Mourning in America: Racial Trauma and the Democratic Work of Mourning

by

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Date:_____April 7, 2010_____
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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation argues for a version of democratic theory, and institutions of democratic practice, that would call for and help to nurture a form of civic identity—individual and collective—committed to a "work of mourning" over the historical and enduring traumas surrounding racial discrimination and violence in the United States. By a reading of psychoanalytic theory in conversation with political and social theory, I show that mourning should be considered less as a limited response to particular loss—one that will resolve itself after a certain lapse of time—than as a process of identity formation through recognition of, and reflection on, formative traumas in the democratic polity. Using the work of Melanie Klein in particular, I argue that the work of mourning not only implies the working through of mundane losses and traumas, but the development of a certain identity (in what Klein calls the "depressive position") that is sensitive to the larger scenes of persecution and violence that shape the social and political landscape. For Klein, mourning is ultimately the process of establishing internal objects that enrich the self's capacity to mitigate its hatred, fear, envy, and greed with reparative guilt and love. Klein's descriptions of inter-subjective mourning have relevance outside the comparatively narrow confines of the analytic situation. I argue that Klein's theories of mourning and identity can enhance collective efforts to address the traumas surrounding racial violence and discrimination in the United States. I illustrate this connection by examining the experience of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC), which operated in Greensboro, North Carolina from 2004 to 2006.

Contents

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With warm thanks and appreciation to the members of my committee: Peter Euben, Ruth

Grant, Rom Coles, and George Shulman.

This is the faith from which we start.
Men shall know commonwealth again
from bitter searching of the heart.

—Leonard Cohen, *Villanelle for Our Time*

Chapter 1: "A Splintering and Shattering Activity:" The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Democratic Work of Mourning.

What is not remembered is the serpent in the garden of one's dreams.

—James Baldwin

Furies: What shall I do? Afflicted, I am mocked by these people. I have borne what cannot be borne. Great the sorrow and the dishonor upon the sad daughters of the night.

Athena: No, not dishonored. You are goddesses. Do not in too much anger make this place of mortal men uninhabitable…Put to sleep the bitter strength in the black wave and live with me…

In the terror upon the faces of these
I see great good for our citizens.

—Aeschylus, *Oresteia*

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This dissertation argues for a version of democratic theory, and institutions of democratic practice, that would call for and help to nurture a form of identity—individual and collective—committed to a "work of mourning" over the historical and enduring traumas surrounding racial discrimination and violence in the United States. By a reading of psychoanalytic theory in conversation with political and social theory, I show that mourning should be considered less as a limited response to particular loss—one that will resolve itself after a certain lapse of time—than as a process of identity formation through recognition of, and reflection on, formative traumas in the democratic polity. Using the work of Melanie

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Klein in particular, I argue that the work of mourning not only implies the working through of mundane losses and traumas, but the development of a certain identity (in what Klein calls the "depressive position") that is sensitive to the larger scenes of persecution and violence that shape the social and political landscape. For Klein, mourning is ultimately the process of establishing (and re-establishing, "again and again," throughout life) internal objects that enrich the self's capacity to mitigate its hatred, fear, envy, and greed with reparative guilt and love. These internalized objects do not buffer us from conflict, but help us to better engage the conflictual interactions between internal and social demands in a sometimes hostile, sometimes receptive environment. Because, on Klein's reading, humans are essentially inter-subjective beings, the recognitions and reparations inherent to the depressive position are crucial to a healthy, democratic form of relationality.[1] Yet Klein's descriptions of inter-subjective mourning have relevance outside the comparatively narrow confines of the analytic situation. I argue that Klein's theories of mourning and identity can enhance collective efforts to address the traumas surrounding racial violence and discrimination in the United States. I illustrate this connection by examining the experience of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (GTRC), which operated in Greensboro, North Carolina from 2004 to 2006.

For Klein, mourning is an iterable process of identification through which we (temporarily) overcome psychic defenses that keep us from a full acknowledgement of constitutive losses in our past. Successful mourning depends on a receptive environment where anxieties surrounding loss and trauma can be held, effectively mitigated, and worked

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1 Recent neurobiological findings suggest a foundation for core intersubjectivity with the discovery of "mirror neurons." See Stern, "Intersubjectivity," in The American Psychiatric Publishing Textbook of Psychoanalysis. Edited by Ethel Spector Person, Arnold M. Cooper, and Glen O. Gabbard (New York: American Psychiatric Publishing Company, 2005).

through. When speaking about political or public traumas in the wake of Klein we might say that productive mourning requires a reflective culture replete with institutions—formal and informal—that serve as reflecting objects capable of publicly "holding" the traumas in the interests of weakening defense mechanisms that seal off violent episodes in the polity's history in silence and disavowal. These institutions and practices are not simply rehearsal spaces for public spectacles of remembrance. At their best, these reflecting objects become structural components of civic identity. Institutions like the GTRC—especially insofar as they insist on having an "afterlife" in the community—provide a model for such mourning spaces. Yet these spaces can be usefully prodded by a theory of mourning—and Klein is a valuable interlocutor in this conversation.

The place of past traumas in the present life of the polity is one of the central themes of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, and the trilogy has periodically been re-staged to reflect democratic society's struggle to integrate the dark legacies in a nation's history that are too often elided or ignored.[2] The ending of the trilogy is often offered as the triumph of democratic institutions over archaic blood rituals central to a more primal notion of justice (represented by the Furies). Yet the ending of the play is much more ambiguous than this, as both the institution of the law court at Athens and Athena's threats of force fail to mollify the haunting Furies ("the mind of the past"). It is only by *integrating* the Furies—their perpetually refreshed memory of historical wrong; their fury and "utter hate"—into the structure of the polis that the conflict is reconciled (at least temporarily). Instead of seeing

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2 See Gonda Van Steen for a thorough description of the political struggle in mid-20th century Greece that was carried out—in part—through different stagings of Aeschylus drama. "Rolling out the Red Carpet: Power 'Play' in Modern Greek Versions of the Myth of Orestes from the 1960s and 1970s (I)," International Journal of the Classical Tradition, Vol. 9, No. 1, Summer 2002, and "Rolling out the Red Carpet: Power 'Play' in Modern Greek Versions of the Myth of Orestes from the 1960s and 1970s (II)," International Journal of the Classical Tradition, Vol. 9, No. 2, Fall 2002. In 2008 South African artist Yael Farber re-purposed the trilogy to reflect on the violent legacy of apartheid in South African politics. Belinda Otas, "On Molora and Moving Forward in South Africa," The New Black Magazine. April 29, 2008.

this resolution as one of ritual closure, I want to read the trilogy as an instantiation of the democratic work of mourning. In the process I want to locate and amplify resonances between the possibilities of mourning dramatized by Aeschylus and those theorized by Klein (and others), in order to better address the political and cultural challenge of working through the living historical legacies of racial trauma in the United States.

As I will argue below, with regards to American racial trauma the democratic work of mourning requires, at base, a willingness to openly engage the discomforting fact that our present polity is in many respects implicated in aftereffects of official practices of racial domination and discrimination. Because this violent racial past, William Faulkner's oft-quoted phrase, "is not past," we require a work of mourning. Just as Athena, in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, held the city responsible to the incessant hounding of the Furies, so too must we find the "great good" for democracy in the "terror" issuing from our bloody history. To do this requires an awareness of how, in mourning the particular historical and enduring traumas surrounding race, we are doing more than beating our breasts in sorrow and lament. We are, in essence, creating democratic citizens. This is the thesis I advance in the chapters below.

In this chapter, I situate the concept of a democratic work of mourning in political controversies and debates surrounding the meaning and relevance of violent events in a polity's history. In light of these debates I discuss what I call the dilemma of "memorialization and amnesty," in which equally persuasive cases can be offered that democratic society's search for justice requires insistent practices of memorialization or formal amnesty or "forgetting." I argue that this unsatisfactory dichotomy between remembrance and forgetting is false, and can be reworked and reconfigured through an

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emphasis on mourning and working through. To introduce the theme of mourning as an

explicit practice of politics, I discuss Danielle Allen's work on interracial distrust and

democratic citizenship, *Talking to Strangers*. Allen raises a provocative thesis about the

connection between mourning and democratic politics, but fails to develop this argument in

any length or detail. In an effort to pick up where Allen leaves off, I turn to psychoanalytic

accounts of mourning—and specifically to Melanie Klein's inflection and re-direction of

Freud's concept of "the work of mourning" (*Trauerarbeit*). Turning from the psyche back to

the polis, I then examine truth and reconciliation commissions in light of Klein's theory of

mourning. I conclude this chapter by charting out the arguments and interventions of the

following chapters, before re-connecting this project to the "terror" which is dramatically

integrated at the close of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. But I begin far outside the realms of myth and

drama. I start with a traumatic moment in the life of a southern community—a "moment"

that testifies to the expansive place of racial trauma in the American polity, to which the

democratic work of mourning is our best response.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

On Saturday, November 3, 1979, in the late morning, a caravan of Ku Klux

Klansmen steered its way through the streets of Greensboro, North Carolina. Thirty-five

individuals inside nine automobiles planned to disrupt a scheduled rally in a black public

housing neighborhood planned by the Communist Workers Party (CWP), which had been organizing mill and cafeteria workers along with the Greensboro Association for Poor People (GAPP). Ostensibly this disruption was to be limited to throwing eggs and making speeches, but the pistols and shotguns packed into each vehicle bespoke other possibilities. As the first car—with its Confederate flag license plate—pushed its way into the protesters' midst, a confrontation broke out. Despite the heated rhetoric on both sides (the CWP/GAPP rally was entitled "Death to the Klan") and the rumored presence of firearms, the Greensboro police attendance at the demonstration was practically nonexistent. The verbal confrontation between the demonstrators and the white supremacists quickly escalated to violence, and five CWP and GAPP members and activists were shot dead. Ten others were wounded.

In the months and years that followed, Klan members were twice acquitted of all criminal charges, each time by an all-white jury. The perceived injustice of the verdicts nurtured an already-present air of distrust in Greensboro—distrust that was not dispelled by a later civil trial that found Klan members and the Greensboro Police Department jointly liable for the wrongful death of one demonstrator. Community members felt aggrieved not only by the absence of criminal accountability, but by the legal system's essentially narrow focus on the events of November 3rd, without any reckoning of the larger conflicts surrounding race and class in Greensboro. For many, the system had failed to produce justice, but beyond that laid a deeper failure inherent to the very institutions of justice themselves: a failure to interpret and understand unjust acts within a broader context saturated by inequality, violence, fear, and hatred. In an effort to provide this missing analysis, community activists organized around the idea of a Truth and Reconciliation

Commission, modeled along the lines of other such Commissions in South Africa and elsewhere. After years of grassroots organizing, a Commission was eventually formed in 2004 as an "unofficial" truth project (the City Council voted—along racial lines—against official involvement).[3] The subsequent inquiry and ultimate report of the Commission provoked intense controversy and resistance.[4]

Greensboro's "importation" of a Truth and Reconciliation model challenged several established myths and assumptions about such processes. Firstly, it demonstrated that the value of a TRC is not restricted to transitional societies emerging from periods of intense civil conflict, genocide, or war. By creating such an institution within the United States, the citizens of Greensboro demonstrated—in the words of a South African TRC commissioner—that "many so called stabled democracies have a number of skeletons in their closets…[that] there are several historical acts of national shame [in the developed world] that will not go away until the wounds are cut open and addressed."[5] Moreover, the experience in Greensboro highlighted the importance of addressing these "skeletons" through processes and institutions that exceed—but do not *replace*—juridical bodies, which, by design, have a restrictive focus on criminal action and intent in isolation from the broader social context.[6] Finally, as a grassroots campaign organized, financed, and operated through non-state agencies, the Greensboro TRC demonstrated that citizen groups themselves could authorize a respected and serious examination of traumatic events in a community's past without the official sanction or support of the state. The Greensboro TRC was not without

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3 Louis Bickford, "Unofficial Truth Projects," Human Rights Quarterly Vol., 29, No. 4 (20070

4 Jordan Green, "Present bumps up against past in truth discussion." Yes Weekly. June 12, 2007, and "Greensboro truth commission is not the first to spark controversy." Yes Weekly. March 29, 2005.

5 Quoted in Lisa Magarrell and Joya Wesley, Learning from Greensboro: Truth and Reconciliation in the United States (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). Pg. 1

6 This is especially true for judicial interventions in policies and events with disparate racial impact, where the courts impose a standard on plaintiffs that requires them to provide discriminatory intent. See Charles R. Lawrence III, "The Id, the Ego, and Equal Protection: Reckoning with Unconscious Racial Prejudice," Stanford Law Review Vol. 39, No. 2 (1987).

precedent in the United States—in 2000 the town of Wilmington, NC had instituted a Commission to investigate an infamous race riot in 1898—but its presence calls attention to a certain lack within the voluminous literature on Truth Commissions. To date, social scientists have understood TRCs as transient institutions that operate as a "hinge" between an autocratic past and a democratic future. Yet the experience in Greensboro might lead us to think of such Commissions as a part of functioning democracies. In fact, as I will argue below, it might help us to think differently about democracy as such.

All this is not to say that the entire community enthusiastically embraced the TRC in Greensboro. Resistance to the idea and execution of the Commission came from a variety of sources. Many prominent Greensboro citizens—including current and former public officials—questioned the objectivity and motives of the groups behind the Commission.[7] Others challenged the utility of dredging up the past and re-opening old wounds. Even those who were sympathetic to the traumatic nature of the event focused on the need to heal and "move on."[8] Unrelenting reflection on past traumas seemed gratuitous, even narcissistic.[9] In a town that prided itself on norms of civility and tolerance, the idea of a Truth Commission seemed to promise only polarization and disagreement.

Advocates for the Commission, on the other hand, argued that a clear reckoning of the events of November 3rd was essential for the present and future health of the community. They highlighted how the events gave the lie to the city's progressive self-image; they pointed to resurgent Klan activity as a sign that the past was far from finished.

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7 One City Council member referred derisively to the process as a "crock." Jordan Green, "Ten best possible book deals about the 1979 shootings." Yes Weekly. March 27, 2007.
8 The Mayor at the time, Keith Holliday, was quoted at a City Council meeting as saying, "The families involved are never going to get over it. I wouldn't get over it. Be that as it may we've got to move on. All of us have family tragedies….You've got to create your own resolve about the things that happened that day that were unfair." "Ten best possible book deals about the 1979 shootings."
9 "Trauma" has in recent decades become a nearly ubiquitous term in the vocabulary of social science and humanities scholarship. See, for starters, Judith Lewis Herman, Trauma and Recovery (New York: Basic Books, 1997), and Ruth Leys, Trauma: A Genealogy. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

More importantly, they argued that the undeniable distrust between black and white communities in present-day Greensboro was partly an echo from the events of 1979 and their immediate aftermath. Only a thorough remembrance of the causes and consequences of those events would allow citizens the opportunity to acknowledge and work through the deeper traumas surrounding race and class in Greensboro. Until then the event would be seen in isolation from the context that made it possible. While the City Council feared an extremism lurking behind these claims, proponents of the Commission found official silence to be a more dangerous—if not extreme—position.

1.1 Race and Racism in Greensboro

Advocacy for and resistance to the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission tracked nearly perfectly along racial lines.[10] This is not altogether unsurprising, given both the immediate and more-distant history of racial disparities and difference in the South (but not, of course, *only* in the South). As labor activist Si Kahn testified to the GTRC, "scratch the surface of any issue in the South and you will find race."[11] Greensboro has a prominent place in the history of the mid-20th century struggle for civil rights. It was, famously, the site of the first widely publicized Woolworth's sit-in in February 1960, and white progressives in the South often viewed the city as a model for moderate race-relations. Yet the image of the city as a vanguard of progressivism is misleading at best and ideological at worst; while it is true, for instance, that Greensboro was the first city to announce that it

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10 In fact, even within the group of supporters there was a noticeable racial divide. This was highlighted by the Commission's final report, which noted that many people in the white community who supported the Commission did so because of a belief in the importance of "reconciliation," whereas African-American supporters tended to be more passionate about the truth-telling and truth-seeking goals. See Magarrell and Wesley, Learning from Greensboro, 96.

11 C. Brown, P. Clark, M. Jost, R. Peters, M. Sills, et al. "Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report: Executive Summary" (Greensboro: Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2006).

would comply with the Supreme Court's desegregation order in *Brown v. Board of Education*, it was also one of the last cities in the South to actually comply with federal desegregation orders.[12] The "progressive mystique" about moderate Greensboro served to obscure a violent social reality not all that different from other cities throughout the former states of the Confederacy. These comforting illusions surroundings norms of "civility" and moderation resurfaced during debates about the organizing efforts behind the GTRC. The emphasis on "civil" speech often enforced silence over uncivil or traumatic realities, and the events of November 3, 1979 were no exception. As Allen Johnson, the editorial editor of Greensboro's most widely circulated newspaper, put it, "Greensboro has trouble talking about things; Greensboro likes to talk about good stuff…Greensboro does not like to talk about bad stuff."[13]

Yet the rhetoric surrounding the Commission's formation is not simply a repetition of the denial and disavowals of an earlier time; instead it highlights a larger trend in race relations in the United States, which has been described as the shift from explicit (or "dominative") prejudice to aversive racism.[14] The diminishment of overt racial prejudice and discrimination in the United States is a borderline incredible phenomenon; in little less than half a century since the Civil Rights achievements of the 1950s and 1960s, American citizens of all races have steadily and surely moved towards a general endorsement of the principles of racial equality and integration.[15] And yet this rise in conscious support for racial equality has seemingly served to force racial prejudice underground. Aversive racism is a term used

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12 William Chafe, Civilities and Civil Rights. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

13 Quoted in "Greensboro: Closer to the Truth" (documentary). See http://www.greensborothemovie.com/

14 Lawrence D. Bobo, "Racial Attitudes and Relations at the Close of the Twentieth Century," in America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences, Volume 1, edited by Neil J. Smelser (Washington D.C.: National Academies Press, 2001). Joel Kovel, White Racism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1970).

15 John Dovidio, Louis A. Penner, Terrance L. Albrecht, Wayne E. Norton, Samuel L. Gaertner, J. Nicole Shelton, "Disparities and distrust: The implications of psychological processes for understanding racial disparities in health and health care," Social Science Medicine, Vol. 30, (2008).

to describe such *unconscious* or implicit negative feelings and beliefs about racial groups. Data on this form of racism indicates the persistence of racial prejudice despite the curtailment of its overt expression. By some measures, whites today are as *implicitly* racially biased as previous generations were explicitly racist.[16]

Moreover, the peculiar nature of aversive racism serves to insure that its presence will often go unacknowledged. Implicit racial bias exists *alongside* explicit egalitarian belief. The predominant reaction to this schizophrenic scenario is an overwhelming discomfort or anxiety about race issues. Conversations about race are avoided due to the unpleasant dissonance between implicit bias and explicit belief. Conscious egalitarian principles, furthermore, serve to confirm that this avoidance is justified ("after all, *I am not racist*; the problem lies elsewhere"). Yet blacks and whites react differently to this avoidance—which often takes the form of an insistence on being "colorblind." We always communicate more than we say: blacks are sensitive to the nonverbal cues that indicate an implicit bias (whites are also able to detect similar implicit anti-white bias). This black sensitivity, combined with psychic defenses about white racial dissonance, leads to widely divergent perceptions about the presence and significance of racism in American society.[17] In other words, unconscious bias has concrete effects—it sustains an air of distrust by simultaneously carrying forward supposedly archaic prejudices while working to keep such prejudices below the surface of public awareness (and even of private conversations). Processes like the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission perform their roles by challenging not only the essential

16 Data from Project Implicit, at Harvard University, indicates that up to three-quarters of whites have an implicit pro-white/anti-black bias. An additional study in 2008 published by Harvard researchers showed that implicit bias is present in white children as young as 6 years old, showing that time alone will not resolve racial discrimination and distrust.

17 Michael A. Fletcher and Jon Cohen, "Far Fewer Consider Racism Big Problem." The Washington Post. 19 January 2009. The title of this article is misleading; polling by the Washington Post revealed a profound split between black and white views on racism. 44 percent of blacks see racism as a "big problem" in America, versus 22 percent of whites. Such divergence also was noticeable in Greensboro with regards to the events of November 3, 1979. Whites were far more likely than blacks to consider the events of 1979 irrelevant for present-day Greensboro. Magarrell and Wesley, Learning from Greensboro, 213.

autism or shortsightedness built into juridical models of justice, but by shedding light on the political *and psychic* resistances towards such investigations.[18] The Greensboro Commission, then, was both a social and psychological institution. Addressing traumatic legacies surrounding violent events requires this more thorough investigation of the ways in which the past is still involved in the present.

1.2 Memorialization or Amnesty?

In this regard, the recent experience of Greensboro is hardly unique. In fact, the debate surrounding the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the presence of enduring racial trauma in the United States are a small part of a nearly ubiquitous and endless contest between remembrance and forgetting—or memorialization and amnesty—within contemporary politics. There is hardly a conflict, violent or latent, in the world today that is not fueled in part by insistent remembrance of historical grievances. From Belfast to Baghdad to Jerusalem to New Orleans, historical wounds have such salience for political struggle that the very coherence of *the past* is cast into doubt.[19] In countries that have undergone a recent transition from autocratic rule, there has been an explosion of interest in the remembrance and negotiation of the violence inflicted upon the population through and by the previous regime. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission is of course the most famous example of this tendency towards an accounting of past wrongs in the

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18 Shoshana Felman, The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the 20th Century. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

19 Witness the conspiracy theories surrounding the events of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. While there is no evidence that levees were dynamited, the belief that this could happen was nurtured by historical memories of earlier floods when certain levees were destroyed to the devastation of the black and poor population. Because the intervening years had done little to create trust between the black underclass and the power structure of New Orleans, there was a kind of social "repetition compulsion" for many who experienced Katrina: same as it ever was. "Another Flood That Stunned America," U.S. News and World Report, September 4, 2005.

service of a democratic future.[20] Yet in the past three decades there have been over forty

such commissions operating in the world, including recent or ongoing ones in Peru,

Uruguay, Panama, Yugoslavia, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and Ghana.[21] These

tribunals both raise, and attempt to answer, intensely difficult political and ethical questions

surrounding issues of guilt, responsibility, power and justice.

As noted above, Greensboro's Commission demonstrates that the negotiation of a traumatic

past is by no means restricted to the so-called "developing world." In the United States

there is continual and often hostile negotiation over not only the content of the past but its

place and role in shaping the future. Different groups within the polity differently remember

ostensibly common objects. Where one sees innocence the other locates a legacy that is

anything but innocuous.[22] The American state, indebted to liberal theories on the

importance of legal redress, often approaches such political dissonance by pursuing a policy

of neutrality that encourages juridical containment of past trauma in the name of equal

standards and the rule of law.[23] From its earliest formulations liberalism has aimed to defuse

political conflict by draining the well of discontent that is filled by remembrances of

historical grievances.[24] As such, some (but certainly not *all*) liberals remain skeptical of the

Truth and Reconciliation model, with its reliance on seemingly apolitical ideas such as

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20 Jonathan Allen, "Balancing Justice and Social Unity: Political Theory and the idea of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission." The University of Toronto Law Journal, Vol. 49, No. 3. (Summer, 1999), pp. 315-353. W. James Booth, "Communities of Memory: On Identity, Memory, and Debt," American Political Science Review 93, 249-263.

21 Eric Brahm, "Truth Commissions." Beyond Intractability (Boulder: University of Colorado, 2004).

22 Witness the 2007 episode in Jena, LA in which the hanging of nooses on a schoolyard tree by white students was considered an innocent "prank" by many within the white community, whereas it could not be (and was not) so lightly taken by a black community cognizant of the violent history of the object. Steven Coll, "Disparities," The New Yorker. October 8, 2007.

23 One hears the will towards neutrality in the claims of Chief Justice Roberts in the recent ruling on the use of racial criteria to promote classroom diversity. As Roberts wrote in the majority opinion, "The best way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race." See the ruling for PARENTS INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS v. SEATTLE SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1 ET AL. As Charles Lawrence III argues, these principles of neutrality often conceal structural inequalities of privilege and power in the supposedly "neutral" social fabric. Lawrence, "Two View of the River: A Critique of the Liberal Defense of Affirmative Action," Columbia Law Review. Vol. 101, No. 4 (2001).

24 Sheldon Wolin has described liberalism as a "philosophy of fear," which explains why liberal theorists insist on means of suppressing or resolving conflict. See Wolin, Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

forgiveness that expand beyond the power and mandate of juridical bodies, and its

introduction of dangerous affect into the political discourse.[25] Anne Norton, however, has

identified the liberal democratic state's silence on its past traumas as a form of "perverse

self-exculpation"—a willful denial of the past through which "persistent

inequalities…appear as the wreckage of a defeated enemy: foreign and unsightly, [but]

holding no threat to the current order."[26] W. James Booth, moreover, has made the case

that strategies of amnesty or juridical containment are inadequate for the achievement of

justice, given that justice bears an intimate relationship to the insistent remembrance of

historic *in*justice.[27] On Booth's reading, memory is not only a prerequisite for justice but also

the mark of a necessary fidelity to those who can no longer represent themselves or make

their voices heard. Charles W. Mills has argued that the abstractions of social contract

theory nurture a politics of amnesia that is incapable of adequately understanding and

counteracting contemporary patterns of discrimination; Mills argues that the abstract social

contract should be replaced with a "domination contract" that emphasizes the historical

inequality and violence at the root of modern democratic societies.[28] For Norton, Booth,

and Mills, there is not only a politics to memory but an ethics of remembrance: the dead

need the living in order to speak, and the living need to be reminded of the dead lest they

idealize or sanitize their history.

      However, the case for remembrance of past trauma shares inadequacies with the

strategy of forgetting. Groups often mobilize on the basis of shared traumatic memories,

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25 Lisa Baglione, "Peacebuilding: A Time to Listen to and Learn from Reconciliationism." Polity Vol. 40, No. 1 (2008).

26 Anne Norton, "Reading in the Shadow of History," Social Text (1998), 49-52.

27 W. James Booth, "The Unforgotten: Memories of Justice," American Political Science Review 95 (2001), 777-791.

28 Charles W. Mills, The Racial Contract (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

attempting to bring public scrutiny and power to bear on historical or ongoing grievances or injustices. Struggles for recognition, then—over who counts as a grievable body or who can speak for the dispossessed—are a central component of any society's search for justice. Yet despite its potential for addressing heretofore-disavowed losses, politicized identity can become, in Wendy Brown's memorable phrase, a form of "wounded attachment."[29] Fidelity to the departed can often betray or overwhelm fidelity to more lively others, or to ourselves.[30] Historic injustices create bitter memories that can confine their bearers to a melancholic cycle of revenge and *ressentiment*, and incessant reflection on these traumatic events can refresh rather than resolve the intense pain of the survivors.[31] This in turn might feed a desire for revenge, and threaten a revival of violent conflict. "Memory-justice" too often resembles the endless haunting of Orestes by the Furies in the *Oresteia*: a single-minded devotion to righting past wrongs, which often ignores or excuses the injustices that such devotion might itself produce. For some times and some places, amnesty/amnesia might seem a more viable—if not just—policy.

