... / but all modestly and soberly” (684-686). The women are not “drunk with wine,” nor are they “wandering, led astray / by the music of the flute, to hunt their Aphrodite / through the woods” (687-680). The revelers are not wild savages, laying waste to Cithaeron by their own volition. There’s no rampant fighting or fornication in the field, nothing more risqué than an afternoon nap. To think that the men of Thebes consider this repose an uproarious orgy is almost comical. The Bacchae have only taken leave of their senses; they have
no predisposition for sin as an effect.

Earlier Teiresias suggests, "it is her character and nature that keeps a woman chaste" (316-317). Chastity here not only refers to virginity, but also to a generally pure character. Because the revelers include married and older women, not likely to be virgins in that day and age, we can guess that Teiresias is not limiting his definition of chastity to purely sexual terms. His comment suggests that the Maenads are innocent because their characters and natures are not changed in any way that incites wrongdoing. Teiresias goes further to contend that "in the rites of Dionysus, / the chaste woman will not be corrupted" (317-318). If the Bacchanal does not degrade a woman's character, then what does it change? By expelling conscious reason, Dionysian magic also dispells all moral principles.

Sin, therefore, is not a self-contained concept in "The Bacchae," but a dependent of self-consciousness. The Theban women lack this awareness, as part of the sorcery. They have no appreciation of their condition at all. The men of Thebes, on the other hand, are watching these miracles with dread. They see these mysteries as "obscene disorder"
(233). Here is the source of the central conflict in "The Bacchae:" the mad against the terrified, the blind against the skeptical.

Why the tension? The Theban men have retained their morality and their right sense. Pentheus, especially, sees the new Dionysian rites as blasphemous (not to mention he fears the seductive power of both Dionysus and his religion). When he condemns Dionysus as "the man who infects our women / with this strange disease" (353-354), Pentheus is assigning moral guilt in a situation where morality is absent. The men and women of Thebes both cannot comprehend the situation, but for different reasons. The revelers are deprived of reason, and the men use their power to enforce their morality. The men of Thebes give a standard of sanity for the reader to judge later crimes by.

We are left imagining these events in Cithaeron, like Pentheus before his fatal voyeuristic voyage. Furthermore, no actual wrongdoing has been done. Where can one see the madness of the Maenads directly? A good example would be Agave walking about with her son's head on a stick. Agave's manner is supposed to be disquiet-
ing because the audience, like the Theban men, still has moral sense. A woman wantonly destroying life, not to mention her own child, would be at best disconcerting. We are not detached from his own sense of justice, like Agave and the Maenads are. As Pentheus is ripped apart, Agave is joyous in her prowess and bravery. Her actions are indescribably heinous; no amount of tempering mercy seems possible.

However, Agave and the other revelers are innocent of homicide. Yes, innocent. How is this possible? Agave herself walks into Thebes proclaiming that she has “won the trophy of the chase, / a great prize, manifest to all” (1198-1199). How can they be pardoned for murder most terrible, murder by her own admission? Observe Agave’s manner after the terrible hunt. She cannot see her son as she is “wrenching away the arm at the shoulder” (1126-1129). She does not recognize “his head, impaled / . . . on her wand [of thrysus]” (1140-1141). The Maenad host falls on their king in wild abandon, until “his ribs / [are] clawed clean of flesh ... and every hand / [is] smeared with blood” (1134-1136). In her triumphant call to Thebes, she exhibits “the head of this wild lion [she has] killed as a
trophy of [her] hunt”” (1234-1215), and exhorts her father to be proud of “the bravest daughters in the world” (1234-1235). She offers Cadmus the head as “the quarry of [her] chase, a trophy for [their] house” (1239-1240). Is Agave insane? Absurdly. Is Does she claim the evidence of Pentheus murder? Doubtlessly. Is she guilty? No.