The issues surrounding the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the larger paradoxes and perils of the struggle between memorialization and amnesty within democratic states raise important questions for political theory and contemporary politics. Namely, how can we relate to and even tarry with trauma or loss (both ongoing and historical) without becoming defined by it? How can actors within the polity insist on the remembrance of their sacrifices and losses without forsaking the possibility of achieving

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29 Wendy Brown, "Wounded Attachments." Political Theory 21 (1993), 390-410. See also Vamik Volkan, Killing in the Name of Identity: a study of bloody conflicts (Charlottesville: Pitchstone Publishing Company, 2006).

30 This seems to be a central theme of Toni Morrison's novel Beloved, in which Sethe is overwhelmed and almost destroyed by the haunting of Beloved. Morrison, Beloved (New York: Everyman's Library, 2006).

31 Nietzsche wrote about the "sleeplessness" (Schlaflosigkeit) of bitter memory. See W. James Booth, "The Unforgotten: Memories of Justice," 777.

collective political settlements in the present and for the future? How can the distrust

resulting from the contested nature of traumatic events be mitigated or worked through? In

short, what sort of *memory* or *mourning work* is necessary for life in contemporary democratic

societies?

Of course these questions are not new, nor are we lacking for potential answers from

a range of perspectives and disciplines. Within political science there is an extensive

literature concerning trauma, remembrance and amnesty, ranging from work on *transitional*

justice for countries undergoing political or social transformation,[32] to historical or enduring

injustices within relatively stable states.[33] Alongside these debates is a vast literature

chronicling the recent rise of public or official apologies for past injustices, such as France's

fuller acknowledgement of collective collaboration with the National Socialists during World

War II, Japan's apology for its colonial aggression, and Australia's annual "Sorry Day,"

which is meant to commemorate state-sanctioned violence against the aboriginal

population.[34] We can add to this list the recent explorations of the politics[35] and ethics[36] of

memory, work that is roughly centered on the memorialization/amnesty dilemma.

Furthermore, outside political science and political theory there is the growing field of

trauma studies, with its focus on the social and political implications of post-traumatic stress

disorder, the intransigence of traumatic memory, and melancholic cycles of repetition

32 Jon Elster, Closing the Books: Transitional Justice in Historical Perspective (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) David Cohen, "The Rhetoric of Justice: Strategies of Reconciliation and Revenge in the Restoration of Athenian Democracy in 403 BC." European Journal of Sociology 42 (2001), 335-356.

33 Jeff Spinner-Halev, "From Historical to Enduring Injustice," Political Theory 35 (2007), 574.

34 See R.R. Weyeneth, "The Power of Apology and the Process of Historical Reconciliation," The Public Historian 23 (2001), 9-38.

35 Joshua Dienstag, Dancing in Chains: Narrative and Memory in Political Theory (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). H. Adam and K. Adam, "The Politics of Memory in Divided Societies," in After the TRC: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa, edited by W.G. James and L. Van de Vivjer (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001), 32–47. I. Amadiume and A.A. An-Na'im, The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing, and Social Justice (London: Zed Books, 2000)., H. Hirsch, Genocide and the Politics of Memory: Studying Death to Preserve Life (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press,   2001)., Ned Lebow, "The Future of Memory." The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, May 2008.

36 Avishai Margalit, The Ethics of Memory (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

through which trauma victims endlessly relive the past.[37] Finally, the politicization of

memory, whether through a skeptical approach to national traditions,[38] or a Foucaultian

emphasis on counter-memory and local tradition,[39] has served simultaneously to undermine

truth claims about national histories *and* to (perhaps ironically) sacralize or authenticate the

fugitive or dispersed recollections of historically marginalized groups.[40] Most of this work

concludes—unsatisfactorily—as does Barbara Mistztal in her essay "Memory and

Democracy:" "balancing solidarity and cohesion *sometimes* requires the generosity of

forgetfulness and *sometimes* demands the honesty of remembrance."[41] Such conclusions seem

to promise little more than an endless struggle between two mutually exclusive forces—an

unenviable choice, we might say, between fixation and forgetting. There is *prima facie* no

principle by which we can establish priority of memorialization over amnesty, or vice versa.

In the absence of transcendent standards, there is no obvious way to settle the claim of and

claims over the past.

Perhaps what is required, however, is not so much a way of resolving these debates

as a means of making them more open and reflective.[42] Drawing from the experience of

Greensboro, the challenge is not so much to achieve full reconciliation with the past as to

create public spaces of reflection on living legacies of trauma and suffering. These spaces in

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37 B.L.Green, "Psychosocial research in traumatic stress: An update." Journal of Traumatic Stress 7 (1994), 341-362., Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma, Absence, Loss," Critical Inquiry 25 (1999), 696-727.

38 Eric Hobsbawm, The Invention of Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

39 Barbara Misztal, "The Sacralization of Memory," European Journal of Social Theory Vol. 7, No. 67., Michel Foucault, Language, counter-memory, practice (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997).

40 James C. Scott, The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

41 Barbara Misztal, "Memory and Democracy," American Behavioral Scientist Vol. 48 (2005). Emphasis added.

42 Paul Ricoeur's work is especially valuable in this regard. Ricoeur warned against the dangers of melancholic fixation to historical trauma, while simultaneously asserting that plural testimonies of trauma were necessary for creating and sustaining trust between citizens in a democratic polity. Following Todorov, Ricoeur thought we could extract "exemplarity" from traumatic events by establishing a reflective distance between them and us. By establishing this distance we can develop a practical wisdom (phronesis) that can memorialize past events without sacralizing them, instead allowing them to contribute to future action and the possibility of justice. See Ricoeur, "Imagination, Testimony and Trust: a dialogue with Paul Ricoeur," in Questioning Ethics: Contemporary Debates in Philosophy, edited by K. Dooley (London: Routledge, 1999).

turn nurture a civic identity that envisions such reflection as a central component of democratic citizenship.

1.3 *Trauma, Trust, and Citizenship: Danielle Allen's* **Talking to Strangers**

In order to accomplish the tasks described above, the conscious and unconscious resistances to reflecting on trauma would need to be countered. One way of doing this is to show that current social ills—such as interracial distrust—are outgrowths of past traumas. In this vein, the work of Danielle Allen is exemplary. As Allen has argued, in *Talking to Strangers*, the unresolved traumas surrounding race in the United States nurture interracial distrust which, in turn, breeds a set of civic maladies that "corrode democratic citizenship from within."[43] Allen's proximate context is post-civil rights United States, where explicit beliefs and attitudes have haltingly adjusted to the inclusion of African Americans but where patterns of interracial trust and practices of political friendship across the races have not fully developed.[44] Allen reads the civil rights struggle over the past five decades as a protracted *stasis*: a lingering civil war that, despite recent Supreme Court pronouncements, is far from resolved.[45] Of course, the race question is more complicated in an increasingly plural America, and the categories of black and white have lost some of the social meaning they had in 1964 (let alone the social meaning they had in *1864*). Moreover, the achievement gap between black and white Americans has closed somewhat in the past decades, leading some commentators to assert that we are on the precipice of a 'post-racial' society. Still, Allen's

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43 Danielle Allen, Talking to Strangers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). p.xx.
44 "Poll Finds Obama's Run Isn't Closing Divide on Race." The New York Times, July 16, 2008.
45 See the recent ruling on the use of racial criteria to promote classroom diversity. PARENTS INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS v. SEATTLE SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1 ET AL.

portrayal of the continued distrust between the races—along with the apparently stalled

progress in the reduction of racial disparities in education, income, and life expectancy—

stands before us as a somber reminder of civic malady. For Allen, distrust results from the

visible and invisible losses and sacrifices inherent to political life in the United States and to

democratic citizenship more broadly. As she writes, "of all the rituals relevant to democracy,

sacrifice is preeminent."[46] By this she means simply that the spoils and burdens of collective

action are always unevenly distributed. She refers to this as the "hard truth" of democracies;

namely, that "some citizens are always giving up things for others."[47] Yet in the United

States, this hard truth has often been concealed—partly by the perpetual invocation of

mythic opportunity, but primarily because sacrifice has been historically concentrated within

a less politically visible segment of the population—the black and white underclass, and the

black community more generally. Ideals of democratic citizenship require that sacrifices be

honored and reciprocated, but Allen—following Ralph Ellison—notes that black sacrifices

for the polity have been and continue to go unrecognized, meaning that reciprocity is

defused and citizenship remains a fugitive ideal in a deeply flawed polity.

The experience of Greensboro adds flesh to Allen's reflections. The shootings on

November 3rd and the subsequent acquittals of the Klan members exacerbated tensions

between the black and white communities and deepened a pervasive distrust towards city

government and administrative services in Greensboro. The same public institutions—such

as the Greensboro Police Department and the judicial system—elicited widely divergent

responses based on one's social standing. Civic myths of civility and progressivism, which

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46 Allen, Talking to Strangers, 28.
47 Ibid., 29

were dearly held by many, were simply unbelievable to others.   In fact, it was partly these very civic myths—bolstered by Greensboro's status within the Civil Rights Movement iconography—that served to marginalize experiences of discrimination against the black community.[48]

There is a larger problem here, to which Allen is also sensitive, surrounding democratic identity and identification. Distrust in the regular institutions of democratic governance grows until it becomes distrust in democracy as such. When the police are seen as ineffectual if not hostile, and the civic powers are thought to be colluding with hate groups, then democratic citizenship seems a hollow pursuit.[49] Powerlessness breeds cynicism, and despair.[50] As Ed Whitfield—a contributor to the Greensboro TRC organizing efforts—put it, in describing resistance to the Commission from black citizens in Greensboro: "for many people it was probably the first exercise in such a democratic, open…(process); it's extremely difficult because most folks see things that are called democratic being done in a way that is much more dishonest than that and so they don't believe it."[51] If the images and institutions of democracy are seen to be a sham, then civic or democratic identity falters.[52]

This introduces a larger question of civic identity, about which I will say more in the chapters that follow. Throughout this project I argue that democratic identity should be

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48 Greensboro was the location for the famous Woolworth's sit-in that sparked a larger sit-in movement across the South in protest of segregation policies. Edward Rothstein, "Four Men, A Counter and Soon, Revolution," The New York Times January 31, 2010.
49 For the effects of distrust on civic participation, see Brent Simpson, Tucker McGrimmon and Kyle Irwin, "Are Blacks Really Less Trusting than Whites? Revisiting the Race and Trust Question," Social Forces Vol. 86, No. 2 (2007). This article, however, does not examine in detail the question of whether or not blacks have good reasons to be less trustful of government authorities than whites.
50 For a similar conclusion drawn form a very different example, see John Gaventa, Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982).
51 Quoted in Magarrell and Wesley, Learning from Greensboro, 49.
52 See Kenneth Hoover, The Power of Identity: Politics in a new key (Chatham: Chatham House Publishers, 1997).

understood less as a *state* of being than a *mode* of acting—a "performative" reality that is

dependent on repeated iterations of democratic action and belief going well beyond such

basic metrics as voter turnout and jury participation. And just as a personal identity is drawn

from an individual's life narrative—a narrative that is often seen as "interrupted" in the wake

of trauma—so too are collective bodies dependent on a living historical narrative that must

make room for, and be reflective about, public traumas and sacrifices (especially when they

lead to widespread distrust or despair). To put it briefly, democratic identity is dependent in

many ways upon institutions of meaning making surrounding historical traumas and their

enduring effects within the polity. If groups cannot see their traumas reflected in the

broader light of public discourse, then they will be unable to emplot or work through the

anxiety, pain, and frustration that emerges from these events. The GTRC provides us with

an example of a potent—albeit imperfect—object of reflection on racial trauma that could

fulfill such a function. In this respect it is also an object of democratic *identification*—an

institution that models the reflective habits crucial to democratic citizenship.

　　　If we are unwilling to accept the civic ills bred by entrenched patterns of distrust,

then Allen thinks we will need to develop new habits of citizenship to address the hidden

aspects of democratic decision-making—loss and disappointment. Such habits would have

to include "methods for dealing with political loss and for developing forms of interaction

among citizens that would allow for the constant redistribution of patterns of sacrifice."[53] In

order to craft these habits, Allen thinks we need to confront another hard truth—which she

draws from her reading of Ellison—namely, that "losses do not disappear but are retained in

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53 Allen, Talking to Strangers., 37

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the fabric of society."[54]   When inherent sacrifices and retained losses are not publicly

acknowledged and worked-through, the polity risks the development of a "collective

neurosis." In order to redeem the promise of democratic citizenship in the face of this

neurosis, sacrifices within the polity must become visible, voluntary, and honored. These

criteria, in Allen's words, "establish a framework for *mourning processes* that can eventually

reconstitute trust."[55]

Allen's evocation of mourning in the context of democratic politics raises more

questions than it answers. On the one hand, efforts for just remembrance and mourning

seem to be essential democratic tasks. Insofar as the past is not past, then working through

the living traumatic legacies of the American polity is a pressing concern—whether the

legacy is slavery, Jim Crow, or intransigent inequalities in income, wealth, education,

imprisonment rates, and health. And yet it is difficult to see how such mourning work

should proceed—difficult, even, to see how *collective* mourning is possible in the first place,

when the "we" that would mourn is splintered along racial, class, cultural and geographical

lines. Moreover, as with the memorialization/amnesty dilemma, a democratic work of

mourning faces dual dangers of endless woundedness and hasty foreclosure. For who will

be able to say when "we" have mourned adequately?[56] If the collective project of working

through mirrors the individual therapeutic situation, then how will it terminate?

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54 Ibid., 110.

55 Ibid., 110. Emphasis added.

56 See President Bush's declaration—ten days after the attacks of 9/11/2001—that the "our grief has turned to anger and anger has turned to resolution," followed by the assurance that "whether we bring our enemies to justice or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done." As grief morphs into grievance, justice becomes retribution.   Much was made of the initial name for the U.S. military response to the attacks of 9/11 ("infinite justice"), mostly because the "infinite" modifier seemed aggrandizing, if not blasphemous. However, the "justice" in the title is just as significant: it is surely a sign that violent retribution for the hurt inflicted was paramount.

1.4 Mourning in America: From the Psyche to the Polis (and back again).

My project picks up where Allen leaves off. Recognizing the importance of public mourning by which historical and enduring traumas surrounding race can be worked through is a vital first step. And certainly the importance of this task is profound, given not only the stark depths of the violent racial history in the United States—the "many thousands gone"[57]—but the living legacy of what Malcolm X called "the centuries of hell…here in white man's heaven."[58] The American trauma of slavery and racial discrimination persists in radical disparities between whites and blacks on a host of socio-economic indicators, but also through a pervasive cultural stigma that is still attached to black skin.[59] Despite undeniable progress, the American polity remains deeply fractured by the color line, with deleterious effects to the health of American democracy. Disparities—segregated life experiences, cultural habits, historical memories—breed distrust, which in turn is fed by disavowals and denials that refuse to see these disparities as the outgrowth of structural systems of domination and discrimination that—if the formal vestiges have been eliminated—continue to impress themselves upon the body politic. The pain and terror of our living racial history is a lamentable object in clear need of mourning or working through.

However, the difficulties noted above—how a (necessarily imaginary) collective subject splintered and segregated by a myriad of metrics could "mourn"—demand that some attention be paid to the assumptions of what public/political processes of mourning are and expectations of what they might accomplish. This is all the more important since the United States—as a pluralist, polyglot nation—does not have *a* tradition of mourning that guides

57 Ira Berlin, Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in America (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2000).

58 Malcolm X, The Autobiography of Malcolm X (New York: Penguin, 2001).

59 Glenn Loury, The Anatomy of Racial Inequality (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

public efforts at commemoration and remembrance. Where then are we to look for

understanding on this topic? In Plato's *Republic,* Socrates suggests that justice in the soul

(*psuche*) might be easier to locate if the canvas is enlarged—hence his lengthy description of

Callipolis, the just city. As Socrates puts it, "let's first find out what sort of thing justice is in

a city and afterwards look for it in the individual, observing the ways in which the smaller is

similar to the larger."[60] My idea is to turn this Socratic method on its head—to suggest

collective mourning processes by analyzing those devised as the level of the "soul." I do this

by taking my bearings from psychoanalysis. Freud's description of the work of mourning

(*Trauerarbeit*) served to "de-communalize" mourning—lifting it out of the specific

cultural/religious practices through which it was historically filtered. In so doing Freud

thought he was identifying universal psychic phenomena that could be subjected to scientific

analysis and limiting the work of mourning to a private struggle between competing internal

drives. In both of these tasks, Freud has proved a failure, but these failures prove crucial for

thinking about a "democratic" work of mourning that is not reducible to group or individual

psychology, but exists at the mobile interstice between the subject and the social.

By employing psychoanalytic concepts and categories, this dissertation theorizes

better means of negotiating the memorialization/amnesty dilemma and outlines a process

whereby civic distrust can be mitigated amidst enduring trauma and loss. Specifically I

engage with the work of Melanie Klein, whose revisions of the Freudian inheritance set the

stage for the rise of the object-relations school of psychoanalysis. Using Klein's theories I

articulate a socio-political form of *Trauerarbeit*—what Eric Santner has called the "integration

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60 Plato, Republic. Translated by G.M.A Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 368e-369a.

of damage, loss, disorientation, (and) decentered-ness into a transformed structure of identity" (individual and collective).[61] Klein argued that identity-formation comes through an experience of loss—in what she called the "depressive position"—and that such "ego-integration" is an iterable and never fully finished process. It is my claim that reflection on Klein's theories of mourning can help political theorists, social scientists, and concerned citizens discern the outlines of a relationship to historical trauma that resists both wounded attachment and hasty forgetting and assists the formulation of a principle of democratic cohesion amidst irreducible plurality. Using Klein's theories on mourning and melancholia we can better learn why—and how—to mourn the historical and enduring and traumas surrounding race. In addition, Klein helps us to think about the requirements for a civic identity that is nurtured through these reflections on the losses and sacrifices that are at the core of collective life in America.

Yet there are obvious dangers with this inverse Socratic approach to trauma and mourning. Put simply, the most significant danger is that we will lose something vital in the translation between *psyche* and polis—for instance the fact that the latter is a complex reality alive with cultural, political, and social differences, a living series of interlocking phenomena that ill-fit the conceptual straitjackets of "organism," or "body." When we speak of "the" polity or "the" collective body we are surely participating, at some level, in a fantasy.[62] Yet it is precisely this ineliminable fantastical element of politics—imbued as it is with desire, anxiety, fear, and hope—that psychoanalysis can help us to better understand. As Joel Kovel put it, psychoanalysis—perhaps more than any other organized approach to human

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61 Eric Santner, Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), xiii.
62 Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism (London: Verso, 2006).

life—can "widen our semantic range" because it "takes into account the full range of human experiences."[63] The basic assumption or presupposition behind Kovel's approach to "psychohistory" (and behind my project as well) is that human beings are richly imaginative creatures whose interactions with each other are not reducible to the external pressures pushing against us. In other words, as "meaning-making" creatures we are absorbing the external world but also projecting back into the world modulated desires, anxieties and imaginative visions through both a conscious and unconscious work of mediation. Our relationships—cultural, social, and political—are not immune to the forces of fantasy (including denial, distortion, and disavowal) but are in fact the very scenes where these forces play out and interact. In other words, we have a psychological reality alongside and in perpetual conversation with (yet never independent of!) our external—political and cultural—reality. This does decidedly not mean that external conditions are irrelevant, or that all political struggles can be reduced to our Oedipal dramas and primal scenes. Rather it implies that there is a life to politics beneath the surface, and that this depth must become an object of examination along with the larger structural and institutional forces that shape our lives. Psychoanalysis, then, can enrich our political vocabulary and, in turn, our political lives—especially insofar as we remain cognizant of the danger that its contribution to our "semantic range" may lead us into incautious conclusions and immodest judgments.

In the remainder of this chapter, I introduce the relevance of Klein to this work and show that her theories provide a potent critique of the Truth and Reconciliation process—

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63 Joel Kovel, White Racism.

specifically in regards to Greensboro. I then describe what I take to be the central

psychic/political claims asserted by the theory and practice of TRCs, before introducing the

crucial features of a work of democratic mourning. My use of Klein will be more fully

developed in the following chapter, but a brief introduction here will serve to demonstrate

her relevance for understanding both the promising and problematic nature of TRCs as a

form of democratic *Trauerarbeit*.

First, however, the word "democratic" in front of mourning needs more elaboration

and justification. Why precisely am I describing this process as a "democratic" one, since

the struggles over collective memory and trauma exist just as surely in autocratic, transitional,

or "failed" regimes? Has democracy become such a diluted concept—what John Dunn has

called the "moral Esperanto" of the nation-state system—that it can be employed as an

anodyne adjective without specific content?[64] Does democracy now operate as an empty

signifier, allowing the reader (and myself) to imbue it with whatever content they might like?

If this is so, then we ought to drop the term altogether. However, there are real and

important reasons for calling the work of mourning I aim to describe *democratic*.

Initially, one might simply say that there are certain well-accepted democratic norms, such as

reciprocity, inclusiveness, and equality, which are served by this project. Democratic

societies protect and honor these norms when they promote honest and open reflection on

the traumas of its past and present. As the President of the Peruvian Truth and

Reconciliation Commission argued, it is by "combating oblivion" and "rescuing the truth of

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64 John Dunn, Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

the past" that Truth Commissions are able to move the polity "closer to [the] ideal of democracy."[65]

Periodic reflections on the traumas of a nation's past are certainly crucial to democratic politics, but my claims about mourning and democracy are slightly different. I argue that reflection on trauma initiates a process of working through that, at its best, nurtures an identity that is *itself* reflective about, and sensitive to, the fragile features of our world. In turn, this form of identity will be better equipped to engage the corrosive aftereffects of political trauma. As Danielle Allen has observed, the difficult practice of making-oneself-vulnerable to others is a habit essential to democratic citizenship.[66] As she puts it, the invisible losses and sacrifices within the polity serve to conceal our profound inter-dependency, the fact "that we are related to one another in more ways than we know."[67] This hints at a deeper connection between object relations psychoanalysis (which emphasizes inter-subjective dependency and relationality) and theories of democratic identity—a connection that will be developed in the following chapters.[68]

In order develop this connection between democracy and the work of mourning, and to anticipate my interpretations of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Process, it will be helpful here to introduce the particular psychoanalytic theory I will employ.

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65 C. Brown, et al. "Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report: Executive Summary."

66 The work of Judith Butler is also crucial here. Butler has argued that grief over loss may allow for an expanded understanding of human vulnerability and, hence, a more egalitarian and just polity. See Chapter three below.

67 Allen, Talking to Strangers, 185.

68 This connection has been developed somewhat by Fred Alford in Group Psychology and Political Theory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994). However, Alford remains primarily pessimistic towards the potential for healthy individual psychology in the context of mass society. Alford follows Freud and Bion in thinking that the group provides a simultaneous outlet for narcissistic self-love and destructive other-hatred. Still, see pages 68-76, where Alford notes the (limited) potential of "developed" groups for the creation of healthy/constructive behavior. Especially relevant is his discussion of the connection between loose and uncontrollable terror/fear and the collapse of democracy (pg. 72) and his advocacy of "constitutional liberalism plus (interpretive) leadership" as following from the discovered truths of group psychology (pg 74). As will become clear, I am more optimistic than Alford is about the potential for democratic life to mitigate paranoid-schizoid tendencies and bring about a collective version of Klein's depressive position. Additionally, I do not want to restrict our understanding of democracy to "constitutional liberalism," which as I will argue below (Chapter four) has historically served to conceal and elide traumas, which not only facilitates paranoid-schizoid fantasies but undermines the possibility that "interpretive leadership" might find a sympathetic audience. However, the seriousness and skill with which Alford has translated Kleinian psychoanalysis and group psychology into political theory present both a high standard for scholarship and a goad for thinking.

Specifically I will briefly show the divergence between the Freudian and Kleinian accounts of mourning—a divergence that receives a fuller treatment in the following chapter. For Freud, mourning is merely a temporary interruption in the life of the subject—a brief deviation from the forward compulsions of the drives. The ego is forced to renounce its libidinal investments in the lost object through a painful process of detachment.[69] Yet as Freud's subject recovers, the ego again becomes "free and uninhibited" and is able to direct libidinal forces from the id towards more responsive objects. In many ways this description reinforces the hegemonic, unreflective understanding of mourning, which sees it as a private, temporary (and "natural") process that ends of its own accord. For Klein, however, it is fair to say that the subject *comes into being* through mourning. We develop a full personality and identity capable of healthy relations with others (and *ourselves*) only by coming through the early process of mourning that Klein calls the "depressive position." The depressive position is encountered when the child first comes to experience loss and deprivation. Successful resolution of both this early depressive position, and all its later appearances, is dependent on the integration of the ego via the overcoming of defense mechanisms of denial, splitting, and omnipotence.[70] A healthy ego will overcome these fantasies by integrating the contradictory demands of the death and life instincts—along with the objects through which the impulses have become *real* for the subject. Accomplishing this task results in the development of trust in both the inside and outside worlds, although this trust is fragile and capable of rupture. Fred Alford has likened this process to the integration of

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69 Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964). Pg. 217.
70 More below, in Chapter two.

the Furies into the Athenian polis at the end of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*.[71] The Furies' anger is

modified or mitigated—but not eliminated—by inclusion in the civic rites. The healthy polis

will avoid denial of the disintegrative demands for crude justice articulated by the Furies, and

instead find room for this "archaic" (the "the mind of the past") anger and aggression. The

healthy individual—on Klein's reading—will through a work of mourning similarly develop

an integrated personality that is capable of reflecting on what has been lost and cohabitating

with the competing/contradictory demands of psychic and social life.

   Secondly, for Freud mourning is a period of "withdrawal" in which the ego is able to

perform its "critical activity"—the private work of "turning-away" from the lost object. For

Klein, on the other hand, this mourning process is not a private but a social one. Successful

mourning is in the first instance dependent on the objects made available to the subject in

his or her early life (the ego is continually accompanied by its others). The infant requires a

supportive atmosphere in order to resolve the crisis of the depressive position; as Klein puts

it, "the increase of love and trust, and the diminishing of fears through happy experiences,

help the baby step by step to overcome his depression and feeling of loss."[72] A lack of

reassuring objects, on the other hand, will exacerbate persecutory fantasies, "diminish trust

and hope and confirm anxieties about inner annihilation."[73] Successful resolution of the

mourning position, then, is dependent not only on the ego's "constitutional factors" (which

are primary for Freud) but on the presence or lack of a supportive context for the testing of

fantasies and the working through of fears and anxieties—and this holds true not only for

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71 In so doing he is partly following Klein herself. See Klein, "Some Reflections on the Oresteia." Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963 (New York: The Free Press, 1975).

72 Klein, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States," Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945 (New York: Free Press, 2002).
73 Klein, Ibid., 347.

the infant but for the adult as well. Even though Klein focuses in her work initially on the infant's depressive position, mourning is not restricted to this earliest of stages in human development. In fact, as I show in the next chapter, the concept of "stages" is inappropriate for Klein's understanding of psychic life: for her, the work of ego integration continues throughout life. Moreover, it is tied inextricably to our experiences of loss and trauma—personally and sympathetically—since it is at these moments that we are most likely to retreat to early fantasies and defensive postures, and are most in need of supportive objects for successful "working through."

Mourning, therefore, is an activity that can never be fully finished; for Klein, it is less a temporary injury than it is a way of living and relating to our self and others. On Alford's reading this 'iterable' quality to mourning makes Athena's welcoming of the Furies into Athens particularly poignant, because it "represents such a narrow victory (only one vote)…[that] will have to be won again and again."[74] The resolution of the depressive position is a precarious achievement because the subject is continually beset by competing passions of love and hate—courtesy of the death and life drives and the multiplicity of objects through which these drives manifest themselves. This highlights another important point of divergence between Freud and Klein. Whereas for Freud these drives (*Trieben*) are ontological, for Klein they are primarily reflections of our objectal contacts and conflicts.[75] We are tensional or torsional beings because the world we encounter is itself contradictory and rife with conflict. Mourning, then, is not only a response to a particular loss but—because every encounter with loss touches off a deeper psychic labor—a perpetually

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74 Fred Alford, "Melanie Klein and the 'Oresteia Complex:' Love, Hate, and the Tragic Worldview" Cultural Critique No. 15 (1990).
75 This is not to say that they are optional; more to follow in Chapter two.

refreshed struggle between the subject and its inner and outer worlds. Mourning is a never-quite-finished process of coming to terms with the conflictual demands of inter-subjective life—using, in Klein's language, the reparative power of love to mitigate the disintegrative power of hatred and hold together the fractious complexity that is the ego.

To *mitigate* hatred—but not to eliminate it. For Klein the death drive is an ever-present and haunting feature of human life, and conflict is coeval with the human condition. Yet—like the Furies—the conflicts surrounding the death drive do not always need to be split-off, denied or to remain a source of dread. Suffering can be productive. In fact it is for Klein one of the signs of a healthy identity that it is able to turn the difficult work of mourning into a generative source of creativity and flourishing.[76] Living with the demands of the death drive—which are activated whenever we encounter loss—marks the successful "resolution" of the depressive position and the establishment of trust despite the persistence of internal and external conflict.

In summation we could say that Klein modifies the Freudian account of mourning in four crucial ways. First, she transforms Freud's subject-who-mourns into the *mourning subject*. In other words, while for Freud mourning is a task carried out by an integrated ego, for Klein mourning is the very *task* of ego integration (or, in slightly differently terminology, the development of our identity). Second, Klein helps us to understand mourning not as a purely private enterprise but as a socio-political practice. Third, Klein shows us that mourning is more than a response to object loss, but is a frequently embodied *state of mind*. Fourth, the suffering experienced in mourning can be productive for subjective and social

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76 As we'll see in the next chapter, there is an added poignancy to Klein's writings in this regard – since much of her most important work on mourning is written in response to the sudden death of her son in a hiking accident. The calls to a creative re-configuration of the pain of loss is profoundly a form of self-work, even as Klein aims to generalize her claims by putting her analysis in the third-person form.

life, but only if we avoid psychic defenses such as denial or withdrawal, and reflect on the tensional relationship between what has been lost and what remains (all four of these claims will be fleshed out in the following chapter).

Yet what precisely does any of this have to do with Greensboro, or racial trauma? In a word, this project is predicated on the assumption that the integrated/enriched self as described by Klein can operate as an index for a healthy society able to live with its "stained" history and lingering traumas. In this respect Klein's work has analogical value for social-political processes of mourning such as the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Analogies, as Freud reminds us, "decide nothing, but they can make one feel more at home."[77] An engagement with psychoanalysis and with Klein, then, can help us to feel "more at home" with the language of loss, mourning, and working through in the context of democratic politics.

Yet the value of Klein's theories on mourning is also *more than analogical.* Klein's description of the ongoing task of identity formation helps us to think more clearly about the process of nurturing a democratic or civic identity that would "make democracy work."[78] Lastly, in many respects Klein can help us to "choose sides" when we encounter competing grief and grievances over a shared public trauma. It is too easy to assume that the work of mourning will always serve egalitarian and anti-racist goals. After all, certainly the Klansmen in Greensboro felt that their actions were a justifiable response to a felt loss or trauma. D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* may be repugnant as historical recreation, but it is surely intended as tragedy. Klein helps us to see that not all mourning is created equal (and, in fact,

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77 Sigmund Freud, New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1964), 64.
78 Robert Putnam, Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

not all mourning *is actually mourning*), and she assists us in the important work of judgment

that must operate hand-in-hand with attempts at collective reflection on trauma and

sacrifice.

1.5 Truth and Reconciliation Commissions as Mourning Processes?

"Revealing is healing."
> —Motto of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission

"The self is not easily united…destructive impulses drive one way, love and the capacity for
reparation and compassion in other ways…full and permanent integration is never possible,
for some polarity between the life and death instincts always persists and remains the deepest
source of conflict."

> —Melanie Klein, "Some Reflections on the Oresteia"

At this point I turn to an examination of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions as

mourning processes, in light of Klein's understanding of the intersubjective work of

mourning. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions straddle the tension between

memorialization and amnesty surveyed above. Moreover, in many respects, critical

appraisals of the Truth and Reconciliation model resonate with Klein's views of the subject.

Just as for Klein the self is a conflictual whole—what Kristeva has referred to as "endemic

ill-being"[79]—a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a concept "at war with itself," caught

between the seemingly exclusive demands of those seeking truth and those counseling

reconciliation.[80] Truth and reconciliation are, after all, not mutually reinforcing concepts,

either logically or politically. In fact opposition to the TRC process is often linked with an

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79 Julia Kristeva, Melanie Klein (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).
80 Jonathan Allen, "Balancing Justice and Social Unity," 320.

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anxiety that acknowledging the truth of past atrocities will make collective life impossible. Truth seeking has an aggressive quality—one thinks again of the Furies, the "gloomy children of the night," who incessantly press their claims against Orestes despite Athena's pleas for peace. On the other hand, reconciliation—even understood as negative peace[81]—is often achieved only through official declarations of amnesty whereby the agents of violence are given immunity from prosecution for crimes committed during the preceding period. If reconciliation involves amnesty (from the Greek *amnestia*, meaning 'oblivion'), then it is—at best—in tension with any pursuit of truth.[82] Just as Klein, then, hinted at a deeper conflict at the root of political life, so too do TRCs map a more fundamental psychological and political drama.

While each of the official or unofficial Commissions over the past quarter-century is marked by particularities that resist subsumption into one universal model, there is a growing critical consensus about the shape and purpose of such bodies. In other words, if there is not a "true" way of performing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, there are nevertheless overlapping practices and norms that form a general model upon which current efforts are often based. In this section I will discuss the most promising features of this model from the perspective of addressing traumatic events and their lingering effects—what I refer to as a Commission's central psycho-political claims—namely: *reckoning, implicature,* and *mutual understanding.* Reckoning is a willingness to confront unpleasant events in a nation's history while resisting the often-immense social and political pressures to "turn the page." Implicature has both a spatial and temporal component— it describes TRC's ability

81 Martha Minow, et. al., Imagine Coexistence: Restoring humanity after violent ethnic conflict (New York: Jossey-Bass, 2003).
82 After all, the Greek word for truth, aletheia, can be literally translated as "un-forgetting."

to reveal broader social patterns and contexts that made traumatic events possible in the first place, and the ability to demonstrate the lingering effects of past violence and discrimination in the present. Finally, mutual understanding represents the possibility that the TRC's activities and final report can create a publicly shared understanding of past events. While no report will eliminate all competing interpretations of the past, it can serve, in Michael Ignatieff's phrasing, to "reduce the number of lies."[83] All of these claims can be discerned in the Executive Summary of the Greensboro Commission. Each of these features of the TRC process is, moreover, crucial from a Kleinian perspective. Together they serve to mitigate the tempting power of defense mechanisms such as splitting and projection while making possible the creation of a socio-political depressive position.

1.5.1 Reckoning

Reckoning is a (more) collective reflection on violent or traumatic events in a polity's past and present; it promotes the idea that such reflection is a necessary component of democratic states concerned with justice. Reckoning therefore echoes Booth's concept of "memory-justice:" victims of traumatic violence are often permanently silenced, and the facts of these events are themselves often obscured or concealed by the official powers.[84] Survivors must then invoke or recall the departed, and when these traumas are shaded over

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83 Audrey R. Chapman and Patrick Ball, "The Truth of Truth Commissions: Comparative Lessons from Haiti, South Africa, and Guatemala," Human Rights Quarterly Vol. 23, No. 1 (2001).

84 This happened in Greensboro, where the police department's first reaction to the event was to cover-up the presence of a police informant who had infiltrated the Klan and had warned police of their plans for November 3rd. When these facts ultimately emerged, the understandable reaction among many in Greensboro was to assume police/Klan collusion or cooperation.

by social power (and powerlessness) such work becomes all the more difficult.[85] Reckoning, thereby, could be said to gain importance relative to the resistance it provokes. Political communities—like individual selves—strive to maintain positive self-conceptions.[86] As such, there is a powerful tendency to deny or ignore past traumas, or to interpret violent events in a nation's history as exceptions or anomalies. Past events that reflect well on the community are instead prominently invoked and commemorated. When such events come to define the collective memory and imaginary, violent or traumatic occurrences are reduced to isolated incidents that—due to their supposedly "fugitive" nature—paint a flawed or inaccurate picture of the community. For instance, in Greensboro, the Woolworth's sit-in and similar, early Civil Rights-era activities become definitional, whereas the events of November 3rd are seen as aberrations to be downplayed or forgotten. Yet why should we follow this form of accounting? As Martha Minow has claimed, the "failure to remember" injustice or cruelty is not just a political failure but "an ethical breach."[87] Tragic reckoning would seek to make the remembrance of such embarrassing or shameful events as common as the celebration of affirming or progressive moments. TRCs exemplify this willingness to include traumatic or shameful events in the public history of a political community. In the case of South Africa, one of the most significant achievements of the TRC process was, in Desmond Tutu's words, "to bring events known until now only to the immediately affected communities…into the center of national life."[88] Tragic reckoning is not a way of reading

85 Sheldon Wolin's reflections on how to "memorialize" loss are relevant here; as Wolin sees it, political theory is implicated in the task of memorializing losses if and when they are related to issues of power and powerlessness. "From Vocation to Invocation." Vocations of Political Theory, edited by Jason Frank and John Tamborino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).
86 Martin O. Heisler, "Challenged Histories and Collective Self-Concepts: Politics in History, Memory, and Time," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science Vol. 617, No. 1 (2008).
87 Martha Minow, "Breaking the Cycles of Hatred," in Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair, edited by Martha Minow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002)
88 Quoted in Magarrell and Wesley, Learning from Greensboro, 163.

out or eliminating positive events worth celebrating—a community should not be exclusively defined by its traumas or by its triumphs. TRCs more modestly herald an overcoming of political and social powers that prefer a sanitized version of history or that fear the potentially destabilizing consequences of such honest accounting.

The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission was explicitly motivated by the task of such reckoning, or, as the Final Report put it, by the charge of "lift[ing] up this painful truth."[89] By "facing shameful events honestly," the Commission hoped to more fully examine a "difficult chapter of Greensboro's history."[90] The Mandate of the GTRC advocated a "humble" and "serious" examination of the past in order to "fully acknowledge" the pain and suffering surrounding the events of 1979 and their aftermath. In this respect, the public nature of the GTRC proceedings—its visible presence in the community for a period of several years—was perhaps just as important as the content of its final report. For Rich Rusk, head of the Moore's Ford Memorial Committee,[91] the GTRC exemplified the possibility that communities can have "a sustained conversation about painful historical topics, like racial violence."[92] By serving as a public object of reflection the GTRC was able to resuscitate a conversation about the events of 1979 and connect it with the interceding years.

The Greensboro Commission's final report also highlighted the official and unofficial resistance to the Mandate of acknowledgement and reckoning. City officials rejected the need for such reflection and clung to the city's progressive self-understanding.

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89 C. Brown, et al. "Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report: Executive Summary," 15.
90 Ibid., 15.
91 A multi-racial nonprofit working for "cultural healing, racial harmony, and social justice" formed in memory of four African Americans lynched in 1946 in Georgia.
92 Magarrell and Wesley, Learning from Greensboro, 140.

Greensboro citizens were, in their eyes, politically moderate and socially tolerant, and political business was accomplished via well-established norms of civility, courtesy, and a willingness to be persuaded. The violence of such groups as the CWP and the Klan violated these norms, and therefore could not be placed at the core of Greensboro's public history. Yet perhaps this resistance simply confirmed Freud's observation that "society makes what is disagreeable into what is untrue."[93] As Lisa Magarrell—a consultant to the GTRP from the International Center for Transitional Justice—put it, "in a city renowned for its 'civility'…dealing with the messiness of truth, emotions, and the failings of the system that tended to serve the majority quite well, was unattractive to government."[94] At times this distrust towards the GTRC process escalated into outright hostility; in 2006, as the Greensboro Commission was preparing its final report, it was revealed that Commission members had been subjected to clandestine surveillance, and that meetings of the Project's Local Task Force had been recorded by the police. Over and against this sometimes hidden, sometimes blatant, resistance, the Greensboro TRC created—in its period of conception, during its operation, and since the release of its report—an alternative public space outside the official civic discourse that privileged denial. Within this space the living legacies of racial and class violence could be more fully engaged and addressed—i.e. *reckoned with*.

What city officials seemingly failed to realize was that their resistance to the Commission damaged the city's image far more than the final report ever could. As Marx McGovern—a member of the Ardoyne community in Northern Ireland, where a similar unofficial TRC had been organized—put it, "to see in Greensboro that one of the

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93 Sigmund Freud, Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1966), pg. 24.
94 Quoted in Magarrell and Wesley, Learning from Greensboro, 174.

arguments against the Commission was that it would make the city look bad, well, for us it is quite the opposite, for it makes us admire the city."[95] The hearings for the Commission certainly were difficult and oftentimes unpleasant; the testimonies of both survivors and Klan members were especially painful to witness. In this respect, however, the GTRC mirrored Klein's description of analysis, which, as she writes, "is not in itself a gentle method: it cannot spare the patient *any suffering*…in fact, it must force the suffering into consciousness…if the patients are to be spared permanent and more fatal suffering later."[96] Greensboro's mayor on several occasions referred to the GTRC process as "unappetizing," but such concessions to the civic pleasure principle—which would keep conflict to a minimum—must be actively resisted for the health of both the psyche and the polis.

1.5.2 Implicature

Beyond reckoning, implicature indicates the possibility of demonstrating the reach of traumatic events within the life of a community. Implicature stands in for the work of establishing a more general or shared responsibility for traumatic events, by revealing the broader cultural and political context that makes such events intelligible or possible. By acknowledging these broader social patterns—living legacies of racial discrimination, entrenched patterns of poverty, abuse, and distrust—TRCs can problematize "bystander" innocence and identify sins of omission. Implicature also weakens a primary defense mechanism—splitting—whereby the source of the trauma is alienated from the community and violence is attributed to "outsiders." In Greensboro, this strategy took the form of

95 Ibid., 140.
96 Melanie Klein, Love, Guilt, and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945, 144.

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othering not only the Klan members—seen as "relics" of an earlier time—but demonization

of the CWP and GAPP as "outside" agitators who had invaded the sleepy mill town only to

stir up trouble. The events of November 3rd were framed as a "shootout" between two

equally repugnant groups that had "nothing to do with Greensboro."[97] Mark Sills, one of

the GTRC Commissioners, reflected powerfully on the persistence of this myth:

> "The city managed through the press to completely distance itself
> from the event and pretend it never happened, which is why we
> needed this Commission in the first place…I gave a talk to a church
> recently about our work and I had people raising their hands and
> saying, "we thought these were all outsiders and you're telling us that
> these folks had been living in this community and working in this
> community and were a part of this community. We've been here all
> of our lives and no one's ever told us this before. We thought they
> were all outsiders.""[98]

The work of implicature goes some distance towards showing the indigenous quality

of traumatic events—to show, despite their appearance as exogenous shocks, a connection

to the mundane habits and patterns of behavior that surround and penetrate the life of the

community. The GTRC Executive Summary contained a particularly powerful example of

spatial implication with an imaginative transposition of the events via racial reversal. By

reversing the reader's optics, the report is able to reveal a powerful (yet partly unconscious)

interpretive framework that helps to explain the disparate racial reaction to the events of

November 3, 1979:

> Imagine for a moment that these elements [of the event] would have
> been racially reversed, viewed as a photographic negative. Imagine a
> group of demonstrators is holding a demonstration against black
> terrorism in the affluent white community of Irving Park. A caravan
> of armed black terrorists is allowed to drive unobstructed to the

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97 Magarrell and Wesley, *Learning from Greensboro*, 30.
98 Quoted in Ibid., 30.

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parade starting point, and photos are taken by the police as demonstrators are shot dead. Most of the cars are then allowed to flee the scene, unpursued, even as they threaten neighborhood pedestrians by pointing shotguns through the windows. The defendants are tried and acquitted by an all-black jury. The first shots—fired by the blacks screaming "Shoot the Crackers!" and "Show me a Cracker with guts and I'll show you a black man with a gun!"—are described by black defense attorneys and accepted by jurors as "calming shots." Meanwhile, the city government takes steps to block citizen protest of black terrorist violence including a curfew in the white neighborhood.

As the report surmises, the event described above is "so unlikely as to be preposterous," yet "in racial reverse, it is exactly what happened."[99] Sills' participation on the Commission, in a similar fashion, brought to light for him the unacknowledged privilege associated with fair skin in the south, along with the amnesia that often accompanies such privilege. As he put it, "being in a privileged state, it's just awfully easy to forget why things are easy or why things seem right when you don't have to face discrimination."[100] TRCs, by exploring the historical and social context surrounding the actual trauma, implicate "bystanders" in the larger social forces without which the event—which is no longer just an event—could not take place. In this respect citizens can learn to become *responsive* to the event even if they were not directly *responsible* for it. Specifically a view of this larger context allows us to recognize patterns of institutional racism (such as laws regarding jury selection) and enduring discrimination. With regards to the latter, it is a telling and sobering fact that, just as the GTRC Final Report was being completed, the Greensboro police department was caught up in a scandal involving disciplinary double standards for black and white officers. The scandal first erupted when a black police officer discovered that a special unit was

99 C. Brown, et al., "Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report: Executive Summary," 32.
100 Quoted in Ibid., 31.

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tracking him within his own department. Ultimately a pervasive pattern of interracial

suspicion and discrimination was revealed, leading to the resignation of the police chief in

early 2006.[101]

Implicature has a temporal dimension as well; it serves to reveal the lingering

consequences of past traumas in the present. Contemporary problems and afflictions

continue to be shaped by the past. Historical counterfactuals are by nature speculative, but

the Greensboro Commission Final Report was able to demonstrate the deleterious impact

the events of November 3rd had on community and labor organizing efforts in Greensboro,

as well as levels of citizen trust towards city government and the police department. The

impact of these events goes far beyond those immediately affected—partly because the event

itself is revealed as a symptom of a broader set of intersecting phenomena which are

resistant to dramatic transformation (even if they are susceptible to gradual modification).

As the scandal within the Greensboro police department proves, prejudice and racial distrust

are persistent forces despite serious efforts to overcome them.

Kleinian psychoanalysis can certainly be used to understand the potency of lingering

racism—though that is not my purpose here.[102] More importantly, Klein's theories on ego

development and integration show the importance of undermining defense mechanisms that

distort both our self-understanding and our view of the world—defense mechanisms that

serve to reinforce beliefs in our innocence.[103] Of course, pursuing this analogy between

psyche and polis can also lead to distortions. For instance, Freud thought that repressed

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101 "NC Police Chief Resigns After Racial Scandal." http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5170742

102 Simon Clarke, Social Theory, Psychoanalysis, and Racism (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

103 Here the work of James Baldwin, who similarly wants to implicate his white audience in patterns of racial prejudice that are pervasive and saturating is of particular relevance from a Kleinian perspective. Baldwin, The Fire Next Time (New York: Vintage, 1992). George Shulman, American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

material in the psyche was ultimately available and susceptible to conscious work—hence the importance of dreams and screen memories, which provide access to the unconscious. Yet denial and distortion in collective life are often predicated on explicit *suppression* of facts ("No one's ever told us this before; we thought they were outsiders"). We cannot count on screen memories or parapraxes to put us into contact with the *social* unconscious. What is clear, however, is that the same psychic defenses that keep discomforting facts repressed in the unconscious *also* support state strategies of suppression and framing—such that even when the facts emerge the previous understanding of the event retains its power, leading to some rather intense cases of cognitive dissonance.[104] In this respect, the "truth" of TRCs often faces surprisingly powerful resistance, since "everybody knows" what *really* happened. As I hope to demonstrate in the next chapter, Klein's turn away from Freudian narcissism towards object relations serves to implicate the individual in their surroundings far more than they—and perhaps we—would care to admit. This is part of the interminable work of analysis that "cannot spare (us) any suffering." Yet in situations where we are called to respond to traumatic events in the polity, such work will prove of vital importance.

1.5.3 Mutual understanding (weak reconciliation)

Truth and Reconciliation Commissions can publicly and dialogically create a context-rich narrative of past trauma that can serve as the basis of a collectively shared historical

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104 Jill Williams, executive director of the Commission, relayed a telling anecdote about a classroom discussion of the GTRC report: "One student's naïve question illustrated the community's predisposition toward the document. 'We all know that this report is biased,' she began, 'but is it biased because it is true or because it unfairly represents the information?' As the student read the report, she explained, she felt sympathy for the CWP members and the Morningside Home residents, but she knew that most people in Greensboro do not feel that way, so the Commission's description of the events, she concluded, must be biased, even if that 'bias' is truth." Quoted in Magarrell and Wesley, Learning from Greensboro, 205.

understanding, a process that could be referred to as mutual understanding.[105] No report can eliminate all competing interpretations of the past, but it can serve to, in Ignatieff's phrasing, "reduce the number of lies," and weaken the imaginative grip of conspiracy theories. By countering current—often heavily distorted—frames of the event, TRCs can articulate a "universe of comprehensibility" that can serve as the basis for the relative harmonization of competing versions of the past.[106] By bridging different narratives of the same event, TRCs can restore the grounds upon which trust might be built. In the evocative phrasing of Bert Van Roermund, they make available "a past to look forward to."[107] In the case of Greensboro, the Final Report was able to conclusively demonstrate police negligence, but it also conclusively established a lack of police and Klan collusion. It was a widely shared suspicion in the black community that the police protected and even supported Klan activities while targeting for abuse labor activists and community members who tried to fight back. When it came to light early on that a police informant had infiltrated the Klan and had warned the GDP about their plans for November 3rd—and still the protest march was allowed to move forward without a significant police presence—these suspicions seemed to be confirmed. Yet as the TRC report demonstrates, the case for conspiracy or collusion is ultimately untenable, even if certain key police officers failed to act in ways that could have easily reduced the chance of violence.[108]

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105 Aletta J. Norval, "Truth and Reconciliation: The Birth of the Present and the Reworking of History," Journal of Southern African Studies Vol. 25, No. 3 (1999).

106 O. Ramsbotham, T. Woodhouse, and H. Miall, Contemporary Conflict Resolution: The Prevention, Management and Transformation of Deadly Conflicts. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005). Brandon Hamber and Richard Wilson, "Symbolic Closure through Memory, Reparation and Revenge in Post-Conflict Societies," University of Connecticut Human Rights Institute Research Papers. Posted at DigitalCommons@UConn. http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/hri.papers/5

107 Bert Van Roermund, "Never Again: Time Frames in Anamnesis and Reconciliation," Paper presented at the fourth colloquium on Time, Law and Reconciliation, University of Johannesburg, December 2004.

108 C. Brown, et al., "Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report: Executive Summary," 7-12.

The relatively modest aims of mutual understanding offer what could be called a theory of "weak" reconciliation. TRCs at their best offer a common narrative to which citizens can appeal as they address the problems of the contemporary polity, but they cannot preempt such contestation any more than they can fully resolve the traumas of the past. Weak reconciliation offers the hope that past wrongs or traumas will be (more) openly and honestly discussed, without the presence of overwhelming bitterness or resentment. But it does not pretend that trauma can be absolutely surmounted or transcended. As the GTRC Final Report puts it, the goal is to "take us *some distance* from half-truths, misunderstandings, myth, and hurtful interpretations."[109] The effect of these conjoined efforts—at reckoning, implicature, and mutual understanding—in the case of Greensboro is that the traumatic event has now been situated in a political, social and economic context such that distancing myths and defense mechanisms lose (some of) their power. By "lifting up this painful truth," the GTRC was, in Whitfield's words, "chipping away at a lie"[110]—eroding the common narrative that isolates racial prejudice in historical time, or sees it only as a messy propadeutic to a now-egalitarian society. Lingering prejudice can on this telling only be treated as a fading relic—an archaic mindset on which the sun will eventually set. This attitude neglects not only the evidence of the GTRC Final Report but the warnings of Kleinian psychoanalysis, which helps us to understand not only the deeper sources of racial prejudice but the difficult, painful—and quite possibly interminable—work of mourning that is our best response.[111]

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109 Ibid., 13. Emphasis added.

110 Quoted in Magarrell and Wesley, Learning from Greensboro, 28.

111 As Sartre put it, in language that Klein would agree with, "if the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him."

1.6 Melanie Klein and the Therapeutic Ethic: Or, the Problems with "Strong" Reconciliation

In the above section I have attempted a Klein-inspired reading of Truth and Reconciliation theory and practice as a work of public mourning—with a particular focus on the Greensboro TRC. Klein's work reinforces these efforts in powerful ways. However, there are currents in TRC literature and practice that Klein would caution us not to accept— currents that mitigate the very work of mourning these bodies seem to exemplify. For instance, there is a seductive tendency within the Truth and Reconciliation model—and the GTRC is no exception—towards a "strong" notion of reconciliation that outstrips the more modest goals of reckoning, spatial/temporal implicature and mutual understanding and insists on a more holistic idea of "healing" or "resolution." This insistence is premised on a belief in original communal "oneness" that has been violated by the traumatic event(s); only the restoration of this original order will bring about real justice and reconciliation.[112] Moreover, reconciliation is read not as a potentially stable (but ultimately precarious) peace but as "closure" and "healing." As the GTRC Final Report put it, "reconciliation means to bring together those parts that were torn apart and *make them whole again*, to repair the brokenness in our community."[113] The language of closure, repair, or redemption, again, presupposes a lost level of communal intimacy in need of restoration. Often this belief is indebted to explicitly religious or cosmological worldviews, which reduce the TRC process to a moment within a progressive and teleological vision of history. Desmond Tutu articulated such an understanding when he told the South African Commissioners that they

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112 TRCs have been compared with Plato's characterization of the "kingly weaver" who "dialectically creates the community through weaving a unity of opposites out of conflicting material to form an organic whole." Norval, "Truth and Reconciliation," 504.
113 C. Brown, et al., "Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report: Executive Summary," 323

"were part of the cosmic movement towards unity, towards reconciliation, that has existed from the beginning of time."[114] On another occasion, Tutu referred to the South African nation as a "wounded people…in need of healing."[115] And Tutu went further in a letter addressed to the GTRC, where he lauded the efforts of the Commission and offered encouragement with a slogan used to promote the South African TRC: "the truth will set you free."[116] As Tutu wrote, "I firmly believe that this is not only true for victims and their families, but for perpetrators and their apologists as well."[117] If the theological presumptions of these claims are not explicit, then a secularized version of natality—the belief that humans may "begin again" or start over—is often offered.[118] Yet there are both practical and political/psychological reasons for rejecting these notions of strong reconciliation. First, the struggle for strong reconciliation may push too hard against entrenched patterns of bias and distrust, creating a reaction that threatens the already difficult work of weak reconciliation or mutual attunement. Traumatic events create problems to be addressed—not sins to be absolved. Insofar as the language of sin and absolution is employed, spectators and participants will be held to an unrealistic standard of healing that instaurates a (melancholic) search for purity. Secondly, the theological or cosmological subsumption of the work of TRCs obscures the conflictual *nature* of collective and psychic life. Our task should not be to "resolve" conflict but to mitigate its most violent features and to find better ways to *live with*

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114 Quoted in Ramsbotham et al, Contemporary Conflict Resolution, 230.