Agave does not kill her son in her own mind. She does not tear Pentheus asunder and mount his head on her thrysus willingly. She is offering Cadmus a lion’s body as a trophy of great valor and courage—at least, she thinks she is. Commandeered by Dionysian magic, she is no more culpable of murder than a blind and deaf man is of jaywalking. This is basically what she is: blind to reality, blind to the world around her, and deaf to the cries of her victim son. Agave’s case is a tragic instance of the insanity defense. She does not even remember being in Cithaeron with the other revelers, as she asks “We--what were we doing on the mountain?” (1293-1294) How can she be guilty of her actions if she does not even comprehend her circumstances?
Since true moral behavior relies on a salient mind, no one in the Dionysian revels has transgressed. Like Agave, the whole of the Maenad tribe is free from sin because they did not recognize their crimes and perpetrate it. No one in the face of these crimes, therefore, claims guilt; punishment is averted by the virtue of senselessness. The new Eden of innocence is not a physical location but a release from responsibility.

However, do not ignore the cost of innocence. This freedom from accountability comes only with the surrender of control. Just as Agave didn't know she was Pentheus's assassin, she could do nothing to be his savior. If man is the only creature who understands morality, then by definition he can never be innocent. Awareness, the quality that the Maenads lack, is being conscious of repercussions and ethics. People would have to renounce their reason in order to absolve their transgressions, and then we would not be human. Like the Bacchae, we would be no more than bipedal beasts, animals without remorse or reason.
The human condition is not one of indulgence and savagery, but of consciousness and regret. One cannot say that Dionysus' spell causes the Maenads to do evil because they are mentally inept. Of course, the enchantment can lead to disaster, such as Pentheus' death and Agave's banishment "in expiation of the murder / [that she has] done ... / [for] it would be a sacrilege that murderers / should remain at peace beside the graves of those / whom they have killed" (1324-1328)." However, as the revelers were without sin, they were not human. This is the awful nature of innocence: destruction with a smile and murder with a shout of joy.

The madness of Euripides' *The Bacchae* affords the reader an unflinching view of the essential human substance—not vicious abandon but mindful liability. While this is a truth of human existence, it is ultimately a daunting damnation: innocence only comes with mindlessness. The Maenads' actions are free from reproach, but only because of their mindlessness.

Since Agave was not truly human in her passionate crime, she is free from human justice. Purity is not within humanity's reach, because it requires us to no longer be human. If being hu-
man requires self-awareness, then actions must be taken rationally. Rather than pursuing morality through blithe ignorance, the truly human individual must employ both reason and madness to perfect humanity.

WORK CITED


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[Work] is the end and purpose of life commanded by God. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism*

According to Max Weber, from the Protestant work ethic, emerged the “spirit of capitalism,” making work define the individual. Work is not simply a task performed during one’s life, but instead com-
prises the totality of life: "[one] performs the work as though it were an absolute end in itself--a ‘calling’" (Weber 17). We live to work, work to live, and it is striving for this ideal that brings fulfillment and completeness to living. However, in Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, the physical transformation of Gregor Samsa, a traveling salesman, clearly demonstrates that fulfilling one’s calling through work ultimately leads to a life of emptiness and isolation.

In order to counteract the financial devastation faced by the loss of his father’s business, Gregor begins living a life consumed by his occupation. Although Gregor demonstrates the Protestant ethic outlined by Weber--living to work--his life remains secluded and unfulfilled; his obsessive work alienating him from his family and society. Kafka transforms Gregor into a beetle, his outward appearance serving as a metaphor for the empty shell that encompasses his life. Gregor’s spineless, expendable body, his lack of control over his legs and bulk, as well as his inability to communicate with his family, all symbolically represent Gregor’s separation and detachment from life due to society’s focus upon work.

Gregor’s transformed physical appearance represents his social status as a wage-earner, his
hard outer shell representing the impenetrable front he must present to others while attempting to encase and protect his delicate inner-being: 
"[He] was the boss' creature, mindless and spineless" (Kafka 8). Gregor is forced to become his boss' pet. His constant traveling schedule keeps him predominantly homeless, and constantly running from job to job while residing in desolate hotel rooms. His strenuous traveling schedule keeps him busy at odd hours of the night, these nocturnal habits depriving him of sleep and at times his sanity (Kafka 8). Despite his constant scurrying for his boss, Gregor cannot defend himself, as he remains under the unyielding danger of losing his job; one wrong move and he is easily "squished." In an effort to protect himself from these harsh working conditions, Gregor must develop a defensive front:

He lay on his hard armorlike back, and when he raised his head a little he saw his vaulted brown belly divided into sections by stiff arches ...