115 Hamber and Wilson, , "Symbolic Closure through Memory, Reparation and Revenge in Post-Conflict Societies," 1.

116 This is of course originally attributed to Christ in the Book of John. Christ did probably not intend it as a slogan, however.

117 Quoted in Magarrell and Wesley, Learning from Greensboro, 54.

118 One writer on these issues counsels, in this vein, that "we don't need to be tied our fears, our hatreds, and our regrets." As I hope to demonstrate throughout the course of this project, the belief in such powers of natality is a melancholic denial or our psychic/symbolic/political inheritances. We cannot fully escape our histories, but there are better and worse ways of being tied to our past. A.B. Brown and K.M. Poremski, Roads to Reconciliation: Conflict and Dialogue in the Twenty-First Century (New York: ME Sharpe, 2005). Obviously any mention in political theory of "natality" will evoke not only Augustine but also Arendt. The latter's secularized account of natality as exemplifying the innate human capacity of beginning is familiar territory - but exploring it here will take me too far afield.

its tragic remainders.[119] For Klein, the healthy integrated ego will mitigate its disintegrative

aggressive desires, but it remains tied to them nevertheless. We can—through a patient

labor of reflection—clarify the sources of our desires, locate their effects in our thoughts and

habits, and thereby liberate ourselves from unthinking repetition of destructive behavior.

However, despite optimistic portrayals of psychoanalysis as a "talking cure," there is nothing

in Klein that allows us the consolation of Tutu's claims. In other words, the truth will *not* set

us free; instead we should search for better ways of being *unfree*—deeply implicated within

but attuned and "reconciled" to a violent past and present.

Danielle Allen might concur. For her, habits of citizenship that could better address

issues of loss and disappointment are held in check by the idea of "oneness"—an operative

metaphor for the democratic nation that obscures patterns of sacrifice and discrimination.

As Allen puts it, "the effort to make the people 'one' cultivates in the citizenry the desire for

homogeneity, for that is the aspiration taught to citizens by the meaning of the word

'one'."[120] Oneness conceals conflict both within the polity and the psyche (which, as Klein

would say, is *also* a multiplicity). For Klein, our identities are never fully integrated but are

beset by competing passions and clashing objects. However, subjects can at the same time

give themselves over to a work of mourning that mitigates hatred and aggression through

love and reparation. In a similar fashion, Allen's ideal polis is a conflictual multiplicity

governed not by metaphors of oneness or unity but by "wholeness," which instead of

concealing patterns of sacrifice and loss will cultivate a desire within the citizenry for the

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119 Minow, et al., Imagine Coexistence, 31.
120 Allen, Talking to Strangers, 17.

work of—in my words—reckoning, implicature, and understanding.[121] Allen finds that "the metaphor of wholeness can guide us into a conversation about how to develop habits of citizenship that can help a democracy bring trustful coherence out of division without erasing or suppressing difference."[122] I would only add that Kleinian psychoanalysis can take us further along the path towards this worthy goal.

But there is still a problem to be flagged here at the outset—namely that psychoanalysis may itself be characterized by therapeutic goals that embolden attempts to "restore" a broken social order or "redeem" a public trauma. After all, the concepts used within the restorative justice literature that undergird many Truth and Reconciliation projects are often lifted directly from the Freudian *oeuvre*.[123] The so-called "therapeutic ethic" guiding restorative justice efforts seems another way of reading Freud's talking cure and the task of psychoanalysis that "*wo es war, soll ich werden*." (where it (id) was, so I (ego) will be).[124] Certainly one can locate numerous passages in Freud that seem to herald a method of psychic unburdening that will release the subject from pathology—for instance Freud's description of the "free and uninhibited ego" in "Mourning and Melancholia." In a similar fashion, advocates of restorative justice in the wake of violent events speak of the trauma as "pathogenic secret" whose power over the agent (and the polity as a whole) can be dispelled as it is brought to public consciousness.[125] TRCs are seen as therapeutic tools whereby witnesses can "unburden" or purge themselves of traumatic memories, and the witnessing

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121 See Allen's discussion of the republic, or res publica, as "the something invisible we look and listen for." Ibid., 88. Note that "wholeness" may carry similar pathologies as "oneness," if employed in the service of those seeking full or strong reconciliation.

122 Allen, Ibid., 20.

123 Of course this language has pervasive reach - even Allen, as I've mentioned, discusses collective "neuroses."

124 Freud did not use the words "ego" or "id;" they are Latin words used by Strachey to translate the more mundane German terms used by Freud – "ich" (I), "es" (it) and "uber-ich" ("translated" as super-ego).

125 A. Allan and M.M. Allan, "The South African truth and reconciliation commission as a therapeutic tool," Behavioral Sciences and the Law Vol. 18, No. 4, (2000).

nation can simultaneously undergo a healing "catharsis" or abreaction.[126] To make these claims, those who pursue a therapeutic ethic draw a strong analogy between individual and collective psyche: nations, like individuals, are burdened by traumatic legacies that we must "get past." Yet "psychologizing the nation" in *this* way carries certain risks; like the metaphor of "oneness" it can be an ideology that subordinates resistance, conflict, and individual needs to ideals of national unity and reconciliation.[127] As Ignatieff warns, "it is problematic enough to vest an individual with a single identity; our inner lives are like battlegrounds over which uneasy truces reign; the identity of a nation is additionally fissured by region, ethnicity, class and education."[128]

If the pursuit of subjective unity and coherence is the psychoanalytic task, then we should not seek to apply the insights of psychoanalysis to collective problems, for doing so would only distort the particular historical legacies behind each traumatic event and slacken our attention to issues of suppression—over and against *repression*—power, and powerlessness. However, if there is a different way of thinking about the subject of psychoanalysis—both its objects of concern and its methods or procedures—then perhaps the analogy between psyche and polis can be redrawn such that it sheds light on political processes after all. This is the line of thought I am pursuing here. Reservations about the language of coherence and oneness are justified. Yet this language reveals not only unrealistic expectations about the collective body but about the individual psyche as well. In other words, the hegemonic analogy between psyche and polis can be distorting without nullifying the possibility of a better—more truthful—analogy that can assist in the

126 Allan and Allan, Ibid., 467
127 Hamber and Wilson, "Symbolic Closure through Memory, Reparation and Revenge in Post-Conflict Societies," 2.
128 Michael Ignatieff, "Articles of Faith," Index on Censorship Vol. 25, No. 5 (1996). Pg. 169.

democratic task of mourning collective traumas. Hence the value of Klein and her *mourning subject*. As I hope to show in the following chapters, psychoanalysis, and Klein in particular, can help us to craft mourning spaces and processes whereby we can confront and work through issues of loss and sacrifice—not as a means of overcoming conflict but of *making it conscious*: overcoming denial and defenses and turning conflict in a healthy, creative direction by making confrontations more public and honest. The therapeutic ethic, on the other hand, does not so much undo the power of denial as promote another kind of denial. It elides the fact that the TRC process is itself not "healing" or "reconciling" in the ways they anticipate. As Muktha Jost, Commissioner on the GTRC put it, "the experience of searching for truth around November 3rd has been a toxic one. To talk about race, class, police, capital and labor all at the same time is not just divisive, but *is a splintering and shattering activity* that can leave you standing on a lonesome precipice for a long time."[129] Mourning work is this "toxic" yet patient labor of "chipping away at a lie"—a lie that either convinces us of our innocence or consoles us with fables of frictionless belonging. For Klein—and, I would argue, for Allen—the work of mourning is the means by which we can overcome a vicious cycle of denial, suppression, distrust and aggression and, through a reflective process of identification, acquire a healthier and more open relation to trauma and loss in the psyche *and* in the polis.

Greensboro sets the scene, then, for what follows—as a moment of political trauma followed by a public and open process of reflection best understood in terms of a democratic work of mourning. In the chapters that follow, I explore a variety of sites, ideas,

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129 Quoted in Magarrell and Wesley, Learning form Greensboro, 241. Emphasis added.

and practices in the interests of better thinking through the possibilities of this work of mourning. In chapter two, I begin by tracing Melanie Klein's understanding of mourning (and the larger picture of inter-subjective life on which it is structured) as it peels away from the Freudian inheritance. In chapter three, I engage the work of Judith Butler, who offers the most impressive synthesis of psychoanalytic and social theory in current circulation. In chapter four, I turn to the political liberalism of John Rawls, and in chapter five I examine the tragic festivals of the ancient Athenian polis. These radically disparate sources of insight and reflection are stitched together by both a Kleinian analytic and the pressing political challenge of articulating and understanding practices of working through trauma and loss in the interests of a more democratic future. To this end, in the final chapter I return directly to the question of racial trauma, examining in detail Barack Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech as a possible object of democratic mourning.

Throughout the following chapters, this dissertation sets out to make three primary interventions or claims. The first is that living legacies of racial trauma in the United States can be productively approached under the aegis of "mourning." The second claim, influenced by the work of Klein, is that "mourning" is less a temporary state of affective sadness than an iterable (and, as such, endless) inter-subjective task of working through and integrating historical and enduring traumas into our individual and civic identities. The third intervention is into the heart of claims over and about "identity" itself, which I take to be less be a sedimented object with permanent features than as an ever-changing and inherently unstable entity-in-becoming.

In closing this chapter, however, let me flag a few more objections to the language of mourning as it applies to political theory and practice. Some might argue that mourning is primarily a private process of grieving involving only those directly affected by a loss. Even if there is an *analogy* to public efforts at accounting for violent events in a polity's past and enduring sacrifices in the present, this is a weak thread upon which to hang a political form of *Trauerarbeit*. These critics might concede that those affected by public traumas need space and time to mourn, but this could be seen simply as providing room for what Freud would call the mundane experiences of depression and withdrawal in the face of object loss. As Freud himself wrote, we should be reluctant to "interfere" with this process, and we count on it being "resolved after a certain period of time."[130] Why precisely, these critics might ask, does mourning take on a more interminable status, and why does the requirement of mourning redound to the public at large, especially if we reject—as I think we must—an unrealistic notion of a collective psyche wounded by traumatic losses?

These are important questions, and I have four responses to them. First, following Allen we can think of mourning as public efforts to acknowledge broader patterns of loss and sacrifice inherent to the life of collectivities, in an effort to make those sacrifices more "visible, voluntary, and honored."[131] In this way we can achieve a more trusting (healthy) polity—or at least mitigate disintegrative distrust. In this light, the language of mourning is valuable *because* of its resonances; it is something we must all do as mortal animals prone to passionate attachment. I want to argue—with Allen and others—that it is also something we need to do as democratic citizens. Second, just because we cannot accept the idea of a

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130 Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 217.
131 Allen, Talking to Strangers, 110.

collective psyche does not mean that there is no shared imaginary or horizon that is tied to and in many ways reflective of a common history. Public processes of mourning provide a more honest accounting of the mixed legacies that compose this shared horizon. Such mourning work faces obvious resistance from those who prefer a sanitized or innocent version of self and collective history. Yet such resistances, again, index the very need for such work, since whatever our past 'is,' it is not innocent. Third, as the work of Judith Butler will demonstrate, mourning is *by nature* a public and even a political process, which is inescapably saturated by inequalities of power and privilege. Some bodies are more "mournable" than others; some traumas register strongly at the level of public consciousness, while others remain fugitive or are neglected.[132] Knowing this we cannot restrict the work of mourning to private acts of grieving, nor see it as unrelated to hierarchies of power and powerlessness. Finally, mourning is not limited to our natural and limited responses to intimate object loss. For Klein, mourning is not only a method of identifying with the lost other, but is also partly about losing certain strategies for living in and understanding the world. Mourning involves giving up not only the object that has been lost, but also letting go of the defenses and fantasies that alleviate our anxiety over this very loss and that keep us from the "splintering and shattering" activity of reflecting on and living with trauma. The work of mourning, therefore, is partly a work of reconceptualization and/as a process of identity achievement—a means of mitigating cognitive dogmatism and instaurating a capacity for facing history and our selves in a healthier way.[133] In this respect,

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132 Here the work of Judith Butler is crucial. See Chapter three below.

133 Joan Cocks, "Collectivities and Cruelty: A Review." Political Theory Vol. 32, No. 3 (2004). pg. 425. J.L. Gibson, "The contributions of truth to reconciliation: Lessons from South Africa." Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol. 50, No. 3 (2006). pg. 414.

the work of mourning is not only a broader phenomenon than it first appears, but it is an essential part of democratic life today.

For one last image to illustrate these claims, let us return to the final scene of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. The eponymous hero has been exonerated of his deed—the murder of Clytaemnestra—and has exited the stage. Apollo has claimed victory over the Furies; the new gods (and new institutions) have triumphed over the old. Yet the play does not end here; in fact it does not end for almost three hundred lines. Despite the supposed resolution of the dispute, the Furies remain to be handled. They refuse to accept the verdict, and threaten to "let loose on the land the vindictive poison dripping deadly out of my heart" (lines 781-783). Athena—the matron god of Athens—is left to negotiate with these terrifying, "sad daughters of the night." At first Athena references the fairness of the procedure by which the case had been settled (795-797), and implores the Furies to "not be angry any longer with this land" (800). Yet this line of reasoning has little effect on the Furies, who respond with a line-by-line repetition of their first complaint, threatening again the "vindictive poison" of their rage. Athena then evokes the threat of force: "I have Zeus behind me. Do we need to speak of that? I am the only god who knows the keys to where his thunderbolts are locked" (825-828). If the Furies cannot be reasoned with, perhaps they can be frightened into submission. However, even the specter of Zeus' thunderbolts does not turn back the Furies' discontent; they continue to rail against Athena/Athens with "fury and utter hate" (840, 872).

At this point, Athena makes a crucial shift in her rhetoric. Instead of asking the Furies to "put away" their hatred and anger, she says, "I will bear your angers" (847). Instead of asking the Furies to give up their claims, Athena offers to incorporate or integrate

them into the structure of the polis: "do good, receive good, and be honored as the good are honored. Share our country…" (165). After offering the Furies the "baron's portion in this land," the dispute softens. The Furies' repetitious laments give way to dialogue: "Lady Athene, what is this place you say is mine?" (892). The Furies have been enfranchised, and in the process they transform into the *Eumenides* ("the kindly ones"). They are still terrifying, but, as Athena says shortly before exiting, "in the terror upon the faces of these I see great good for our citizens" (990-991).

I argue that we should read the final scenes of the *Oresteia* as a metaphor for the task facing democratic polities and citizens in the face of historical and enduring trauma. We cannot legislate or reason away the "mind of the past," nor eliminate it with force, nor simply acknowledge it. Instead we have to incorporate "the terror" into the very structure of our collective and individual identities. This is what I mean by the democratic work of mourning.

Chapter 2: "Again and Again:" From Freudian *Trauerarbeit* to Kleinian Mourning.

Not until the object is loved as a *whole* can its loss be felt as a whole.
  —Melanie Klein, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States"

I'm good at love, I'm good at hate
it's in between I freeze.
              —Leonard Cohen, "Recitation"

    The previous chapter was designed to illustrate the importance of mourning as an explicit practice of working through loss and sacrifice surrounding political traumas such as the events surveyed by the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In the process I argued that psychoanalytic theory—and particularly the work of Melanie Klein—could provide us with the means of interpreting and analyzing the assumptions of what public processes of mourning are and our expectations of what they might accomplish. Klein modified and altered the Freudian inheritance in profound and lasting ways, but her work has yet to establish a broad toehold in political and social theory.[1] Nevertheless, Klein's work is particularly valuable in correcting what I described in the previous chapter as the excesses of the "therapeutic ethic," which underlies many efforts at political reconciliation and trust building in the aftermath of violent events and within living traumatic legacies of adverse discrimination. In this chapter I aim to give this picture some depth and perspective.

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1 With some notable exceptions: Fred Alford, Melanie Klein and Critical Social Theory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Alford, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Greek Tragedy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), Alford, "Reparation and Civilization: A Kleinian Account of the Large Group," Free Associations 1, no. 19 (1990), Isaac Balbus, Mourning and Modernity (New York: Other Press, 2005), Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender (Berkeley: University of California, 1978), Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur: Sexual Arrangements and Human Malaise (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), Janice Doane and Devon Hodges, From Klein to Kristeva: Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Search for the 'Good Enough' Mother (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

I began the previous chapter by asking about the type of memory/mourning work necessary for life in contemporary democratic societies. At this point we can expand and refine that query into a series of pressing questions about Greensboro, race, and democratic *Trauerarbeit*: What exactly is the public nature of mourning? Should we understand institutions like the GTRC as an ill-conceived encroachment of private grief and grievance into public life, or as a powerful reminder of the inter-penetration and co-mingling of public and private realms? How can we reflect on violent legacies of trauma like the events of November 3rd, 1979 without subsuming the violence into a mythistorical narrative of progress *and* without forsaking the possibility of, in some way, "moving on"? Should we welcome all forms of mourning—for instance the felt loss of Klan members as well as that of black citizens threatened by the Klan? Is "closure" a proper telos for political *Trauerarbeit*, or does this goal only mislead us? In what capacity can these institutions be looked to in order to nurture a form of democratic identity that is committed to reflecting on the lingering traumas of the polity?

While the relevance of Klein for these questions was initially established in the preceding chapter, here I aim to provide a detailed reading of Klein's theories of mourning as they carry forward, inflect, and re-direct the Freudian conception of *Trauerarbeit*. As such, I will need to leave behind—temporarily—the directly political terrain of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, Greensboro, and aversive racism, and enter into the thickets of psychoanalytic theory. Just because I aim to appropriate Kleinian theory for questions outside its initial ken, I cannot ignore the context from which Klein's work originally emerged. It is only through a close reading of Klein's ideas on mourning—a reading which is itself dependent on a detailed exposition of the divergence and overlap between Klein and

Freud—that I can demonstrate not only the utility of Klein for political questions but the inescapable psychological components to social life that require more attention than they currently receive. Nevertheless, the dilemmas raised by the Greensboro experience are never far from the surface of this chapter's arguments, and the productive analogy between polis and *psyche* will periodically resurface in what follows.

In what follows, I interpret Freud's seminal reflections on mourning in light of the developments in his larger theories of the *psyche*. Specifically I connect Freud's work on narcissism and dreams to his explication of the psychic economy at work in mourning. Before turning to Klein, I show that the modifications to Freud's topographical theory of the mind carried implications for his understanding of mourning that he failed to fully develop. Freud was ultimately tripped up by his lingering belief in a fundamentally narcissistic subject that *creates* its loved objects through the incessant workings of insatiable libido. *Trauerarbeit* and *Durcharbeiten* (working-through) are procedures for weaning the libido from investments that have turned out badly. For Klein, however, human instincts are not fundamentally narcissistic but are *ab initio* related to external objects; the *psyche* is less a monad that draws objects into its orbit through the gravitational pull of libido than a multiplicity in which self and other persist in a fluid relationship to each other. Klein, although she inherits the language of drives from Freud, ultimately divests herself of this vocabulary in favor of "passions," which are essentially *relational* in nature—i.e. they appear not out of the subject *qua* narcissistic monad but unfold in a relational nexus. For these reasons, Klein's work is particularly valuable for thinking about politics because she focuses less on the supposed laws of the *psyche* as a separate (and asocial) entity and more on the psychological effects of our different ways of relating to each other, and the different ways

we navigate the gap between our internal and external world (i.e. the ways in which fantasies impede our understanding of the other). Klein's work has immanent social content, even if Klein herself did not extend her theories to the social realm outside of a few scattered passages. In detailing the ways in which Klein modifies the Freudian account of mourning, I aim to show her relevance for interpreting and evaluating socio-political attempts at engaging collective traumas and enduring legacies of racial violence. I do this by tracing the developments in Kleinian theory, but I also examine Klein's theories *in situ* by describing Klein's published analysis of a ten year-old child named Richard. In closing the chapter, I return to a very different analytic space—Greensboro and the GTRC—in order to show the value of Klein's work for public efforts at remembering a painful past and working through a difficult and contentious present. I then show how Klein can contribute to debates in political theory on the status of so-called "wounded" identity.

2.1 Freud: Mourning is a Bad Dream

I begin—as did Klein herself—with Freud. Freud's seminal manuscript on object loss, "Mourning and Melancholia," was composed in 1915 and published in 1917. In that piece Freud quickly sketches his understanding of the normal work of mourning (*Trauerarbeit*) and contrasts it with the pathologies inherent to melancholia. Mourning, for Freud, is the subject's natural reaction to loss. Someone or something to which the libido was attached has gone missing, and the lingering libidinal investments—charges of psychical

energy that Freud called "cathexes" (*Besetzungen*)—suddenly go unrequited.[2] Repeated reality testing establishes that the object no longer exists, and the ego thereby demands that all libidinal investments be withdrawn from the suddenly empty space of the other.[3] *Trauerarbeit*, then, is this process of "turning-away" from the lost object through a gradual renunciation of our psychic attachment. Freud thinks it unwise to interfere with this process, which—even though it involves a "grave departure from the normal attitude to life"—is a normal and natural condition that will resolve itself "after a certain lapse of time" (1917a, 243).

The work of mourning is primarily the work of the ego, which attempts to wean the libido from its objectal attachments. Yet libido is often intransigent; it "cling(s) to the object" by means of hallucinations that border on psychosis. Libido is inertial by nature; once it selects an object it holds that investment dearly. As Freud puts it elsewhere, the "core" of Eros is the unquenchable desire to "make one out of more than one."[4] Once this union is established, "there is no room left for any interest in the environment."[5] In this respect Freudian libido embodies Aristophanes' description of Eros in Plato's *Symposium*: it desires absolute union with the beloved and is constantly stung by the distance from its

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2 Freud thinks that the lost object can be either a person or "some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on." Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964). "Mourning and Melancholia" is hereafter-cited in-text as (1917a, x) See also the Freud, Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), pg. 418 for more on Freud's concept of Besetzungen.

3 In "Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety" Freud explains the painful nature of these empty spaces. In essence, when we encounter something in our life that invokes the departed other (a song, a favorite chair, pieces of clothing) we stir up libidinal energies that were accustomed to satisfaction at these places and in these moments—the song was a shared song, the clothing implied proximity, the ability to touch the other. Yet when the other is gone this energy collects and builds on itself without the possibility of release. Tears may provide a substitute satisfaction of compiled libido, but ultimately the ego has to locate another source of fulfillment—or risk sliding into pathology, i.e. melancholia. Freud, Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1959).

4 Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1961), pg. 65.

5 Ibid., 65.

"other half."[6]   As such the ego's work of detachment is "extraordinarily" painful (1917a, 244) because "people never willingly abandon a libidinal position" (1917a, 244). As these others depart, the ego seeks to "withdraw" from an external world that now seems profoundly "poor and empty" (1917a, 246). From this withdrawn position, *Trauerarbeit* involves a steady invocation of, and ultimately a release from, the "memories and expectations" bound up with the departed other—"carried out bit by bit, at great expense of time and cathetic energy" (1917a, 244). Ultimately, respect for the "verdict of reality" carries the day (1917a, 255), and the ego is "persuaded by the sum of narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object that has been abolished" (1917a, 255). When this process is completed the ego "becomes free and uninhibited"— ready to direct libidinal forces towards more responsive objects (1917a, 245).

There is a larger economy motivating Freud's picture of the subject-who-mourns. For Freud, the organism, above all, seeks constancy. Drawing from Newton's laws of motion and the conservation of energy, Freud sees human life as searching for the lowest possible level of stimulation. As he puts it, the organism would, "if it were feasible…maintain itself in an altogether unstimulated condition."[7] However, this search for constancy (or stable investment) is threatened by the essentially destabilizing pressures of Eros and the fragility of object attachments. The ego serves the organism by buffering it from the onslaught of rapacious libido and the risk of inconstant object-affection. In this regard the ego seems little more than a psychic accountant—managing the economic tasks

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6 "Each of us then is the mere broken tally of a man…and love is simply the name for the desire and pursuit of the whole." C. Gill, "Plato: The Symposium," (New York: Penguin Classics, 1999). As we'll see, for Klein desire cannot be fully detached from aversion: love without hate is a fantasy, and hate without love is a nightmare. Each without the other is a pathological compromise formation.

7 Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XIV. Translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964). 121.

"of mastering and disposing of the amounts of stimulus and sums of excitation that impinge on it from outside and inside."[8] Freud's description of the work of mourning clearly shows this psychic economy at work: the ego 'buys' objects with libidinal investment but is forced to 'sell'—painfully, reluctantly—when those investments turn sour.[9] The pleasure of libidinal satisfaction can only be maintained through wishful psychosis ('the other *may* reappear') or a redirection of investment. Inertial libido clashes with intransigent reality. Although Freud does not cite it, one is reminded of the disagreement between Haemon and Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*. Haemon—"libidinally invested" in the doomed Antigone— attempts to recoup his investment by persuading Creon to spare Antigone's life. Creon, however, is a pure embodiment of the reality principle. In his mind the death of Antigone is a *fait accompli*; he instructs Ismene and the Chorus (in the presence of the still-alive Antigone) not "to speak of her 'presence'; she lives no more" (line 567). When the leader of the Chorus invokes Antigone's engagement to Haemon, Creon replies "death…shall stay these bridals" (577). When Haemon pleads for her life, Creon reasserts the verdict: "thou canst never marry her, on this side of the grave" (750). Creon chastises Haemon's "enslavement" to his betrothed, coldly stating at one point that there are "other fields for him to plough" (569). A purely Freudian reading of this play might insist that its central theme is not the polis/oikos conflict[10] or the replacement of archaic codes of honor with norms of democratic citizenship[11] but the ability (or inability) to mourn the lost object. On this reading Ismene and Creon are not the unsympathetic sibling and the unjust tyrant,

8 Ibid., 121.

9 Besetzungen can mean an engagement of energy but also an allocation of funds. It is remarkable how frequently Freud employs the metaphors of economics. For instance in "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety" Freud describes the ego's situation in mourning as "the position of the speculator whose money has become tied up in his various enterprises," 7.

10 G.W.F Hegel, The Philosophy of Fine Art, tr. P.B. Osmaston. Reprinted in Hegel on Tragedy, ed. A. and H. Paolucci (New York: Doubleday, 1975).

11 Bonnie Honig, "Antigone's Laments, Creon's Grief: Mourning, Membership, and the Politics of Exception." Political Theory 37, no. 5 (2009).

respectively, but representatives of the beleaguered ego, who obeys the reality principle and respects "the instructor necessity."[12] On the other hand, Antigone and Haemon represent the inertial power of libido. By resisting the work of mourning, they only serve to destroy themselves. The healthy mourner will instead accede—albeit, again, slowly and painfully—to the dictates of reality. The subject grieves the lost object in order to release and turn away from it, as a wave retracts before it returns to shore. This is what Freud calls the process of "severance."

Severance is both a process of detachment *and* compensation. In withdrawing its libidinal investments in the lost object, the ego counters the pain of disengagement with a series of reminders about the joys of life (the "sum of narcissistic satisfactions" noted earlier). Moreover, the ego attempts to compensate the libido for its loss by itself becoming an object for libidinal satisfaction. By assuming the object's "features" the ego tries "to make good the…loss by saying: 'Look, you can love me too—I am so like the object.'"[13] In this respect, mourning represents a return to the earliest stage of human life, before *any* object had made an appearance—i.e. the state of primary narcissism. From its state of original narcissism, the infant only encounters others "as a result of his screaming for help…in this way there is for the first time set over against the ego an object, in the form of something which exists 'outside' and which is only forced to appear by a special action."[14] Objects, for Freud, do not have an independent existence, but are, in effect, called into being

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12 Freud, Introductory Lectures, 444.

13 Sigmund Freud, The Ego and the Id (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1960), 24.

14 Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, 14.

by the subject's instinctual needs. For the infant, one object is just as good as another one.[15]

The ego can imitate the object because the id did not care for the object as such, but only for

how that object gave a certain shape or satisfaction to its libidinal desires. For the subject-in-

mourning the economy of equivalent exchange is paramount. There are other fields for us

to plough.

To better understand this picture of the subject-who-mourns we need to turn to

other works written by Freud at this time.[16] During the time between the composition of

"Mourning and Melancholia" and its date of publication, Freud gave a series of lectures in

Vienna that represented the most complete summation of his work to that point. In these

lectures Freud practices a certain art of seduction. He first introduces his audience to

material drawn from everyday experience (slips, jokes, and dreams) before moving on to his

more controversial ideas about sexuality and repression. For our purposes, Freud's

description of dreaming is particularly relevant, not only because it reveals Freud's larger

assumptions about the struggle between libido and ego witnessed in the work of mourning,

but because it uses language and concepts that are strikingly similar to those employed in

Freud's depiction of *Trauerarbeit*—specifically the language of "withdrawal." Mourning on

this reading is akin to a bad dream, which like all such dreams ends "spontaneously" once

the body's biological and psychological needs have been served.[17]

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15 Sigmund Freud, "The Libido Theory and Narcissism," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), pg. 256.

16 This time period (1914-1918) was one of great theoretical progress for Freud. During this period Freud wrote not only "Mourning and Melancholia" but the influential manuscripts "On Narcissism," "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," "Repression," and "The Unconscious."   He also published several important shorter works and gave two series of lectures that were published as the "Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis." It is tempting, however, given the prominence of "withdrawal" as a metaphor in his work at this time, to make much of the fact that this was also a time of great deprivation for Freud. World War I deprived Freud not only of most of his patients but of the ability to conference with the growing psychoanalytic movement. See George Makari, Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), pgs. 299-314.

17 "Mourning, as we know, however painful it may be, comes to a spontaneous end. When it has renounced everything that has been lost…our libido is once more free…to replace the lost objects by fresh ones equally or still more precious." "On Transience," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Volume XIV. Translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), pg. 307.

In the Vienna lectures, Freud first aims to counter the assumption that dreaming is a rude interruption to the biological organism's need for sleep. Instead of seeing dreams as psychic disturbances, Freud argues that they are "guardians of sleep."[18] The role of dreams is to maintain—and not to upset—the body in its state of rest. As Freud puts it, "without the help of the dream we should not have slept at all…it could not avoid disturbing us a little, just as the night watchman often cannot help making a little noise as he chases away the disturbers of the peace who seek to waken us" (1917b, 158). Dreams fulfill biological and psychic needs, satisfying both the body's need for rest and the libido's need for wish fulfillment. In this state the ego—withdrawn from the world—finds itself "at one" with the libido's demands. The primal state of libidinal distribution is thereby restored—"total narcissism, in which libido and ego-interest, still united and indistinguishable, dwell in the self-sufficing ego" (1917b, 519). Dream-assisted sleep provides recuperation precisely because it is a state of isolation through which "all object cathexes…are given up and withdrawn into the ego" (1917b, 518). In a similar fashion *Trauerarbeit* provides a period of retreat from the world so that the ego can convince the libido to renounce its objectal attachments. After a "certain lapse of time" the libido relents, and the subject-in-mourning 'awakens'—refreshed.

One would hesitate to make too much of these parallels, except for the fact that Freud himself draws the homology between the body in pain (whether physical or mental) and the fatigued body in need of rest; for both, the natural response is a withdrawing of libidinal cathexes back onto the ego. The wounded or exhausted man can only love himself;

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18 Freud, Introductory Lectures, 158. Hereafter cited in-text as (1917b, x).

the "*sacro egoismo*" and libido subsist together temporarily in a state of "blissful isolation," and only when this phase has run its course can the recuperated subject send out libido to the external world (1917b, 518). Of course, there remain crucial differences between the state of dreaming and the work of mourning which would belie any effort at strong correlation.[19] The point of this exercise is to show the common image of the Freudian subject behind both dreams and mourning—one that is split between a fundamentally narcissistic ego and an all-too powerful libido, which, in effect, *creates its objects* through the vicissitudes of its needs. The ego struggles to tame the libido and enforce an economic logic of investment, loss, and recovery. Yet inertial libido is loathe to renounce its investments, and it can only be coaxed into doing so through its *original* object of love—the ego itself. As Freud understands it, object-love is merely a pale copy of self-love, which is primary. Narcissism, as he puts it, is "the universal and original state of things, from which object love is only later developed, without the narcissism necessarily disappearing on that account" (1917b, 517). The megalomania witnessed in both successful mourning and dreaming is not "a new creation" but "a magnification and plainer manifestation" of narcissism "which had already existed previously" and which "fundamentally persists" throughout life.[20] Moreover, self-love is the only kind of "happy love" (1914, 100); object-love is by nature precarious and uncertain, and hence it violates the essential principles of the organism's search for constancy. The love of others involves a "giving up" or sacrifice of our own personality, with a consequent lowering of self-regard (1914, 78 & 99). Ultimately, for Freud, love for others is little more than a suicidal tendency (1917a, 252).

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19 For instance the role of the reality principle, which, as I have demonstrated, is crucial in mourning but nowhere to be found in dreaming.

20 Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XIV. Translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964). Hereafter cited in-text as (1914, x)

If this is true, however, then what explains the commonplace nature of object-love, something that Freud does not seek to deny? For Freud, the banal love of others results not from a *sacrifice* of the "*sacro egoismo*" but a *spillover* of narcissistic libido. In essence, the ego can only contain a portion of the energy emanating from the insatiable libidinal instincts. If this excess libido goes unsatisfied, then the organism's constancy will be upset, and displeasure will ensue. Hence, the ego "is obliged to send out its libido" to outside objects, "so as not to fall sick as a result of its (libido) being damned up" (1917b, 523). It is only because we desire *too much* that we need others at all. Freud crystallizes the situation into a punchy maxim: "we must begin to love in order not to fall ill." (1914, 85).

At this point we could say that the choice for the subject-who-mourns is one between *fixation* and *forgetting*, between an unhealthy form of dependency and an efficient practice of replacement.[21] Healthy object-love, resulting from an overflow of narcissistic libido, should be an investment in objects that will reciprocate this affection, but ideally this reciprocation will return interest or pay a dividend. The value of reciprocated affection will diminish if we invest too heavily in any particular object (if we 'put in' more than we 'take out'). With any choice of an object to love we risk an over-exposure (a concentration of resources) that will breed dependency and, ultimately, disappointment. We can see this clearly in Freud's description of the pathological face of mourning, i.e. melancholia. In melancholia the ego has—instead of severing itself from the lost object—*incorporated* the object, which in turn becomes a pathogenic presence. The work of mourning is thereby forestalled, and "the shadow of the object [falls] upon the ego" (1917a, 249). The ego—

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21 This distinction maps neatly onto the one from the previous chapter between "memorialization" and "forgetting," especially since memorialization is there interpreted as a loyalty or fixation to the departed.

altered by the object—is unable to carry forward its critical activity since it cannot simultaneously mediate the demands of both the incorporated object and the outside world that, through reality testing, proves the absence of the other. Because of this, the melancholic ego comes to forsake the world for the sake of the object. This desire to maintain one's investments, to keep alive the lost other, is an indication of an over-weaning dependence on one's object-loves. However, the cruel irony of melancholic attachment is that affection for the other has not, by this process, been sustained but *precluded*. "The object itself is given up" and the "refuge" of narcissistic identification serves to replace affection with abhorrence (1917a, 251). As Freud puts it, "hate comes into operation on this substitutive object [i.e. the altered ego], abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering" (1917a, 251). Because the object and the ego have been conjoined, this hatred operates as both blame and guilt—as projected disgust of the other and internal self-loathing.[22] These self-reproaches (mixed with feelings of triumph and guilt) show that "object loss was transformed into ego loss" (1917a, 249). The melancholic complex behaves as an "open wound, drawing to itself cathetic energies…and emptying the ego until it is totally impoverished" (1917a, 253). For all these reasons, melancholia is closely connected with its emotional opposite—mania. In mania, the intense expenditure of psychical energy required by the "open wound" is suddenly discharged. Freud implies that the melancholic subject can liberate himself from the incorporated object (thereby ending the vicious cycle of self-hatred and *ressentiment*) only through this sudden and violent re-direction of libidinal energy. The heretofore-melancholic patient now seeks "like a

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22 In Freud's later work, melancholic identification serves as the basis for the sadistic superego. See below.

ravenously hungry man for new object cathexis" (1917, 255). *Trauerarbeit*, on the other hand, as we have seen, is a slow work of severance—a process of rescinding our engagement to the lost object and preparing the ground for future attachments and loves. Mourning is the quiet, painful compliance to reality; melancholia, on the other hand, is violent—even revolutionary.[23]

Once again, Freud charts two starkly different paths leading from experiences of object loss—an art of forgetting that retreats to the subject's original state of narcissistic self-sufficiency, or a fixation on the object that impoverishes the ego and turns the once-loved other into a hated and spiteful internal critic. Down the first path lies health; down the other, pathology. Mourning, in this regard, reveals the negative side of the psychic economy of object-love. Just as we must love others to avoid falling ill from pent-up libido, so too must we withdraw our affections from the empty space of the lost object lest this excess free energy turn us towards neurosis. We are psychically programmed to forget the loves that disappoint us, and if this natural style of mourning is perverted the result will be a disastrous fixation. Object dependency upsets the ego's ability to maintain an equilibrium of stimulation and satisfaction: "we are never so defenseless against suffering as when we love, never so helplessly unhappy as when we have lost our loved object or its love."[24] Shallow affections represent a more diversified libidinal portfolio; one that can weather the inevitable disappointments that flesh is heir to. Successful adult mourning is simply a replaying of the

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23 For some, this is precisely the hopeful side of melancholia. See Chapter three.
24 Civilization and its Discontents, 32.

child's game of *fort/da*: we master the pain of disappearance by calling other objects into the room.[25]

It will seem odd, however, to say that the Freudian subject faces a choice between fixation and *forgetting*. After all, Freud sees the task of analysis as the unearthing of forgotten memories and the translating of repressed material that unconsciously shapes our lives. As he puts it, its task is to "make conscious everything that is pathogenically unconscious…to fill up all the gaps in the patient's memory, to remove his amnesias" (1917b, 350). The therapeutic situation and technique are designed to provide access to the timeless, contradiction-rich realm of the unconscious, in order to show how our present actions, thoughts, and anxieties are inflected by repressed material.[26] Freud, in fact, describes analytic work *in terms of "remembering"* (*Erinnern*), a process intimately tied both to *Trauerarbeit* and its cousin, *Durcharbeiten* (working-through). This work of remembrance is not, however, an effortless retracing of past experiences in the present; it is menaced at every turn by psychic defenses and resistances. The material to be remembered is always accessible (the unconscious forgets nothing), but this access is blocked by the intense displeasure surrounding our early experiences and subsequent object losses. Working-through names the process of overcoming neurotic resistances that keep traumatic events from active consciousness. As Freud puts it, "the patient brings out of the armory of the past the weapons with which he defends himself against the progress of the treatment—weapons

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25 Freud first describes the fort/da game in Beyond the Pleasure Principle. Freud had witnessed an interesting aspect of his grandson's play. Specifically the child seemed to experience immense pleasure by tossing his toys away from his body, while saying 'o-o-o-o.' When he began to play with a toy that was attached to a piece of string, he would throw the object and then pull it back (in order to throw it again), this time uttering "da." Freud thought the child was forming the words "fort" (there) and "da" (here), and that the game was a way of mastering the anxiety the child felt whenever his mother would leave the room.

26 Sigmund Freud, "The Unconscious," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XIV. Translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964). Pg. 187.

which we must wrest from him one by one."[27] Once these resistances are effectively countered, the pathogenic object can be made conscious: *wo es war, soll ich werden.* Remembering the traumas of our history through patient analytic work is the means by which we can "recover both what is essential from the past and what is essentially past."[28]

We engage the traumatic kernel by denying it an absolute singularity; we work it over "associatively and by producing contrasting ideas."[29] By gathering resonances we constellate a meaning around the "pathogenic nucleus." As Sedler puts it, "remembering makes it possible both to *own* those thoughts and feelings engendered in the past…and to *distance* them from the present situation."[30] One can look at this process by analogy through the lens of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*—a perpetual favorite of Freud's. In the same way that Oedipus' repressed trauma comes to light slowly, by the collecting of associations (his scarred ankles) and associates (the Theban shepherd), so too do we re-member and re-produce our traumas, symbolize them, and secure a distance from them through the expressive labor of self-reflection. Freud himself drew this parallel in his Vienna lectures: "the Athenian dramatist exhibits the way in which the long-past deed of Oedipus is gradually brought to light by an investigation ingeniously protracted and fanned into life by ever fresh relays of evidence. To this extent it has a certain resemblance to the progress of a psycho-analysis" (1917b, 410). In the structured space of the analysis, the patient can—like Oedipus—re-member and re-connect unconscious traumas to the conscious mind.

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27 Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-through" The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XII. Translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964). See also Mark J. Sedler, "Freud's Concept of Working Through," The Psychoanalytic Quarterly 52, no. 1 (1983).

28 Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-through," 152.

29 Freud, "Remembering…"

30 Sedler, "Freud's Concept of Working Through.", 95.

However, the character of this remembrance matters a great deal. Here, "remembering" is not the opposite of forgetting but its necessary propaedeutic. Repressed material is not exactly forgotten; it is *an all too present* force in our lives—poisoning our relationships with others by causing us to unconsciously repeat pathological behavioral patterns. Or, as James Baldwin puts it, "what one does not remember is the serpent in the garden of one's dreams."[31] Analysis seeks to undo the resistances surrounding repressed traumas and to make them conscious, but it does this so we might then drain this "serpent" of its mystery and its power. Perhaps *wo es war, soll ich werden* could be (loosely) translated as, "remember to learn to forget."

Pathology, again, results from pent-up energy that cannot be discharged. Only the recovery of the repressed material will make such abreaction possible.[32] Freud's early work with Breuer was focused on the idea that all neurotic behavior had a simple (or single) traumatic cause. Once the repressed event was unearthed, the patient experienced a healthy purgation or catharsis, and returned to normalcy.[33] Freud ultimately broke from this rather crude formulation, but the metaphors of unburdening or "releasing" the patient from a pathogenic trauma or event persisted well into the middle period of his work—a period that included the composition of "Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through" and "Mourning and Melancholia." In this stage of his thinking, Freud held that pathogenic conflicts stemmed not from perverted nervous functioning caused by repressed experiences, but from the contentious interactions and negotiations between libido, ego, and the external

31 James Baldwin, The Evidence of Things Not Seen. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1985).

32 See J. Greenberg and S. Mitchell, Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). Pg. 26.

33 See Maria Talero, "Temporality and the Therapeutic Subject: The Phenomenology of Transference, Remembering, and Working-Through," In J. Mills, Re-Reading Freud: Psychoanalysis through Philosophy (New York: SUNY Press, 2004).

world. However, this does not mean that Freud abandoned the presuppositions of trauma

theory; it is more accurate to say that he supplemented this theory with the so-called

'topographical' model of the mind, which posited not simply unconscious material but an

unconscious *system*—another psychic world unto itself. Freud's analysis of patients who

resisted the "talking cure" convinced him that there was a more complicated process of

pathology at work in the human mind. Even if the neurosis began with a traumatic event,

the subsequent development of the psychic material only served to obscure the pathological

point of origin under new layers of perverted mental functioning. We can think of this by

drawing an analogy to physical injuries. When the body suffers a physical trauma, the injury

often extends past the site of impact. The surrounding areas are also indirectly affected, and

as the wound recovers the "healthy" parts of the body begin to over-compensate for the

nearby weaknesses. In the process, the body often suffers additional injury: the original

trauma draws fresh ones into its orbit. When the injury is psychological, a similar process

takes place. The wound, in essence, multiplies upon itself. As the analyst sets off in search

of the source of pain—Freud often likened himself to an explorer or adventurer "in a

foreign land"[34]—his efforts reveal a seemingly infinite sequence of repressed memories and

material.

 At this point, the analogy between *psyche* and polis can resurface. This recoiling

sequence or spiral of trauma is not, we might say, just a *psychic* fact. For instance, if we

reflect on the circumstances surrounding the traumatic "event" of November 3rd, 1979 in

Greensboro, we will soon realize that it is composed of countless smaller events running

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34 Makari, *Revolution in Mind*, 47.

back centuries.[35] The authors of the GTRC Final Report felt compelled for these reasons to analyze not only the precipitating events of the November 3rd shootout but the recent history of both race and labor relations in Greensboro and the surrounding communities, in order to fill in the deeper background of the events. But the selected starting points are arbitrary more than they are absolute: the "biography" of November 3, 1979 is tied to countless other stories. For both subjective and political traumas, there is no reaching bottom.

Given this discovery of infinite traumatic regress, Freud's understanding of psychoanalysis shifted from a simple talking cure to a more layered practice of relationality that would help the patient undo resistances and avoid pathological repetition. As Sedler notes, psychoanalysis came to resemble the second labor of Herakles, in which the hero was required to slay the nine-headed Learnean Hydra. This could only be accomplished by severing the central, "deathless" head, but in order to do this Herakles first had to subdue the other heads. If one of the subsidiary heads were severed, two would grow back into its place. In like fashion, Freudian analysis, by partly abandoning the suppositions of trauma theory, now confronts a psychic agency that bears multiple sites of injury and a myriad of defenses. Despite such obstacles, Freud—who did not shy away from heroic self-appraisals—nevertheless thought that the labors of *Durcharbeiten* and *Trauerarbeit* would bear fruit. If practiced with patience and assisted by a trained guide, psychoanalysis could release the patient from his or her "enslavement" to both the compulsion to repeat and the tendency towards precarious and risky object attachments. Mourning can still affect a

35 Official Truth Commissions' investigations are often restricted to a certain time period, but "unofficial" Truth Commissions must negotiate these stopping/starting points in the absence of official edicts.

separation from the lost objects in the interests of new loves. The circulation of libido can

be restored, even if it is menaced by a recoiling sequence of obstacles and snares.

There is one last thing to mention here in the context of "Mourning and

Melancholia"—namely, the notable absence in Freud's description of mourning of the

densely layered practices and laws about grief found within every cultural community, and

how these codes might impede or support the process he is describing. Within Freud's own

(rejected) cultural tradition, the laws surrounding the Jewish practice of Shiva could have

provided him with interesting material for analysis. Certainly Freud was not insensitive to

the psychic role played by community ritual, but with regards to mourning there is nothing.[36]

How should we interpret this lack? One could argue that it is part of Freud's overall secular

(and secularizing) mission—another piece of his contempt for the "infantile" nature of

religious dependency.[37] This is undoubtedly correct. In addition, however, I would argue

that Freud's neglect of the communal qualities of mourning betrays both his efforts to

"universalize" *and* to "individualize" the process. In other words he is simultaneously

seeking to make the process intelligible to everyone regardless of his or her particular cultural

inheritance, and to detach the individual's grief from cultural attempts at subsumption—the

incorporation of the individual's death into a larger code of civic meaning.   Freud abhorred

both the consolations of religion and the particularism of culture, and he offered neither a

sermon nor a funeral oration.[38] The result of this double move, however, is that Freud de-

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36 Not even a footnote.

37 See, generally, Freud, The Future of an Illusion (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1961), and Civilization and its Discontents. One could also argue, as many have, that psychoanalysis is actually a substitute religion, with its own rites and rituals. Hence Freud would feel no need to describe existing laws/practices of mourning, which would now be obsolete with the dawning of his science of the mind.

38 See Freud on consolation in "Civilization and Its Discontents," hereafter cited in-text as (1930, x). See also his letter to wife where he tells her "the form in which the old Jews were happy no longer affords us any shelter." Quoted in Frank Heynick, Jews and Medicine: An Epic Saga. (Jersey City: Ktav Publishing House, 2002).

communalized grief only to privatize it—turning it from a collective task to a private struggle *within* a heroic psyche that is withdrawn from the "outside" world.

At this point we can provide a general accounting of the value of Freud's work for the questions that began this chapter. In short, what does Freud's description of mourning say about the situation in Greensboro, and the possibility of articulating a social-psychological work of mourning that can help us to both honor the sacrifices inherent to democratic politics and better address the traumatic living legacy of racial violence and discrimination? At first glance, Freud does not appear to be of much assistance. In fact, it could be said that Freud *reinforces* the resistances to a public form of *Trauerarbeit* I noted in the previous chapter—the very resistances that originally inspired my turn to psychoanalysis. In particular, Freud seems to testify to both the "unappetizing" nature of this work—its being, for instance "extraordinarily painful"—and also the untoward or unhealthy habits of dwelling needlessly with the experience of loss. Freud sees mourning as a private struggle between rapacious libido and calculating ego, and he looks upon engagement with the subject-at-mourning as unjust "interference" in a natural process that will end "spontaneously" of its own accord. The work of mourning is not, for Freud, an inter-subjective labor of reflection on socio-political loss and sacrifice, but a purely subjective process of object-renunciation. Healthy subjects get past their losses and traumas in due time, and any lingering indication of grief only represents a pathological condition. Because love for others is, at root, a love of the self, we put away those selves that no longer reflect our desires back to us.[39] Freud's narcissistic subject-who-mourns accepts the verdict of

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39 Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, 66.

reality, puts to rest his former attachments to the lost love, and calls an equivalent object into the room. *Fort/da.* If we were to seek in Freud's understanding of psychoanalysis an analogy towards socio-political practices of responding to loss and sacrifice, we would be compelled to propose little more than resignation and quietism.

Thankfully, the Freudian story does not end here, with this version of Freud, and the psychoanalytic story does not end with any of the many Sigmund Freuds. In the previous chapter, I noted that Klein modified Freud's seminal account of mourning in four important ways—with her picture of the mourning subject (in distinction to the subject-who-mourns), the social nature of mourning, its early and continual relevance for human subjectivity and sociality, and its potential as both a source of creativity and positive inter-subjective relationality. Yet for all the ways in which Klein diverged from Freudian theory, the ultimate relationship between their works—especially with regards to mourning—is a complex one. This complexity is intensified by the essential mobility of Freud as an author, since he shifted his views repeatedly. As such, Freud's individual manuscripts cannot be understood in isolation from the seismic shifts in the overarching topography of his theory. As Freud evolved his thinking from the traumatic theory to the topographical model of the mind, and from the latter to the structural model of the psyche, he not only complicated the goals of analysis but also hinted at a possible reconfiguration of the work of mourning. He began to theorize a form of identification that was neither idealization nor incorporation. In other words, he started to indicate a third possible response to object loss and trauma *beyond* fixation and forgetting. If only to do justice to Freud, then, I will briefly describe these changes, before demonstrating how Freud was still held back by a suspicion (if not an

outright hatred) of object-dependency that continued to prejudice his conception of the subject-who-mourns.[40]

Freud's topographical model of the mind, with its focus on interminable conflict between the libido and the ego, dissolved in the wake of World War I. It was at this point that Freud conceded another source of psychic discomfort and social alienation—namely, the so-called death drive (*Todestreib*). For Freud, the death drive represented an instinctual wish for disintegration, or for a return to the organism's original state of undifferentiated matter. The death drive is originally directed at the ego—the accountant who keeps the organism alive by modifying its demands for libidinal satisfaction. However, soon "a portion of the instinct is diverted towards the external world and comes to light as an instinct of aggressiveness and destructiveness" (1930, 78). The death drive is consistently frustrated by Eros—its "equally immortal adversary"—and in response it turns into an aggressive force against both the self and the external world. Within Freud's new understanding of the *psyche*, Eros and the *Todestrieb* share "world-dominion…[and] it is this battle of the giants that our nursemaids try to appease with their lullaby about heaven" (1930, 82). The presence of the death drive further complicates the task of analysis, since now it is not simply the presence of repressed material, or a tensional struggle between libido and ego, that causes psychic conflict and neurosis. Now the subject has a *conflictual nature*; it is split upon itself.