(Kafka 7)

Gregor is given a hard, empty shell which surrounds and protects his inner-self, his human side. While the true Gregor lies hidden beneath
this impenetrable layer, the outside world is only witnesses only his sturdy exterior.

Yet despite his shield, Gregor is still wounded by the harsh realities that work brings into his family life. After losing his job, Gregor is disowned by his parents and sister. His father hurls an apple into Gregor's shell in order to break past his defenses and wound him eternally: "the apple remained embedded in his flesh as a visible souvenir " (Kafka 37). Gregor's inability to go to work leads to his greatest suffering, as he discovers that his family only accepts him for the profits from his labor. Without work, Gregor is viewed as a pest, a disposable and worthless creature.

Gregor's ineffectiveness in maneuvering his newly transformed bulk and excess of legs visually demonstrates his inability to control his life in the workforce. "If I were not holding back because of my parents, I would have quit long ago ... and as soon as I save the money to pay off the debt that my parents owe ... [then] I'll cut myself free" (Kafka 8). Gregor is trapped in the relentless cycle of the working man. He has no choice but to work because there are no other means by which he can support himself or his family. According to
Weber, a loss of work results in a loss of one’s “calling” in life (Weber 17). For Gregor, working itself has resulted in such a loss because he feels imprisoned and thus incapable of truly living. “Gregor observed to his horror that he could not control his direction when moving backward.” (Kafka 20). Just as Gregor is unable to manage his bulky body, he is incapable of commanding the direction of his life. Instead, Gregor is tossed at random by the constrictions of his profession, inhibiting Gregor’s control over both personal and social demands, such as spending time with his family. Although Gregor would prefer not to work, work completely controls his life. As a result, Gregor feels completely helpless and marginalized by capitalism. Survival demands that Gregor work, yet work itself is suffocating Gregor. Although he sees his life flying out of his control, he is unable to regulate its motion.

Gregor’s inability to communicate with the outside world reveals the divide that the workforce has created between Gregor and the world. By removing his human voice, Kafka shows us how being a servant to capitalism silences our voice and forces us into a gloomy world of isolation:
Gregor was shocked when he heard his voice answering ... a persistent chirping ... so that the words remained clearly shaped only for a moment and then were destroyed to such an extent that one could not be sure one had heard them right. (Kafka 9)

Once transformed, Gregor is no longer able to speak, but instead emits a chirping that is not understood by his family or coworkers. Although Gregor can understand everything said around him, he is physically unable to express his own wants and needs. Gregor is no longer understood, and thus his need for love and affection goes unnoticed and unfulfilled because Gregor cannot effectively communicate his needs: “As no one could understand him, no one thought, including the sister, that he could understand them” (Kafka 24). Thus, as a result of his working ethic, Gregor ultimately loses what is most precious to him: the love and admiration of his sister. Wok weakens the strongest of human bonds - the love of family. And despite efforts to regain this attachment, Gregor becomes forever estranged from the outside world: “the steady stream of faces that never become anything closer than acquaintances” (Kafka 7-8). Kafka transforms Gregor from an active partici-
pant to an observer, who continues to live physically, while merely watching his life rush by. This emotional disconnect leads to Gregor’s death, as he realizes that he no longer has a life to live for. Although working provides Gregor and his family with the sustenance to survive, it deprives him of a life worth living.

Before entering into a “capitalist-driven world,” Gregor Samsa would sit at his desk and look out of his bedroom window at the city below; now he can only look with “some vague remembrance of the freedom he had once found in gazing out” (Kafka 27). Instead of seeing a city of life and promise, Gregor sees urban life as a desolate, cold world: “he could have believed that he was gazing out the window at a barren wasteland where the ashen sky merged indistinguishably with the gray earth” (Kafka 27-28). Rather than fulfilling his life’s “calling,” working strangles Gregor, taking his life as its price. Economic reality forces indifference, isolation, a loss of love, and a loss of hope. Beware: Work can transform you into a beetle, carrying nothing but an empty, hollow shell, protecting the last bit of humanity trapped inside.
WORKS CITED


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