Freud's structural model of the mind not only introduces Eros' unruly obverse, but, in addition, it begins to "populate" the subject's psychic map. Freud begins to lay new

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40 The phrase "doing justice to Freud" is indebted to Jacque Derrida's essay by the same title. In that essay Derrida artfully traces the competing images of Freud in contemporary philosophy and social theory, and shows how these different pictures emerge, in part, from Michel Foucault's schizophrenic reading of Freud. Jacques Derrida, "'To Do Justice to Freud': The History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis," translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Critical Inquiry, Vol. 20 (Winter 1994).

emphasis on the psychic derivatives of object-relations. In the process he moves slowly and

haltingly away from the theory of narcissism and towards an understanding of object-

attachment that is predicated on neither idealization nor incorporation. With this later work

Freud altered his view of the ego, identification, and detachment while revisiting the themes

of mourning and melancholia.[41] The heretofore-unquestioned narcissistic, "free and

uninhibited," ego is cast into serious doubt. As noted above, in "Mourning and

Melancholia," the dividing line between normality and pathology rested on the difference

between replacement of, or identification with, the lost object. Now Freud admits that

"we…did not know how common and typical" identification—the setting up of the object

inside the ego—really was (1923, 23). Identification, far from a pathway to pathology, now

has a great share "in determining the form taken by the ego…[and] building up what is called

character" (1923, 23). "Introjection" of the lost object is perhaps the "sole condition under

which the id can give up its objects" (1923, 24).[42] In other words, Freud has recognized the

multiple roles that loved and lost others can play in the subject's internal world. The ego is

not the accountant-*cum*-tyrant but a mediator between an independently existing outside

world and a crowded and contentious inner world. As such, the ego, according to Freud, is

both powerful *and* powerless; he compares it with a "constitutional monarch…without

whose sanction no law can be passed but who hesitates long before imposing his veto on

any measure put forward by Parliament" (1923, 57). The ego is a "frontier creature" beset

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41 See, in particular, The Ego and the Id and "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego." The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XVII. Translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964)

42 "Introjection" is not used in "Mourning/Melancholia". See the editor's introduction in Standard Edition, Vol. XIV, page 241. Freud does not, unfortunately, develop a clear distinction between the different methods of object identification, oscillating between descriptions of introjection, incorporation, internalization, and identification. However, there are hints in "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" that Freud was dissatisfied with his conceptual taxonomy (or lack thereof). In that work, before breaking off his analysis of identification he asks himself plaintively "Can there be no identification while the object is retained?" Freud leaves this essential question open (his primary attempt to close the question resulted in his description of the super-ego, to which we will return in Chapter three). For the answer we will need the work of Klein, Torok, Abraham and others. See below.

by competing desires and the claims of "three masters:" the external world, the id, and the subject's internalized others (including the super-ego and the ego-ideal) (1923, 58). Straddling these porous borders, the ego is seen less as a place of sovereign closure than an unstable place of reflection. Introjection implies that the ego can identify with lost objects of affection without being overwhelmed by these specters. Instead of being overturned by loss, the ego now *comes into being* through loss. This presents us, again, with the possibility of a third way between forgetting and fixation.

With *this* Freud in mind, let us return briefly to Greensboro, and to the possibility of democratic *Trauerarbeit*. There are three significant changes inherent to Freud's structural model that can help us to address the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter. First, neurosis is no longer considered to be caused by a single traumatic event. Instead of a pathogenic secret plaguing the otherwise healthy subject, Freud now identifies a pathogenic structure underlying human subjectivity. With regards to Greensboro, Freud might help us to recognize the truth that the events of November 3, 1979 are both seismic occurrences in the life of the community *and symptoms* of a more comprehensive set of interlocking conflicts including race and labor relations, and cultural norms surrounding acceptable speech and action (not to mention the deeper psychological structures of antipathy and aversion underlying *these* social phenomena). In other words—holding the analogy between psyche and polis tightly for a moment—the task of mourning is not to unearth (and then forget or move past) a repressed trauma, but to reflect on the contentious struggle between self and other amidst a living historical and cultural legacy that inflects these relationships in a myriad of ways. Second, and following from this, the task of analysis is no longer to undo repression and to "free" the beleaguered ego, but to *make visible* the conflictual nature of

psychic and social life. Instead of a catharsis of pathogenic material, the role of the analyst is

to help clarify the sources of tension within the subject and its world.[43] In terms of

Greensboro, this implies interpreting and presenting past events in a non-progressivist light,

in order not only to deepen collective understanding of the event but also to analyze the

subjective fears and fantasies circulating around the trauma. Mourning involves the re-

membrance or re-integration of the split-off or repressed traumas, not a "monumentalizing"

or "memorializing" of them (which Freud understood as a *substitute* for working through).[44]

Finally, mourning is no longer governed by an efficient economy of renunciation and

replacement; it is no longer a subjective version of creative destruction. Freud's initial

description of a subject-who-mourns withdrawing to an original state of ego-narcissism in

order to recuperate from its losses, only then to create new objects out of its excessive

libidinal desires, is now too crude of an image. Instead mourning is conceptualized as a

reflective coming-to-terms with loss that involves *cohabitation with*, more than replacement of,

our lost objects of attachment. Since it is precisely the ego's identifications with (or

'introjections' of) these objects that allows the process of de-cathexis and *Trauerarbeit* to

proceed, the healthy work of mourning and the pathological compromise of melancholia are

less diametrically opposed than they first appeared.[45] We must already have an internal

world populated by lost others *before* and *in order to* mourn. Freud never fully engages the

circularity of this claim, but by making these moves, he opened a door to a non-melancholic

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43 As I will argue in Chapter five, "catharsis" should be read as the work of clarifying conflict and demanding an emotional/intellectual response to dilemma, and of bringing split-off or repressed forces into the public realm for deliberation and debate—not as a means of purging of "leaving behind" the past.
44 Jonathan Lear, Freud (New York: Routledge, 2005), pg. 65.
45 Emily Zakin, "The 'Alchemy of Identification': Narcissism, Melancholia, Femininity," In Mills, Re-Reading Freud, pg. 85

form of identification with the lost object that would allow for an enrichment of the ego rather than its impoverishment.

> "It is now easy to define the difference between identification and…extreme developments of being in love as may be described as "assassination" or "bondage". In the former case the ego has enriched itself with the properties of the object; it has introjected the object into itself…in the second case [the ego] is impoverished; it has surrendered itself to the object, it has substituted the object for its most important constituent."[46]

Despite the ease with which Freud makes this definition, he never fully develops a conceptual taxonomy that would distinguish between introjection, identification, and incorporation—or between what he calls identification as "enrichment" and identification as "enslavement". The door to a non-melancholic form of object attachment has been opened, but despite the seismic shifts in his understanding of object attachment, Freud never accepted the full implications of this opening nor revised the account of mourning he gave in 1917.[47] It seems that ultimately Freud could not overcome his suspicion and hatred of object-dependency.[48] Objects are always "objects-for" (for the subject's aggression, for the subject's libidinal investments, etc). The possibility of an enriched ego co-existing with its dead (but still lively) others through a non-narcissistic form of attachment is a fleeting specter in Freud's text. No sooner does Freud admit the possibility than does he change the

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46 Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego," 57.

47 It is important to emphasize the fact that Freud gave no indication that his account of melancholic identification (or incorporation) at the root of the ego overturns in any way his earlier picture of mourning as "object decathexis" vis-à-vis reality testing. In fact, in "Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety," composed two years after "The Ego and Id," Freud restated his earlier understanding of mourning: "mourning occurs under the influence of reality-testing; for the latter function demands categorically from the bereaved person that he should separate himself from the object, since it no longer exists. Mourning is entrusted with the task of carrying out this retreat from the object…" (109). This is crucial because Judith Butler (among others) has flattened the distinction between mourning and melancholia, and seen this move as precisely what Freud was doing in "The Ego and the Id." A more thorough treatment of Freud's late work, however, shows that he did still see a difference between mourning and melancholia. See Chapter three, below, for a fuller examination of Butler's uses and abuses of Freud.

48 One wants to make much of Freud's admission, in the Introductory Lectures, that "I follow the rule of not taking on a patient for treatment unless he was sui juris, not dependent on any one else in the essential relations of his life." Perhaps a wishful projection of Freud's own idealized sui juris status?

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subject.[49] However, the door towards the object—and towards a practice of mourning as reflective integration of our painful histories of trauma and loss—that Freud opens in the late period of his work is the one through which Melanie Klein and subsequent object relations theorists will enter, and it is to this work that I now turn.

2.2 Klein: Mourning as a Psycho-Social Accomplishment

Melanie Klein saw herself as faithfully carrying forward the work of Freud, but, due specifically to her analysis of small children (something in which Freud showed little interest), she ultimately reconfigured Freudian psychoanalysis in important and lasting ways. Particularly relevant for this project is Klein's re-writing of Freudian drive theory into a theory of human passions that are essentially *object-oriented and -derived* rather than narcissistic. Freud's *Trieben* are the irreducible quanta of energy in the human psyche; their incessant push to satisfaction is what keeps humans perpetually unsatisfied, and in particular their presence explains our alienation (or discontentedness) within civilization. As shown above, however, Freudian *Eros* is at base narcissistic; the psyche sees its internal and external objects as means for, or barriers to, its satisfaction. Hence Freud's "economic" mourning cycle. *Trauerarbeit* is a "turning-away" from the lost object and a gradual renunciation of our emotional and visceral attachment. When this process is completed, the ego becomes "free and uninhibited"—ready to direct libidinal forces from the id towards more responsive

49 Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego," 53-57.

objects.[50] Despite the seismic shifts in Freud's overarching psychic topography, which opened a door both to object identification beyond fixation and to mourning beyond forgetting, Freud never offered a theory of object relations that went beyond abject dependency—and Freud hated dependency. Yet, for Klein, object relations are at the center of human life. Where Freud thinks of drives as biological forces that essentially *create* objects for the subject, for Klein "there is no instinctual urge…which does not involve objects."[51] Human instincts (Klein's "passions") are "*ab initio* indivisibly linked with object-relations."[52]

Klein begins her revision of Freud by taking seriously the latter's introduction of the death drive alongside Eros. In Klein's analysis of young children—beginning with her own—she noticed an incessant oscillation between states of tenderness, aggression, and terror. She drew from these experiences in order to develop a theory of early mental functioning that—when its full implications were spelled out in the course of her career— fundamentally altered the Freudian picture of internal life. Klein's expansion of the analytic setting, and her use of play as a means of soliciting feedback from her young patients, gave her insight into the place of aggression and internal fear not only in the mind of the infant but throughout the course of human life. These insights then shaped her own theories on mourning and object loss. For Klein—in opposition to Freud—mourning has a non-economic or non-reconciliatory—and decidedly social—character.[53] Like Freud, she hypothesized that all adult mourning is a replaying and re-working of an original object-loss that occurs in infancy. But instead of seeing a reiteration of the *fort/da* game—as a means of

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50 Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 214.

51 Melanie Klein, "The Origins of Transference," Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963 (New York: Free Press, 2002), 53.

52 Ibid., 53.

53 Compare Freud: "We rely on (mourning) being overcome after a certain lapse of time, and we look upon any interference with it as useless or even harmful" ("Mourning and Melancholia," 244). Klein's work shows how the social world is always/already "interfering" with the mourning processes - shaping them in various directions, or making them impossible.

mastering the art of making objects disappear and reappear—Klein came to see early

mourning as the work of *establishing* secure internal objects, which in turn help us to

overcome the pain of grief. Mourning is not an heroic game of self-mastery but a sign of

utter dependency. The early objects that first create in us a sense of loss are also those

that—once internalized—help us to work through it. Later in life we are just as dependent

on supportive objects and contexts for the working through of our grief, and these contexts

are public as much as they are private. In fact, according to object relations theory, there is

no final line between private grief and public life. Rather, the world of attachments is

"concentric, extending from the infant's first cry to the broadest achievements and failures

of civilization."[54] Loss, sacrifice, and the ability to mourn are not unrelated to hierarchies of

power and powerlessness, which means we need to attend as much to the context of grief as

we do to its internal logic—since these are ultimately inseparable. Moreover, mourning

work is not "finished" when the object has been introjected into the *psyche,* since both the

internalized objects *and the means of internalization* are inherently unstable. Mourning is

something we are called to do "again and again" throughout life. In fact, it is clear that, on

Klein's understanding, the work of mourning extends to become the most important, if

perpetually elusive, task of subjective and political life—i.e. the work of "ego integration."

Ego integration implies a greater synthesis between internal and external worlds, and a better

understanding of the interpenetration of psychic and social realities. The integrated ego is an

enriched ego, capable of holding together the contradictory and conflictual elements of

psychic and social life and seeking to mitigate hate, envy, resentment, and greed (their own

54 Gal Gerson, "Object Relations Psychoanalysis as Political Theory," Political Psychology. Vol. 25, No. 5 (2004)

and others') with reparative love.[55] For Klein, the work of mourning requires and calls for a

receptive culture that, in turn, promotes a form of subjective identity that is capable of

acknowledging inter-dependency and participating in an ambiguous social world without

fantasies of absolute perfection or corruption. Whereas Freudian politics ultimately issue in

resignation and quietism, Klein's work presupposes the (always fragile and precarious)

possibility of a polity where we could acknowledge and seek to repair the sacrifices and

losses inherent to collective life. Again, Klein herself never fully developed the socio-

political implications of her work.[56]   There are tantalizing glimpses, however—for instance,

when she writes about the ability of analysis to turn individuals from social anxiety to "social

feeling," whereby our "hostile" and aggressive attitudes "give way to kindlier and more

trustful feelings towards [our] fellowmen, and people may inhabit the world together in

greater peace and good-will than they do now."[57] The key to this "utopian state of things" is

the shift from a Freudian subject-who-mourns to Klein's *mourning subject*.

     The immanent social content of Klein's views on the work of mourning can be made

to speak to the concerns that frame this project. At the level of collectivities, the work of

mourning involves a doubled act of acknowledgement where the painful living legacy of

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55 It is important to flag here at the outset an important objection to this language of "love mitigating hate". Specifically, thinkers like Arendt have argued that love can never be seen as a political emotion, because it will collapse the distance between self and other that is required in the space of appearances. Moreover, the flipside of in-group love in politics is often a vicious form of hatred projected onto the out-group. As Freud himself warns, "it is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness" (1927, 72). Hence certain strains of liberalism remain deeply suspicious towards affect as such (i.e. Rawls' demands that public discourse be drained of 'unreasonable' claims). Liberals such as Rawls would prefer if politics were drained of hatred and love. Object relations psychoanalysis convinces us, however, that this is both impossible and not to be wished for. As passionate beings, we cannot help but to have passionate politics. For Klein, moreover, the projection of hatred onto out-groups only results from "unintegrated" love. Since we cannot experience love without hatred, the task of the ego (and of society) is to integrate both and to admit ambivalence in all our object relations—thereby mitigating the tendencies towards pure, irredeemable hatred and the violent aggression it inspires. Furthermore, in opposition to Arendt, Kleinian love (haunted always by hate) does not turn the polis into a sphere of intimacy. Rather, it brings the native fractiousness and conflict of the polis into the intimate sphere. Klein's subject is a contentious multiplicity, with all the ugliness, beauty and ambivalence of every other collective body.

56 Many of Klein's interpreters have—no doubt in some part due to this lack of development—seen Kleinian theory as indifferent to social arrangements and phenomena. These readers emphasize Klein's theories of unconscious phantasies that are (on this reading) independent of external reality. However, Klein explicitly speaks of incessant interaction between phantasy and external reality; in fact, phantasy is the result of a conjunction between unconscious drives and the external world that the infant is constantly "absorbing." It is true that Klein does not historicize her claims about human life and agency, but there is in my mind no ground for seeing her work as apolitical. While Winnicott and Bion develop Kleinian theory in a more explicitly political and social direction, this trajectory is immanent to Klein's thought.

57 Klein, "Development of Conscience in the Child," 257.

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racial trauma is recognized alongside and *through* an acknowledgement of the socio-psychological defenses that menace this work. William Chafe, for instance, has argued that norms of "civility" in Greensboro during the Civil Rights era served as a mechanism of denial over the city's deep, structural inequalities—a mechanism of denial that resurfaced during the organizing efforts for the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission.[58] By exposing this habit of denial, Chafe also opens up the possibility of recognizing that which was denied. The exposure of civility as ideology indicates the possibility that civil norms of speech might be reconfigured.[59] Secondly, for Klein loss is formative of identity, with identity understood as an unfinished (and unfinishable) process of identification in either the depressive or paranoid-schizoid position. The work of mourning is iterable—we must do it "again and again"—not only because we periodically experience loss throughout our lives but also because our lives are structured by our approach to loss *as such*. The iterable quality of mourning has a strong bearing on a culture "stained" by the formative trauma of race. Because the very constitution of the American polity is marked by racial domination—an imprint that has had long and lasting effects—Klein's understanding of the work of mourning can be seen as an analogy to the best means of attending to and working through this living legacy. Lastly—and moving well beyond the realm of analogy—Klein's vision of integrated identity, where identity is less seen as a "hard" set of character traits and attributes and more as a fluid and polyvalent field of relations, can be seen as the basis for a democratic style of politics where citizens can interact with each other outside the

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58 Chafe, Civilities and Civil Rights (Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1993).

59 It should be noted, however, that Chafe seems pessimistic about this possibility. He ends Civilities and Civil Rights with the following plaints: "Are civility and civil rights compatible? Will they ever be? The answer, it would seem, is no—at least not so long as those who take part in traditional political discourse do not begin from the same place and do not share the same resources. Civility within a context of oppression simply provides a veneer for more oppression." Ibid., 354-55.

pathological compromises of demonization and paranoia. The question of how we confront

loss is the question of whether or not we will be able to relate to others in a non-dominating

or non-pathological fashion. Klein's picture of resilient identity through an iterable process

of identification also gives us a position from which we can analyze—and judge—forms of

blocked grief such as those exhibited by the Ku Klux Klan.

To substantiate these claims, it will be necessary to chart the main components of

Klein's theories on human attachment and mental life. For Klein, the early life of the infant

is characterized by radical and bewildering dependency and a frustrating lack of control over

one's body and its desires. Insofar as the infant's bare needs are satisfied by external

sources, he or she starts to develop a mental image of what Klein calls the "good breast."[60]

Yet when the caregiver is absent, the child's wild needs work to develop an alternate

image—the "bad breast," which is absent when needed, or present when it is not wanted.

Klein calls this time in the infant's life the "paranoid-schizoid" position, because the infant

has not achieved object permanence and has not realized that the 'bad' and 'good' breasts are

actually part of the same person. The paranoid/schizoid position is characterized by a weak

ego, which is unable to tolerate the co-presence of good and bad objects, and which thereby

splits the objects and keeps them separate in the mind. These 'part-objects' are internalized

and become aspects of the child's nascent character; in fact, from the moment of birth a

complex inner world is being built up in the child's mind corresponding to its experiences in

the world as these are inflected by phantasies emanating from the subterranean operations of

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60 Klein uses "breast" to emphasize that the infant's first identifications are with part-objects, and not with the whole person. By using "breast", moreover, Klein obviously emphasizes that this first part-object is typically with the feeding mother. Does Klein "idealize" the mother-infant dyad in this respect? In so doing does she eliminate other possibilities for rearing children—i.e. same sex male couples? Yes and no. Klein does acknowledge the practice of bottle-feeding; however, she disparages this practice and re-asserts the importance of an early bond between mother and infant. See Klein, "Weaning," Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945 (New York: Free Press, 2002).

the life and death drives. As Klein puts it, "the ego is constantly absorbing into itself the whole external world."[61] Splitting is the infant's first means of defense against the bewildering array of internal and external stimulations. We are born into a pathological state—Klein calls this earliest state of mind "a compromise by an unhealthy organism."[62] This compromised ego creates "larger than life" people and emotions, "unmodified by their opposites."[63] As Fred Alford puts it, the paranoid/schizoid position is marked by the "watertight distinction between good and bad."[64] The good internalized parents come to represent the life instinct, whereas anxieties relating to the death drive become deeply intertwined with the cruel and dangerous internal figures. This implies not only that the infant's experience of the world (however crude) is split, but that the infant *herself* is split: the operations of the life and death drives (which Klein feels are a constitutional feature of human life) are externalized and projected into idealized or threatening objects.[65] We can still witness the lingering power of this early state of mind in fairy tales and melodramas, where wicked stepmothers and devious villains menace blessed godmothers and upright heroes. Even though both the good and bad objects have been introjected, the latter are constantly seen to threaten the former, lending the 'paranoid' quality to the infant's mind. The infant feels persecuted and attacked, and in turn musters its meager defenses to fight against these threats. The life of the infant, far from being an idyllic state of primal narcissism or autoeroticism, is closer to the Hobbesian *bellum omnium contra omnes*.

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61 Melanie Klein, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States," Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945. Pg. 266.
62 Melanie Klein, "Symposium on Child Analysis," Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945. Pg. 160.
63 Julia Segal, Melanie Klein: Key Figures in Counseling and Psychotherapy (London: Sage, 1992), 34.
64 Alford, Melanie Klein and Critical Social Theory, 232.
65 Freud thought something similar occurred in melancholia. "Melancholia…shows us the ego divided, fallen apart into two pieces, one of which rages against the second." Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989). Pg. 51.

However, if this terrifying experience were restricted to the first months of life, it would hardly be worth Klein's (and our) attention. For Klein, the paranoid/schizoid position, and its characteristic psychic defenses, is a continual temptation throughout our lives. The stresses and anxieties accompanying deeply felt losses especially draw us back to this position. From there, the lost object assumes an outsized character, and we feel compelled to defend it at all costs from internal and external threats. We thereby project the hatred that is mixed up with the object—and we have no attachments that do not involve hatred[66]—into another object, or we absorb it into the ego and enter a period of self-loathing. Enslaved to the other and beset by persecutory phantasies, Klein's paranoid-schizoid position corresponds nearly perfectly to Freud's description of melancholia. To arrest this cycle, we must reintegrate the lost (whole) object into our ego—in part by returning to it its fundamental ambivalence—and thereby strengthen our confidence in both our internal and external realities. As Klein puts it, we can "bear to realize that the object was not perfect and yet not lose trust and love for (it), nor fear (its) revenge."[67] This reparative labor is the work of Klein's "second" position—the "depressive position." The depressive position is first brought about by the infant's growing ability to integrate his or her experiences. The infant comes to realize that the heretofore separated good and bad objects are parts of a larger whole. As the ability to recognize reality increases, the internal melodrama begins to fade: "the bad is less bad…the good is less good."[68] The infant in turn begins to receive some relief from persecutory anxieties, as phantasized projections are withdrawn and the full ambivalence of the external world is appreciated. Yet this creates in

66 "Scientists prove it really is a thin line between love and hate." The Independent. 29 October 2008.
67 Melanie Klein, "Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states," Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945. Pg. 355.
68 Lavina Gomez, Introduction to Object Relations (New York: NYU Press, 1997). Pg. 42.

the infant a profound sense of loss: as the world's goodness is burnished, the child's own

sense of goodness is similarly tainted. In particular, the child realizes—with horror—that its

attacks against the persecuting bad objects were simultaneously an assault on the beloved

object. Instead of seeing herself as a brave defender of threatened internal objects, the child

recognizes that the hatred and aggression she has hurled against her enemies was in reality

directed against her loved ones. The depressive position, then, marks the infant's

introduction to the experiences of loss, guilt, and a sense of responsibility for the damage

she has done.[69] Until this time the infant, in so many words, *cannot lose*: persecutory anxiety is

not felt as a lack or absence of care but as the *presence* of an attacking object. The

internalized others are not yet actual objects; they are merely melancholically incorporated

"part-objects" representing the unintegrated unconscious phantasies spinning out from the

life and death instincts. These objects cannot be loved or lost until they are recognized as an

ambiguous whole, filled in by the infant's dawning awareness of fundamental object

ambivalence. Once we are able to fear, love, hate, and hope for the same other, real object

relations can begin.[70]

For Klein, the depressive position is defined not only by the appearance of the whole

object, but by the appearance of subjective care and concern for this object *as an other* (and

not only as a reflection of our instinctual needs, pace Freud). As the ego increases its ability

to live with the competing demands of the life and death instincts and the objects through

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69 Elizabeth Bott Spillius, Melanie Klein Today: Developments in Theory and Practice (London: Routledge, 1988).

70 To see the diverse and unsettled nature of psychoanalytic theory, one would have to compare the "real" in this sentence with both Freud's reality principle and Lacan's "real." For Freud, reality testing is the means by which the ego tests the outside world to check on its libidinal investments. For Klein, the reality-testing of the depressive position is a testing of internal reality by means of outer reality. Are our powerful fears deserved or do they rest on a partial reading of reality built on unconscious phantasy? "Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive State," Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945. Pg. 347. Lacan's "Real," on the other (third?) hand, is a space of incommensurability within the Symbolic—it is the means by which we discover the essential artificiality of both our external experiences and internal consciousness. Lacan will come up again in chapters three and five.

which they are realized, the infant turns from its early defenses of splitting and projection and develops facilities for reparation and love. The depressive position marks, in infancy, a development in cognitive capacities and, in adulthood, a mitigation of cognitive and emotional dogmatism. Persecutory anxiety eases and makes way for depressive anxiety, which is centered not on our own survival but on the loved object's well being. If the child has received responsive and sympathetic care, they will be able to accept the fundamental ambivalence of their first objects, which up to this point have aroused equally intense feelings of hatred and love, fear and joy. By integrating these emotions, the child is able to achieve an uneasy internal balance between love and hate. Thus a virtuous circle commences whereby trust in internal and external reality can promote the expression of reparative guilt, which in turn mitigates persecutory anxiety, clarifies the sources of conflict and fear, and increases trust. Conflicts are not denied or pushed out of consciousness, but are held together in the self. As Klein puts it, steps in ego integration result "in a greater capacity…to acknowledge the increasingly poignant psychic reality."[71] The child begins, in essence, his or her first work of mourning: "with the introduction of the complete object…the loved and hated aspects of the mother are no longer felt to be so widely separated and the result is an increased fear of loss, states akin to mourning, and a strong feeling of guilt."[72] Kleinian mourning, in quasi-Freudian fashion, involves an act of severance. Yet instead of the sovereign ego departing from its spoiled investments, the Kleinian ego has to let go of the pure image of the ideal caretaker, while at the same time

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71 Melanie Klein, "Some Theoretical Conclusions regarding the emotional life of the infant." Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963. Pg 73.
72 Melanie Klein, "Notes on some Schizoid Mechanisms," Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963. Pg. 14.

compensating for this loss by internalizing a more secure inner world where love will
predominate over hate:

> "When the infant feels that his destructive impulses and fantasies are
> directed against the complete person of his loved object, guilt arises
> in full strength and together with that, the overriding urge to repair,
> preserve or revive the love injured object. These emotions in my
> view amount to states of mourning…Gradually…as the infant re-
> introjects again and again a more realistic and reassuring external
> world…essential developments in the super ego organization take
> place."[73]

Here Klein enters the door that Freud had opened with his miscarried conjectures
about identification and the super-ego. Klein provides analytic substance to the possibility
that Freud only hints at—object-relations that are neither predicated on neither fixation nor
forgetting:

> "In normal mourning the individual succeeds in establishing the lost
> loved person within the ego, whereas in melancholia and abnormal
> mourning this process is not successful…If cannibalistic impulses are
> excessive, the introjection of the lost loved object miscarries, and this
> leads to illness. In normal mourning, too, the subject is driven to
> reinstate the lost loved person within the ego; but this process
> succeeds."

Klein thinks that successful resolution of the depressive position in infancy lays the
groundwork for overcoming grief later in life. However, we should not read "resolution"
here as an Hegelian *Versöhnung*.[74] Klein's positions are not inevitably successive or fully
terminable. The depressive position is a "crossroads" of development that we encounter
"again and again" throughout our lives, as if we were living in an M.C. Escher sketch. For
Klein, subsequent object losses will trigger a return to the depressive position, with its

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73 Klein, "Some Theoretical Conclusions regarding the emotional life of the infant," 74.

74 Compare Hegel's depiction of "unhappy consciousness" with Klein's views on the depressive position. Hegel describes unhappy consciousness as "the Alienated soul, which is the consciousness of self as a divided nature, a doubled and merely contradictory thing." For Hegel, the inherent contradiction of divided consciousness demands resolution. Klein, on the other hand, would diagnose Hegel's fantasies of resolution as a holdover from the paranoid-schizoid position. Here is Wittgenstein, in a Kleinian vein: "the difficult thing here is not, to dig down to the ground; no, it is to recognize the ground that lies before us as the ground."

concurrent feelings of helplessness and anxiety. Just as with the original paranoid-schizoid position, the mourning subject's ability to come through revived depressive positions will depend not only on their internal constitution but their experiences in the external world:

> "The poet tells us that 'nature mourns with the mourner.' I believe
> that 'Nature' in this connection represents the internal good mother.
> This experience of mutual sorrow and sympathy in internal
> relationships, however, is again bound up with external ones. As I
> have already stated, Mrs. A's greater trust in actual people and things,
> and help received from the external world, contributed to a relaxing
> of the manic control over her inner world."[75]

Crucially, Klein's work enables us to supercede Freud's theory of primal/natural narcissism. In the process, she helps us to see that the Freudian choice between economic mourning and pathological melancholia is a false one. The infant is a social animal from the very beginning, pushed by the life and death instincts to establish relationships with the external world.[76] Klein certainly does not deny the possibility of narcissistic behavior or states of mind, but instead of treating these as primary she sees them as the result of "part-object" incorporation—the precise opposite trajectory from Freud (for whom the object only makes its appearance as libidinal energy overflows the ego).[77] Klein's postulation of innate relationality is a direct challenge to Freud, and to the conception of the pleasure-seeking/pain-avoiding atomistic individual underlying the latter's vision of the subject-who-mourns.[78]

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75 "Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States," Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945. Pg. 359. "Mrs. A" is a Klein herself, thinly disguised. "Mourning" was composed in the period after Klein's son fell to his death while hiking in the Swiss Alps. The whole essay, then, is an interesting study in self-work, as much as it is also a commentary on the work of mourning.

76 These instincts, from a strict Kleinian perspective, only have meaning insofar as they are 'activated' by the objects to which they attach. No objects; no instincts.

77 Segal, Melanie Klein: Key Figures in Counseling and Psychotherapy, 104.

78 Michael Rustin, The Good Society and the Inner World: Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Culture (London: Verso Books, 1991). Pg. 25.

For the purposes of this project, Klein's most crucial contributions to psychoanalysis are her portrayal of mourning as the work of ego integration (and vice versa), and her theory of object attachment that rejects the Freudian subject's meager choice between forgetting and fixation. These two aspects of Klein's work are intimately intertwined with each other. Klein's picture of the integrated ego is one in which a favorable balance has been achieved between the hatred and destructiveness that are ineliminable presences in human life, on the one hand, and the loving nurturance and concern for others that are equally natural and essential to humanity, on the other hand. Integration implies more than the tolerance or acceptance of aggression, however; it implies the difficult (and perhaps interminable) work of getting beyond resentment, envy, and greed and towards a clearer picture of the psychic and political conflicts (both inherent and unnecessary) plaguing us. As Klein puts it, the insight gained from integration means that "potentially dangerous parts [of ourselves]… become bearable and diminish."[79] Following Klein, we should understand the dawning of such insight not as a permanent leave-taking from internal and external conflict. As Klein puts it elsewhere, the depressive position inaugurates a mourning process that requires a work of severance that is "by no means detachment in the sense of estrangement."[80] Not: 'where it was, so I shall become.' Instead: 'Where it was, it shall remain; yet it and I can live together.' Less pithy, but more promising; it recalls Athena's plea to the Furies: "put away the bitter strength in the black wave…and live with me."

In the wake of Klein's reconfiguration of the Freudian inheritance, how should we think of the task of psychoanalysis—especially as it relates to individual and collective

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79 Melanie Klein, "Envy and Gratitude," Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963. Pg. 232.

80 Klein, "Symposium on Child Analysis," 165. This passage is a bit obscure - Klein is apparently referring both to object relations and to our sense of attachment to the life strategies of what she would later call the paranoid-schizoid position.

responses to loss and trauma? How does analysis assist in the work of mourning and/as ego

integration? Klein, in this respect, carries forward the insights of Freud's late period: the

task of the analyst is not to lift repression but to help the analysand integrate the love and

hate which inflect their object relations and their view of the world.[81] Analytic therapy does

not promise a cure but, instead, clearer insight into the disease.[82] More specifically, object

relations psychoanalysis helps us to see psychic conflict expanding beyond the subject's

internal structure into the broader social world. We are torsional beings not only because of

the competing life and death instincts but because we are continually internalizing a

conflictual external world via ambivalent object relations. The reluctance to admit our

socially implicated nature is a byproduct of paranoid-schizoid fears, and Klein thought her

most important discovery was the panoply of defenses that we employ to deny relational

guilt while asserting our innocence and independence. Analysis aims to untangle such

resistances—turning unconscious repetition into conscious conflict—but it cannot promise

full and complete conflict resolution at the intimate or social level.[83] Instead the "not

entirely unfeasible task" is to diminish persecutory anxiety by "break[ing] up the mutual

reinforcement that is going on all the time between hatred and fear."[84] This is decidedly not

a private form of self-work but at its broadest level would necessarily involve a

reconfiguration of social and political spaces and practices—institutions like the GTRC

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81 See Roger Money-Kyrle's interpretation of the similarities and differences between Freud and Klein on this score, as reported by Hanna Segal: "in his first analysis with Freud [Money-Kyrle] thought that pathology was due to repression of the libido and the aim was to lift repression, 'where id was ego should be'…in his analysis with Klein, in London, he began to think that pathology was rooted in the conflict between love and hate and the aim was integration." Segal, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (London: Routledge, 2007).
82 Ibid., 3.
83 Hence Herbert Marcuse's hopes for a civilization without repression are cast into serious doubt by Klein-inspired social theorists. However, the very idea of repression is re-cast in a new direction, and the conflict between the individual and the social is reconfigured. Theories of radical social alienation can gain no succor from Klein, who would understand them as residues of paranoid-schizoid phantasies. But in dispelling radical hopes for a completely new world, Klein helps actors committed to social justice in their work of identifying those aspects of our social and political reality that are susceptible to change.
84 Klein, "Development of the Conscience in the Child" Love, Guilt, and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945 257.

where citizens can engage in the painful work of confronting and working through the polity's living legacies of trauma.

As we have seen, there is a vicious feedback loop between anxiety, fear, and hatred—all of it, Klein would say, touched off by our original experience of helplessness in infancy. The nexus of emotions we experienced at that time is carried forward throughout our lives as an unconscious residue—a perpetually haunting reminder of debilitation and abject dependency. Yet beside this vicious circle of self-reinforcing hatred is a virtuous one of love and concern. Just as we have experienced frustration, sent out our anxiety and fear into the other, and then introjected that fear back into the self—the melancholic circle—so too have our experiences of satisfaction and love been projected into the world and reflected back into ourselves.[85] As Klein puts it, "we have two circles, the one benevolent and the other vicious, both of which are based on the interplay of external or environmental and internal psychical factors…it is important for the proper development of the mind that the child should come under the influence of the benevolent circle."[86] Psychoanalysis at its best helps the patient to express the poignant and tragic struggle at the core of intersubjective life—to realize the "disaster" of inherent conflict. Once this work of attunement has succeeded, the patient can come under the sway of the virtuous circle of concern, trust, and reparation. In other words, the identity worked out in the depressive position is the highest subjective *and cultural* achievement available to humanity. It is, however, an especially fragile

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85 One could reflect on this by analyzing the impact of mood on perception of one's environment. In an elated state, one's encounters with others often resonate with that elation; the opposite often occurs when we are feeling depressed, angry or alienated. A rainstorm can seem both restorative and oppressive. Klein gave voice to this in her essay following the death of her son: "the external world was felt to be artificial and unreal, because real trust in inner goodness had temporarily gone." "Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States," in Love, Guilt, and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945. Pg. 361.

86 Melanie Klein, "Weaning," in Love, Guilt, and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945. Pg. 292.

achievement—dependent on repeated performances ("again and again"), and, as such, immanently prone to failure.[87]

At this stage we can now review the four modifications Klein makes to the Freudian account of *Trauerarbeit* before seeing how these modifications help us to better reflect on the experiences of Greensboro, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, and aversive racism. First is the shift from Freud's fundamentally narcissistic subject-who-mourns to Klein's inherently relational mourning subject. By linking the essential and yet unfinishable task of ego integration to the work of mourning located in the depressive position, Klein has taken us far beyond the economic cycle of renunciation and replacement presented in Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia." Human subjectivity is not interrupted but *inaugurated* by loss.[88] Full development of the human character, Klein argues, is dependent on successful working through of painful grief and deprivation that springs not only from the loss of particular objects through which the world will have become meaningful, but from our tragic susceptibility to pathological habits of mind and character that will keep this mourning work at bay. Mourning is ultimately the process of establishing (and re-establishing, again and again throughout life) internal objects that enrich the self's capacity to mitigate its hatred, fear, envy and greed with reparative guilt and love. These internalized objects do not buffer us from conflict but help us to better engage our conflictual relational demands in an sometimes hostile, sometimes receptive external environment. Because we are essentially

87 Klein appears to drop completely Freud's larger historical anthropology. There is no sense in Klein's work to the idea that "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny"—that each stage in mental development is a recreation of our first evolutionary steps as a species. The paranoid/schizoid position is not an archaic deposit that is modified through repression and sublimation. The life and death instincts are constants - they were not sublimated through an original social compact by a band of patricides, and they are not essentially in conflict with the demands of civilization (i.e. they do not need to undergo modification if we are to live together at all). In this respect Klein's subject is at once and the same time more conflict-ridden and more capable of cooperation and care than Freud's. Desire is not alienated by the rise of "civilization" but emerges, takes shape, and is satisfied (if never eliminated) through our interactions with others. For Lacan, by contrast, jouissance is unthinkable within the strictures of human relationships enforced by capitalist society.

88 Judith Butler makes a similar claim, but because she follows the late Freud (and moreover gives a Freud-inflected reading of Klein), her notion of democratic Trauerarbeit looks very different from the one I am articulating. I will trace these differences and describe their significance in the next chapter.

inter-subjective beings, the recognitions and reparations inherent to the depressive position

are crucial to a healthy form of relationality that can only take place once the melancholically

incorporated part-objects are given up and the cognitive dogmatism of the paranoid-schizoid

position is overcome.[89] By these means we also overcome the narcissistic fantasy that keeps

us from acknowledging the place that others—and our fantasies and fears about those

others—play in our lives. This, in a nutshell, is Klein's *Trauerarbeit;* it is less Freudian than

Sisyphean, and for this reason, ironically, it is all the more hopeful.

Klein's second crucial modification of the Freudian account of mourning is related

to the first. In her descriptions of fundamental inter-subjectivity and her appreciation of the

subject's task of ego integration as an interminable (but not *a*-telic) work of mourning, Klein

has revealed the inter-locking connections between individual and social life. Mourning is

not a private work of renunciation, but an essentially public process of (re)internalization of

the lost object through the supportive (or *against* the intransigent) medium of inter-subjective

relationships, which are themselves not immune to social/cultural/political pressures or

unrelated to the distribution of power and powerlessness. Socially unwelcome objects

cannot be fully mourned, because the subject feels the sting of social disproval alongside the

pain of loss. In turn the lost object will either be idealized—as a defense against this

disapproval—or viciously denigrated—as a concession to convention; in either case the

"shadow of the object" falls upon the ego, mourning is aborted, and melancholia ensues.

This fact goes a certain distance towards explaining longstanding social and psychic

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89 Recent neurobiological findings suggest a foundation for core intersubjectivity with the discovery of "mirror neurons." See Stern, "Intersubjectivity," in Textbook of Psychoanalysis, edited by Cooper Person, et al. (Washington DC: American Psychiatric Press, 2005).

pathologies surrounding issues of race, sexual identity, and gender norms.[90] Our inner world is originally established and continually refurbished in ways that correspond to our actual experiences with the external world. As Klein puts it, "if the mourner has people whom he loves and who share his grief, and if he can accept their sympathy…his fears and distress are more quickly reduced."[91] Successful mourning is dependent upon a supportive environment that legitimates depressive reparation and helps to mitigate manic and paranoid defenses.[92]

Third, if Klein's mourning subject comes into being through its initial experience with loss in the infantile depressive position, it is also continuously falling back into this position whenever it experiences loss or trauma—either personally or sympathetically. By altering Freudian *Trauerarbeit* and expanding it to encompass the (endless) task of ego integration, Klein has shown that the work of mourning is not only a private coming-to-terms with particular object loss, but is a more general process of healthily reflecting on loss and damage *as such*. Kleinian theory allows for—indeed, it insists upon—a form of relationality beyond narcissism and a reparative response to loss beyond fixation and forgetting. Therefore it is indispensable to public efforts of remembering and working through shared traumas.

Finally, in addition to altering the scope, location, and importance of mourning, Klein has altered its directionality.   Whereas Freud envisions the mourning process as one of "withdrawal" into a sleep-like narcissistic state where the ego can recover from its losses,

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90 Anne Anlen Cheng, The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Simon Clarke, Social Theory, Psychoanalysis, and Racism (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), Arthur Colman, Up from Scapegoating: Awakening Consciousness in Groups (Brooklyn: Chiron Publications, 1995), Christopher Lane, The Psychoanalysis of Race (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

91 Melanie Klein, "Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States," Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Writings 1921-1945, 347.

92 Bion's development of object-relations theory is crucial here. His work on the process of "containment" that is first offered by the mother fleshes out Klein's claims about environmental factors for successful mourning. The external environment—including social norms, institutions and practices—either receptively "contains" and modifies aggressive projections and paranoid fears, or it creates a negative resonance chamber where aggression and fear feed upon themselves. See Elizabeth Spillius, Encounters with Melanie Klein (New York: Routledge, 1997) and Wilfred Bion, Attention and Interpretation (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995).

Klein envisions mourning as a process of engagement—an engagement not only with the internalized departed others but with supportive or inhibiting contexts of living relations. What Freud saw as an ego-driven retreat is, on Klein's reading, a continuation of messy relationality between internalized objects and an ego that is never fully withdrawn from the world. Reality testing, in turn, is not the means by which the ego convinces the libido to renounce its object, but the means by which the subject rebuilds its trust in internal and external environments. For this to take place, however, the external environment must be capable of holding, refining and re-turning the depressive longing. As the pining for the object is liberated by a secure, trusting external world, the mourning subject's suffering can be successfully sublimated and turned into signification. In this respect, the depressive position is not only the first appearance of loss but also of symbolic expression. As Bion put it, describing the weaning experience, "the infant recognizes no breast, therefore a thought."[93] Our greatest compensation for loss is the ability to express this loss—to speak it and have it reflected and resonated back to us by other speaking beings. Klein found that those analysands who mitigated paranoid-schizoid phantasies while working in and through the depressive position turned their suffering into a source of creativity and growth. They were able to gain a more realistic and lasting relationship to both the lost object and to a world where those we love are constantly failing and falling away from us. As she puts it, "the pining for the lost object implies dependence on it, but dependence of a kind which becomes an incentive to reparation and preservation of the object. It is creative because it is dominated by love, while the dependence based on persecution and hatred is sterile and

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93 Hanna Segal, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (London: Routledge, 2007), 2.

destructive."[94] Maria Torok expresses a similar idea in her essay on the distinction between (creative) introjection and (sterile) incorporation:

> Introjection [is a] process of broadening the ego....the transition
> from a mouth filled with the breast to a mouth filled with words
> occurs by virtue of the intervening experiences of the empty mouth.
> Learning to fill the emptiness of the mouth with words is the initial
> model for introjection...introjecting a desire, a pain, a situation
> means channeling them through language into a communion of
> empty mouths. This is how the literal ingestion of food becomes
> introjection when viewed figuratively. The passage from food to
> language in the mouth presupposes the successful replacement of the
> object's presence with the self's cognizance of its absence. Since
> language acts and makes up for absence by representing, by giving
> figurative shape to presence, it can only be comprehended or shared
> in a 'community of empty mouths.'"[95]

Kleinian theory cultivates attentiveness to the experience of both "the empty mouth" and the importance of a "community of empty mouths" for the working through of grief and painful deprivation. The community of open mouths is a community capable of a work of mourning—of listening and responding to and sharing the grief of loss, and not trying to deny or disavow the loss by stuffing the mouth with the false food of incorporated objects. The work of mourning is an inter-subjective, discursive practice where we share the experience of emptiness. This emptiness is the necessary basis of a sympathetic response that brings us back to life.

Ultimately, Klein's modifications of the Freudian account of *Trauerarbeit* make it possible for object-relations psychoanalysis to shed light on public attempts at remembrance and reconciliation surrounding violent or traumatic events and living legacies of adverse

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94 Klein, "Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states," 360.

95 Maria Torok, "The Illness of Mourning and the Fantasy of the Exquisite Corpse," in The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis, translated by Nicholas Rand, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 127-8.

discrimination, hatred, or animosity. Pace Danielle Allen, Klein's work can help democratic

societies create trustful coherence out of division without erasing conflict or suppressing

difference. It can help us to understand the temptation to demonization and how an

experience with confronting and working through trauma can erode this "pathological" state

of mind. Klein can also speak to the creation of social conditions where this sort of work

can proceed—the contours of institutions that can operate as "holding" environments for

the iterable work of mourning.

However, it is one thing to make such claims based on Klein's theoretical work and

another thing to substantiate them through an examination of Kleinian psychoanalysis *in situ*.

In the next section of this chapter, then, I will explore the concentric circles of object

relations theory, beginning with Klein's clinical analysis of children. Then, I will return to

the Klein-inspired reading of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission that I

began in the previous chapter. After this is completed, we will have a clearer view of the

promise and perils of democratic *Trauerarbeit*.

2.3 *"You hate your parents, they will fail you, and it will not be okay:" Description of a Successful Child Analysis.*

Melanie Klein was a pioneer in the field of child analysis, along with Hermine Hug-

Hellmuth and Anna Freud.[96] Yet Klein's method of analyzing children stood out for its

abrasive—some would say abusive—qualities. Klein thought it crucial not to protect the

child from the aggressive and fearful phantasies loose in his or her unconscious and

conscious minds (in direct opposition to Anna Freud). If Freud sought to dispel illusions

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96 For the differences between Anna Freud and Klein regarding child analysis see Klein, "Symposium on Child Analysis," in Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Writings 1921-1945.

about the civilized nature of modern men and women, Klein aimed to expand the work of demystification until the pre-Oedipal child was implicated in phantasized murder. Children were not to be buffered from these psychic realities but forced to work through them, in a relatively safe and trusting setting, and in league with a sympathetic analyst. Even with children, analysis is not a gentle method—it "cannot spare the patient any suffering" but must strive to increase the analysand's ability to understand and live with the painful conflicts to which it is inherently prone.

These reflections come to life in Klein's description of a child analysis she gave over several months in 1941, as World War II was spreading across Europe and London—where Klein had lived since 1924—was subject to intense shelling. The analysand was a ten year-old child named Richard, who had for two years been suffering from intense bouts of fear and paranoia that had made it impossible for him to attend school. Although the analysis was relatively short, due to exigencies surrounding the war, it achieved a successful diminution of persecutory anxiety that had "again and again" left the analysand subject to pathological defense mechanisms including idealization, splitting, and denial. Specifically, Richard had an overweening dependence on an idealized version of his mother. Richard could not establish a trusting relationship with either his father or his peers, because the presence of others threatened the internal "good" mother (who was represented by the color "light-blue" in Richard's dreams and drawings). This dependency resulted from Richard's inability to accept or tolerate aggressive or destructive feelings towards either of his parents. Since these emotional contraries were unintegrated, the parental imagos was split into an idealized beloved and a cold, hostile persecutor who appeared time to time in Richard's unconscious and conscious fantasies. The latter figure was often represented by Hitler, who

offered the child a convenient embodiment of persecutory anxiety, fear, and disgust. The external Manichean struggle between the Axis and Allied powers reinforced a similar clash at the level of the *psyche*. Richard's constant struggle between unintegrated destructive and loving impulses clearly demonstrated the powerful pull of the paranoid-schizoid position, and the drama of the war reinforced Richard's tendencies towards splitting that kept depressive guilt and loving reparation at bay. As Klein interpreted it, Richard attempted to concentrate on external threats "in order to get away from the combined pressure of internal and external danger situations."[97] She immediately began to interpret this defensive splitting, aiming to put Richard in touch with the internal drama that he had so far managed to externalize:

> "Churchill and Britain represented another aspect of the parents: the good Daddy who protected Mummy, the wonderful parents, more admired than the real ones (Richard agreed to this), while Germany and Hitler stood for the bad parents when they were angry with him…Richard seemed deeply interested in this interpretation. He remained silent, evidently thinking about it. His gratification over this new insight was very striking. Then he commented on how difficult it was with so many kinds of parents in his mind."[98]

Richard's dawning awareness of object ambiguity was an important developmental step, but at the same time it stirred up within him a profound sense of loss and alienation. While at times Richard was able to accept Klein's interpretations of unintegrated hatred and anxiety, at other times his resistance to these uncomfortable truths proved too great. It was "too painful and frightening to distrust Mummy…Richard: 'don't say this, it makes me

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97 Klein, Narrative of a Child Analysis (New York: Delacorte Press, 1975), 103. Seemingly unambiguous external conflict is an immense relief to those stuck in the paranoid-schizoid position. As Klein relates it, "Richard agreed with conviction that it would be much easier to fight Hitler in Munich than in his inside." As the ambiguity of external reality is confronted, the internal conflict can be simultaneously accepted (and vice versa).
98 Ibid., 28.

unhappy!"[99] When depression cannot be endured, splitting and persecutory anxiety serve to reinforce each other. This vicious cycle stifles feelings of guilt, love, and compassion; the split, melancholic ego cannot love itself or others. The analysand's ability to face this reality is predicated on overcoming the fundamental defenses that are a characteristic feature of mental life. Richard's progress in this regard was halting and uneven. Nevertheless, over the course of the five-month analysis, Richard was able to confront and express his deep-seated anxiety, transforming unconscious persecution into conscious depression. The analysis modified the idealized mother image and ultimately the analytic relationship became a useful internalized object itself, lessening dependence on incorporated part-objects and decreasing anxiety about the internal and external worlds. Not only did Richard's self-understanding change for the better, but also his interpretation of the war became more subtle and nuanced (especially for a ten year-old). His capacity to express sorrow over Allied losses—which had previously been too painful for him to bear—increased, but so did his capacity for sympathy with the attacked enemy. Klein interpreted this as resulting from increased ego integration:

> "Love and hate had come closer together…the suspect and the light-
> blue [idealized] mother, also the good and the bad father, had
> become more synthesized…together with the guilt arising from this
> insight... With the steps in integration and synthesis, the tolerance
> towards the bad object increased and sympathy with the actual enemy
> could be experienced—a very important emotional change."[100]

In drawing the good and bad mother closer together in his mind, Richard was able to increase love for his actual parents, in spite of their imperfections. The child had gained insight into the ambivalence of external and internal reality; as he put it to Klein: "I have

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99 Ibid., 108.
100 Ibid., 267.

discovered that there is no happiness without tragedy."[101]   On Klein's interpretation,

Richard's "envy, jealousy, and greed, which in my view are expressions of the death instinct,

diminished because he became gradually able to face and integrate his destructive

impulses."[102]   The analysis had unearthed heretofore split-off and suppressed desires for

integration and reparation; Klein's interpretations and her ability to withstand the negative

transference and contain Richard's anxieties had served to make possible a work of

mourning over the poignant and "tragic" reality. By lessening paranoid fears regarding his

internal world, Klein enabled Richard to experience and express his anxieties and conflicts

more clearly.[103]   It is "only by facing feelings of hate, and thereby gradually bringing them

together with other parts of the self, that they become less overwhelming."[104]   Less

overwhelming, but hardly anodyne. By integrating the split-off parts of our mind, we are

better able to bear destructive impulses and their consequences, but this is far from a

consoling reassurement of our fundamental goodness. The life instinct can come to check

the death drive, but this struggle remains an immortal battle between irremediable

adversaries. Richard's internal conflicts and external conflicts were not fully resolved by his

ascension to the depressive position; they were instead faced fully for the first time:

> "Richard, before leaving, inspected his jacket, which was stained with
> soot. He did not seem perturbed and said that though there would
> be a row with Mummy over this, it would not be too bad. He parted
> in a friendly way, neither particularly excited or elated, nor persecuted
> or depressed….Richard's insight into the need to dirty himself, if he
> wanted to clean something, seems to me of some significance. His
> whole development at this stage showed a diminution of idealization,
> progress in integration, and therefore a greater capacity to

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101 Ibid., 29.
102 Ibid., 466.
103 Ibid., 262.
104 Ibid., 366.

acknowledge that a person can be good without being perfect…dirty
yet useful, helpful, valuable."

Richard's internal and external worlds were dirtied yet valuable, and even all the more precious and secure for their imperfections. The life instinct—enhanced and inflected by positive objectal contacts—had gained predominance as Richard's envy, greed, and persecutory anxiety had dimmed. Klein's sympathetic holding environment had allowed for Richard's repressed conflicts with his actual parents to emerge, become conscious, and find expression. Richard's receptive response to Klein's interpretations—which, to the uninitiated, can seem bizarre or even cruel—convinced Klein that analysis brings relief by making "contact with deep-lying unconscious anxieties." Doing so gives the analysand "a feeling of being understood and therefore revives hope."[105] Richard's "patriotic" defense of his idealized mother gradually yielded to a more reflective appreciation of her (imperfect) goodness. Moreover, the new picture of his internalized mother yielded new understandings of what it meant to be patriotic in the first place: the manic and persecuted defense of the Allies gradually gave way to a more balanced appreciation of the highly-charged but ultimately ambivalent situation. Though it perhaps seems tangential to the work of the analysis (but only seems so), Richard was able to appreciate a potential difference between German citizens and the Nazi leadership, which allowed for the softening of frozen dichotomies between good and evil. By successfully leaving behind the lost perfect object, Richard was able to gain a measure of security and independence that he had heretofore lacked. By internalizing the clashing "good" and "bad" objects, Richard was able to look

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105 Ibid., 100. As Klein puts it, "it seems striking that interpretations which are most painful, such as those of destructive impulses directed against the loved object or even—as will be seen in later sessions—of anxieties relating to internal dangers and persecution by dead and hostile objects, can yet lead to great relief. Ibid., 192.

forward to and accept new relationships, and this diminished pathological habits of mind that had relevance far beyond Richard's immediate relations. This is Klein's clearest portrayal of a healthy work of mourning, through which the analysand develops an identity that is capable of reflecting on loss and damage without succumbing to the defensive temptations of idealization or denial.

Richard's analysis proved successful, insofar as he gained some measure of relief from severe persecutory anxieties and improved his ability to tolerate conflict in his internal and external worlds. Yet clearly my project is less interested in the fate of one ten year-old British child than the ongoing struggles over race and reconciliation in the United States. In the next section of this chapter, then, I will draw analogies between Klein's clinical setting and her theories of mourning and ego integration to re-describe and interpret the events surrounding the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Specifically I aim to show defense mechanisms such as idealization, splitting, and manic denial operating in the debates surrounding the Commission before, during, and after its time of operation. I then will argue that the Commission's efforts at reckoning, mutual understanding, and temporal/spatial implicature went some distance toward undermining these defenses— helping to make visible the larger conflicts over race, power, and powerlessness in Greensboro. The GTRC provided, in many respects, a powerful holding environment that nurtured and might continuously allow for an ongoing work of mourning surrounding the events of November 3, 1979. Yet, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, the GTRC was also haunted by fantastical desires for healing and resolution. Kleinian theory helps us to reconfigure the standards for successful public *Trauerarbeit* by moving away from metaphors of healing and absolution towards integration and trust.

In the previous chapter I employed Kleinian vocabulary to examine the presuppositions behind the solidifying model for Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, with a specific focus on the Greensboro TRC. There I described what I consider to be the three central psychic/political claims of the TRC process, namely: reckoning, spatial/temporal implicature, and mutual understanding. Reckoning represents a public effort at reflecting on an unpleasant history and lingering traumas. Spatial/temporal implicature seeks to demonstrate that we are not (only) ourselves—that "bystanders" to a traumatic event are implicated in a deeper and broader structure that makes such events possible. Mutual understanding is the means by which public officials and concerned citizens articulate a trusted version of traumatic events in order to create a more commonly shared understanding of collective history—what Bert van Roermund calls "a past to look forward to."

In the previous chapter I also discussed certain resistances to the TRC process in Greensboro, which we can now read in the light not only of Freudian and Kleinian theory but also of Klein's analysis of Richard. City officials' fears that the TRC process—with its "unappetizing" reflection on violent events and lingering racial prejudice—would reflect badly on the city now come to resemble Richard's desperate attempts to defend the idealized "light-blue" mother imagos. Secondly, just as Richard had externalized the conflict by projecting his fear and anxiety into the figure of Hitler, so too was the violence between Klan members and the CWP interpreted as "outside agitation" bearing no intimate connection to the "real" Greensboro. The polarized and externalized conflict both reflects and reinforces the subjective temptation to distance oneself from one's own aggression.

Finally, in the previous chapter I also discussed the seductive tendency towards full (or "strong") reconciliation immanent to the TRC process. With Klein, we might now see this search for conflict-free existence as the specter of the "inexhaustible and always bountiful breast," which promises "unlimited gratification," security, and peace.[106] I argued that Klein helps us to refocus our efforts on more modest goals of "weak" reconciliation—not overcoming conflict but making it conscious while mitigating its most destructive aspects.

At this point, after detailing the relevance of the shift from Freud's subject-who-mourns to Klein's mourning subject, the latter's relevance for the claims repeated above should be in better focus. Specifically, Klein legitimates the use of "mourning" to describe socio-political efforts at remembering and reflecting on shared trauma and loss. Successful or healthy mourning at the subjective level is contingent on these very efforts to publicly avow loss and provide (at minimum) symbolic reparation. In turn, these efforts will prove successful only insofar as they mitigate paranoid-schizoid fantasies of purity and (strong) reconciliation. Moreover, such efforts must not limit their focus to a particular trauma but respond to the larger patterns of sacrifice and loss in the polity. In doing so they will begin to nurture a continual process of reflection that can mirror Richard's depressive acceptance of ambivalent reality. This in turn facilitates the development of a democratic identity sensitive to the living traumas that circulate in and through collective politics. This is neither politics as therapy, nor a reduction of the political to the psychological. Instead it is a

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106 Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms," 7.

recognition of the deep intertwinement between *psyche* and polis, an intermixing that we need to understanding if we are to live—and live together—well.

In closing this section I want to suggest that TRCs—and similar institutions—should see themselves explicitly in terms object-relations psychoanalysis: as a holding environment for public efforts at remembering and working through a difficult past. As the GTRC Final Report puts it, the polarized remembrances of traumatic events—including the events of November 3, 1979 and their aftermath—reflects a "deeper brokenness" in the community. But unlike the GTRC Final Report, which goes on to say that the proper response to this brokenness is a search for "genuine healing," a Klein-inspired Truth Commission would forego the language of healing in favor of "mitigation" and "integration." Repressed conflict at the subjective level and suppressed conflict at the objective level must be made conscious, but doing so will not herald full reconciliation. Instead, we can hope that painful reflection on past and present violence and adverse discrimination will inaugurate a collective depressive position, which will mitigate individual and group tendencies towards defensive splitting, projection, and idealization and will bring about more receptive and responsive efforts at doing justice and resisting injustice. The "splintering and shattering" activity of Truth Commissions can convince citizens of a complicated and difficult history, but—like Richard—we can engage this difficulty with the realistic hope that we can continue to pursue democratic communities where life is collectively authored through (more) open and participatory politics. In order for this to happen in the face of deep-seated trauma—and the disavowals, distrust, and animosities that follows—the TRC process must not only offer "dirty but…valuable" objects to be esteemed, but must *itself* become an imperfect but "good enough" internalized object that can guide collective and individual efforts at working

through feelings of loss, alienation, depression, and guilt.[107] By diligently crafting a trusted process of reflection and engagement, TRC organizers and participants can mitigate distrust in the citizen body and instaurate a virtuous cycle of guilt, trust, and reparation—putting into play an iterable process of identification that could widen and deepen citizens' sympathetic engagements across the frozen terrain of split, paranoid politics.

In the end, the analogy between Klein's analysis of Richard and the GTRC's interpretation of the events of November 3, 1979 can distort crucial differences—even as it highlights certain vital similarities—if we do not keep other factors in view. Even if the Kleinian subject is a multiplicitous whole, Greensboro is fractured by additional cleavages that simply do not exist at the subjective level. Moreover, we must admit that individual members of a community do not experience the effects of collective trauma in an identical fashion: the KKK and CCP members have a different relationship to the events of November 3, 1979 than do the residents of the Morningside home community—(not to mention the citizens of Greensboro who were only tangentially related to the drama or who moved to Greensboro in the years following the event). Trauma for the individual is a different story than *collective* trauma, even if the broader "stories" in which we find ourselves—the discursive norms and cultural desires and fantasies—are rife with loss, grief (thwarted and realized), disavowal, and denial. It is these larger forces that *do* involve other members of the Greensboro community. For this reason, thinking about and relating to public processes of mourning in a Kleinian light is important if we want them to yield just outcomes. Ultimately Klein's work helps us to identify new standards of success for such

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107 The language of "good-enough" is D.W. Winnicott's. Winnicott was influenced by Klein's account of the "good" object, but felt that Klein's language did not clearly distinguish the "good" object from the idealized object. I prefer "good-enough" to Klein's "good" for this same reason. See Winnicott, Playing and Reality. (London: Routledge, 2005).

efforts. We should not look to such efforts for a "genuine healing" at either the subjective or social levels. Instead we should deem them successful if they nurture additional reflection on both apparent and obscured traumas. This, in turn, will serve the development of a democratic identity that is committed to a continual process of working through the losses and sacrifices inherent to collective life.

To conclude this chapter, let me suggest one concrete supplement to current thinking on collective trauma. Many TRCs, and similar social or cultural attempts to remember a horrifying past, are motivated by the slogan "never again."[108] It is hoped that creating a public record of atrocity will go some distance towards preventing future catastrophes. However, perhaps one of Klein's most frequently employed phrases—"again and again"—is a more suitable axiom. We must engage living legacies of the past because the conflict over such histories is a continual and evolving struggle on both psychological and political levels. Time, by itself, does nothing to heal our wounds. This *depressing* conclusion, however, should not be seen as a closing down of futurity and progress. Exploiting the ambiguity of the word "again" we can see such reflection as a/gain—an *enrichment* of our collective and individual identities through the acquisition of a complicated and "difficult" past that can act as a surer foundation for present and future attachments. This would imply "getting past" not so much as "leaving behind" but as in *acquiring* a past to look forward to—discovering socio-psychological institutions and practices of mourning that can help us to confront and work through the legacies of trauma that are too often split-off or denied a conscious presence in the polity's self-representations. Revisiting loss "again

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108 See, for instance, the Never Again project in Rwanda or the NAAF (Never Again, Always and Forever) Holocaust memorial project. http://www.neveragainrwanda.org/ and http://www.neveragain.org/.

and again" is not a political or cultural version of the repetition compulsion (which is the *unconscious* reliving of trauma), but its very opposite: the work of mourning. Klein's work heralds (if it does not explicitly call for) a culture enriched by a work of mourning that overcomes disavowal and denial and which, in turn, enriches deliberative and participatory politics by nurturing a democratic identity capable of confronting and accepting the long dark shadow of our racial history (and this history's continued presence). The contemporary American moment of polarized politics seems to echo the refrain of Leonard Cohen that opened this chapter: we're "good at love" and "good at hate," but "in-between" we freeze.[109] Klein's work helps us to chart and better inhabit this in-between.[110]

2.4 Melanie Klein and Wounded Identity

How does Klein's understanding of identity and identification contribute to debates about identity within political theory (and vice versa)?   For instance, Wendy Brown has argued that late modern liberal societies are marked by myriad political identities that all suffer from what Brown refers to as "wounded attachment."[111] The situation confronting emancipatory and democratic politics, as Brown sees it, is that the "antidemocratic powers of our time" have produced subjects and identity positions for which the "taste for substantive political freedom" is "attenuated."[112]   Desire is attenuated and identity is wounded because each is stretched between a liberal discourse heralding agency,

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109 Of course, the polarization of American politics has a long history. See, for instance, Michael Rogin, Ronald Reagan The Movie: And Other Episodes in Political Demonology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

110 The "in-between" here will evoke Arendt's "inter-esse." Obviously I cannot chart the differences and overlaps between these ideas here. Arendt remained hostile to the insights of psychoanalysis, but Julia Kristeva has offered a reading of Arendt that attempts to bridge this gap. Kristeva, Hannah Arendt. Translated by Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

111 Wendy Brown, States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

112 Ibid., x.

responsibility, and potency and a "historically unique form of political powerlessness."[113] This unique condition results in a form of political powerlessness that, in effect, cannot speak its own name—cannot come to terms with itself within the discursive norms and identity-positions bequeathed to late modernity. In turn this powerlessness comes to manifest itself as "the conservative raiment of despair, misanthropy [and a] narrow pursuit of interest," and oftentimes twists "into a more dissimulated political discourse of paralyzing recriminations and toxic resentments parading as radical critique."[114] Enflamed by the promise of freedom yet unable to (collectively or individually) shape its destiny, the liberal subject is caught within a lifeless politics and a cultural malaise.

This unique historical configuration presses political theory to refine its tools of intellectual investigation—to focus less on the macro powers of institutions (such as those that preoccupied Marx and Weber) and more on the micro powers that shape or twist desire—such as discourse. Insofar as this moves political analysis into "a more psychological and less institutional line of inquiry," Brown entertains the possibility that psychoanalysts might be the "appropriate theoretical consultants" (she mentions Freud and Lacan by name), as long as they are "bent toward history, insedimented with culture, and tethered by economic and political context."[115] Yet Brown refuses this psychoanalytic turn (at least, momentarily) and instead alights to the work of Nietzsche and Foucault in order to plumb the depths of our predicament. Nietzsche and Foucault each prove to be excellent diagnosticians of the liberal malaise, since they attend to the micro-powers that shape and

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113 Ibid., x.
114 Ibid., x.
115 Ibid., x.

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twist desire until identity becomes, in Brown's terms, "attached to unfreedom" and "rooted in injury."[116]

How has this "injured" or "wounded" form of political identity come into being in late modernity? For Brown, it is the outgrowth of the rise in modernity of the (supposedly non-gendered, non-racialized) autonomous sovereign subject, a subject that was splintered in the wake of decolonization struggles and the feminist and civil rights movements. These challenges "from the margins" gave the lie to the ideal of the "centered European identity with its economic and political predicates."[117] Yet the "denaturalizing assault" against the autonomous subject is a doubled-edged blade that cuts against those who wield it. The result is that identity as such "is unraveling" at the same time that identity *claims* are proliferating—a double bind where claims for emancipation from the self-certain center are at once and the same time an admission and a *denial* that no identity can offer a secure foundation for action or belief. Theorists such as William Connolly have seen this in terms of a "paradox" of identity/difference, where identity claims from the margins are made in relation to a set of socially recognized differences that are then converted into an "other" as a means of securing identity's status.[118] This dialectic of identity/difference/otherness/identity only doubles the violent foreclosure or denial of difference that initially inspired the *resistance* to the autonomous liberal subject. As Brown sees it, the challenge is to theorize how "politicized identity" has come to invest itself "in its own history of suffering"—trapped within the gaze of an exclusionary identity it had originally hoped to problematize and disrupt—while offering the possibility that such

116 Ibid., xii.
117 Ibid., 53.
118 William Connolly, Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991)

"wounded identities" could engage "in something of a Nietzschean 'forgetting' of this history.[119] If identity in late-modernity suffers from fixation to an outmoded (and desire-twisting) ideal of liberal autonomy, then perhaps the antidote is a pinch of Nietzschean overcoming.

Nietzsche becomes, in Brown's eyes, an essential interlocutor for these questions because his categories of bad conscience and—especially—*ressentiment* seem to capture the psychological tension behind politicized identity. *Ressentiment*—the "moralizing revenge of the powerless" makes sense of the peculiar woundedness of identity in late modernity. Here is Brown:

> "[It is] not only the tension between freedom and equality but the
> prior presumption of the self-reliant and self-made capacities of
> liberal subjects, conjoined with their unavowed dependence on and
> construction by a variety of social relations and forces, that makes *all*
> liberal subjects, and not only markedly disenfranchised ones,
> vulnerable to *ressentiment*; it is their situatedness within power, their
> production by power, and liberal discourse's denial of this
> situatedness and production that cast the liberal subject into failure,
> the failure to make itself in the context of a discourse in which its
> self-making is assumed, indeed, is its assumed nature."

In other words, the refused ego-ideal of the autonomous liberal subject has not been rejected but melancholically *incorporated*—its terms and standards continue to haunt politicized identities who are caught up in its discursive norms while they are simultaneously confronted with a historical condition that makes the fulfillment of these norms impossible. Liberal discourse imposes a certain structure of denial or disavowal over the liberal subject's placement within (and *dis*placement by) power; and it offers up no terms for avowing or

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119 Brown, States of Injury, 55.

working through this impossible or wounded condition. Blocked grief then accumulates and conducts into rancor and *ressentiment*, the latter of which is a "triple achievement" that produces "an affect (rage, righteousness) that overwhelms the hurt…a culprit responsible for the hurt…[and] a site of revenge to displace the hurt."[120] The inability to face down the incoherence of identity in late modernity produces a subject of *ressentiment* and a politics of rancor. Politicized identities become less a foundation for agency than defense mechanisms against the vertigiousness of identity as such—"a *substitute* for action, for power, for self-affirmation that re-inscribes incapacity, powerlessness and rejection."[121] Identity politics is trapped in the very charm of identity that it had hoped to dispel. Moreover, because it can only know itself from *within* this trap, it completes a self-negating circle that only serves to redouble pain and *ressentiment*.

Brown compares the haunting of late-modernity by the ghostly specter of the sovereign subject to that which, in Nietzsche's account, "breaks the will"—the "'it was'…the name of the will's gnashing of teeth and most secret melancholy."[122] The melancholy of the past haunts the present, and late modern liberal subjects seek to enact revenge against this incorporated object—but can only unleash attacks on substitute objects (while leaving the rejected model intact):

> "that which was…is the name of the stone [the will] cannot
> move…and so he moves [other] stones out of wrath and
> displeasure…thus the will, the liberator, took to hurting, and on all
> who suffer he wreaks revenge for his inability to go backwards…this
> …is the will's ill will against time and its 'it was.'"[123]

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120 Ibid., 68.
121 Ibid., 68. Emphasis mine.
122 Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spoke Zarathustra in The Portable Nietzsche, Walter Kaufmann, editor (New York: Penguin, 1976), 251.
123 Ibid., 252.

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For Brown, Nietzsche's diagnosis of subjective *ressentiment* also describes a late-modern political stasis where marginal identities usurp the claims of the centered subject only to stand in the place of that subject in order to deny the vertigiousness of action that would (or could) seek out emancipatory possibilities beyond the narrow confines of liberal dogma. In other words, by challenging the exclusions built into the mode of the nongendered and nonracialized subject, politicized identity (ironically, tragically) has not only fallen into the trap of identity/difference, but has served to exclude a broader critique of the political and economic norms of late modern capitalist societies. Standing back from the abyss that this critique of identity has opened—in fact, coming to resent this very abyss—the proliferating subject positions of the contemporary period only serve to re-inscribe and carry forward the values of the toppled (now *incorporated*) ideal of the bourgeois *citoyen*. Dug into a rut by discursive norms that were ostensibly dissatisfying, we remain ossified in a posture of digging that only deepens the problem.

If the political dilemma of late-modernity is a certain melancholic structure of fixation, then perhaps Nietzsche's "forgetting" proves to be a vital antidote to our malaise. Brown briefly entertains this possibility, but finds that it is "inappropriate if not cruel" given how the very challenges to the center from the margins were made possible by memories of painful and violent legacies of exclusion.[124] Despite his diagnostic accuracy, Nietzsche can only take us so far given his "privileging of the individual character and capacity over the transformative possibilities of collective political invention" (not to mention how the privileging of individual will is easily incorporated into the liberal fantasy of autonomy).[125]

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124 Brown, States of Injury, 75.
125 Ibid., 75.

And so Brown turns from Nietzsche towards the configuration of "a radically democratic political culture" that could acknowledge the "elements of suffering" built into late modern identities. For Brown, there is a possibility that the "problematic of pain…at the heart of contemporary contradictory demands for political recognition" primarily longs for (more than revenge) the "chance to be heard into a certain release…incited into possibilities for triumphing over, and hence losing, itself."[126] While Brown cautions against a "slide of political into therapeutic discourse," she seems to turn the Nietzschean practice of forgetting into a certain politics of mourning.

Perhaps, then, we could return to the decisive moment where Brown curved away from psychoanalysis and towards Nietzsche and Foucault, in order to reinsert the voice of Melanie Klein as an essential interlocutor in the debates over identity and identification and the possibilities of political mourning. What if we re-described Brown's description of wounded attachment and identity using Klein instead of Nietzsche? Does this get us past the impasse that Brown identifies in Nietzsche's valorization of the individual will at the expense of collective political invention? I think it does. In the wake of Klein, new, more democratic possibilities for subjectivity seem opened up—identity capable of escaping Nietzsche's "secret melancholy" of the "it was" through an iterable process of identification *with* the "it was." Instead of suffering from a twisted will that "gnashes its teeth" at the unwilled and immovable stone of the past, we could come to a more conscious acceptance and awareness of this past—seeing the "it was" (*Es war*) as part of Freud's "so I will become" (*soll Ich werden*). If Freud's maxim seems to overplay the role of the "Ich", then

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126 Ibid., 75.

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Klein corrects this excess by showing that the depressive acceptance of this inheritance is not an act of the individual will but a *relational* achievement. Brown calls this the "admixture" of the "language of 'being' with 'wanting,'" which serves to emphasize the inexpugnable futurity of the "Ich" that is perpetually coming-into-being (*werden*).[127] Brown, in the final analysis, wants us to see identity less as a hard reality or foundation stone for action than as an iterable and vulnerable process. We might say that the challenge is not to overcome the "wound" at the heart of identity, but to make this wound conscious in order to mourn it (in fact making it conscious, again and again, is an *act* of mourning). As I see it, Klein can help to chart the course for this style of politics, by showing the ways in which we can transition from Nietzschean resentment over wounded identity to *acceptance* of the vertigiousness of identity and action. I share Brown's anxiety about a slide from politics to therapy, but disavowing and denying the essential intertwinement between *psyche* and polis is no longer a viable position. The challenge, as Brown puts it, is to make psychoanalysts such as Klein an interlocutor while "bending" her towards history, "insedimenting" her with culture, and "tethering" her to economic and political context. In the next chapters, I explore this challenge.

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127 Ibid., 76.

Chapter 3: Bringing Ourselves to Grief: Judith Butler and the Democratic Superego

It is worth noting, however, that identification always relies upon a difference that it seeks to overcome, and that its aim is accomplished only by reintroducing the difference it claims to have vanquished. The one with whom I identify is not me, and that 'not being me' is the condition of the identification. Otherwise, as Jacqueline Rose reminds us, identification collapses into identity, which spells the death of identification itself.

—Judith Butler

Identity…should not be restricted to what one could not deny if questioned by a bigot of whatever denomination. It should be based on what one can assert as a positive core, an active mutuality, a real community. This would force fewer people to become (because they try too hard not to become) radical and religious caricatures. It would also force new standards on communities: do they or do they not provide, a positive, a non-neurotic, sense of identity?....People on this earth owe each other something like what I call identity.

—Erik Erikson

The cultivation of the superego arbitrarily breaks off the process of psychoanalytic enlightenment. But to make a public profession of consciencelessness is to sanction atrocity. So heavily weighs the conflict of social and psychological insight.

—Theodor Adorno

As stated in the first chapter, this dissertation sets out to make three primary interventions or claims. The first is that living legacies of racial trauma in the United States can be productively approached under the aegis of "mourning." The second claim, influenced by the work of object-relations psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, is that "mourning" is less a temporary state of affective sadness than an iterable (and, as such, endless) inter-subjective task of working through and integrating historical and enduring traumas into our individual and civic identities. The third intervention is into the heart of claims over and about "identity" itself, which I take to be less be a sedimented object with permanent features than as an ever-changing and inherently unstable entity-in-becoming. These interventions are predicated on the idea that object-relations psychoanalysis (and most

especially the work of Klein) can assist democratic theorists, social scientists, and concerned

citizens think about the practices and institutions that could give form to this work of

mourning; psychoanalysis "widens our semantic range" and makes us more sensitive to the

interactions between *psyche* and polis that often go unacknowledged or disavowed.[1] Yet such

claims are not made in a vacuum: psychoanalytic categories and concepts are already

operational in political theory. In this chapter I examine work in this vein by the radical

democratic theorist, Judith Butler. Of those writing at the intersection of political theory

and psychoanalytic theory, no one figure is perhaps more influential—or more notorious—

than Butler. Butler has, over the span of her career, repeatedly embarked on epic and path-

breaking flights of scholarship, which have been met with admiration, puzzlement, extreme

enthusiasm, and abject scorn. In her early work, she became one of the first North

American theorists to seriously engage the work of French poststructuralists such as

Foucault and Derrida, using these figures to think about the socially constructed nature of

gender and sex. In her more recent writings, Butler has engaged the work of Levinas and

Adorno in order to craft timely polemics aimed at some of the most urgent concerns of our

time, including the American cultural and political response to the terrorist attacks of

September 11, 2001 and the subsequent U.S. led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Throughout her entire career, Butler has been explicitly influenced by psychoanalytic theory.

In fact Butler has, perhaps more than any thinker writing today, helped to scale the largely

illegitimate boundaries between psychoanalysis and political theory, showing the extensive

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1 Joel Kovel, White Racism, 7.

overlap between each discipline's subjects of concern even as she has cautioned against reductionist readings that see political phenomena strictly through a psychological lens.

For the purposes of my project, Butler's work is crucial in three ways. First, her discussion of what makes for a "mournable" life helps to shed light on the precipitating events and subsequent experience of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Just as Klein and Freud help us to identify certain psychological resistances to the work of the Commission, Butler helps us to locate the effects of political and cultural norms that make certain lives grievable while leaving other losses unspoken. In this respect Butler's work makes us cautious of a certain style of grieving—what she calls "monumental" mourning—that, in its very articulation, denies or precludes the losses of others. Secondly, Butler's recent work on "precarious life" resonates with Klein's description of the depressive position. By arguing for a fundamental vulnerability and relationality inherent to human subjectivity, Butler has sketched the contours of a more ethically and politically responsive form of life. And, like Klein, Butler has argued that successful mourning does not require "forgetting" but rather a new relationship to what has been lost (and to loss as such). In these regards Butler is a vital ally for my efforts to describe a form of democratic *Trauerarbeit* that can address and work through (while not *leaving behind*) the manifold traumas surrounding race in the United States. She provides an important supplement to Klein with her focus on how historical inequalities of power and speech warp and twist the possibility of successful mourning as Klein describes it. Like Wendy Brown, Butler uses psychoanalysis to the extent that it can be "bent toward history," and "insedimented with culture."[2]

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2 Wendy Brown, States of Injury (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)

However, digging deeper into Butler's work reveals a fundamental obstacle to such an alliance. Put briefly, Butler's promiscuous appropriation of Freud installs within her analytic an aggressive negativity that ultimately compromises her own theoretical and political positions. Butler uses Freud (primarily) and Klein (tangentially) to build an argument about the failures of identification—gender, political, cultural, and subjective. Her concern in doing so is to describe all life as structurally "melancholic." For Butler, all subjectivity is scarred by disavowed loss and effaced vulnerability. Several critics have faulted Butler for "smuggling in" such seemingly ontological claims while maintaining a poststructuralist and social constructivist posture, and certainly this inconsistency is troublesome.[3] Yet the larger problem is that Butler's investments in both a melancholic structure to subjectivity and the immanent failure of any identity or mode of identification have flattened Freud's and Klein's distinction between mourning and melancholia, leaving no other possible response to loss than an absolute fidelity or fixation to what has departed—an Antigone-inspired "loyalty to death." However, for Butler this fidelity is less to any particular dead object than to death *qua* negativity, to that which precedes or eludes the grasp of social and cultural prohibition. In the terms of previous chapters, Butler offers a politics of fixation over a politics of forgetting—reinforcing a false dichotomy that needs to be exposed and reconfigured. If Butler provides an important corrective to Klein's ahistorical tendencies, then Klein can help us to think beyond the fixated or melancholic structure of identity and political action as Butler describes it.

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3 See Moya Lloyd, Judith Butler: From Norms to Politics (New York: Polity Press, 2007), John Seery, "Acclaim for Antigone's Claim Reclaimed (or, Steiner, Contra Butler)," Theory and Event Vol. 9, No. 1 (2006), Slavoj Zizek, "Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes, please!" in Butler, Laclau, and Zizek, Contingency, Hegemony, Universality (London: Verso, 2000). Butler repeatedly denies that she is doing this.

Despite her near-continual reflection on the politics of mourning over two decades of scholarship, Butler has failed to fully appreciate the importance of *working through* ("again and again") loss. She is content to reduce grief to grievance, and to reduce mourning to a scene of recognition where our vulnerability and relationality are revealed. Yet as I have shown in the previous chapters, recognition is only one part of the work of mourning; we also need to attend to the task of integrating loss into a structure of political and subjective identity—an identity that is fragile because *all* identity is fragile (because iterable, perpetually subject to revision and rebuilding). This is a project to which Butler, at certain moments, seems committed. In fact, given Butler's explicit concerns—exposing social melancholia, and thinking about ethical and political life on the basis of inter-subjective vulnerability—her work at the intersection of psychoanalytic and political theory would have been more helpful and more convincing if she had started with Melanie Klein. Instead Butler exhibits a strange allegiance to (a certain) Freud, despite the latter's deep contempt for the very subjective vulnerability that she is calling her readers to acknowledge. This peculiar relation to Freud has caused Butler to miss an opportunity to enlist Klein and other object-relations theorists in an effort to think more clearly about the modes and meanings of dependency. Yet more profound than this lack is Butler's hesitance to offer a theory of democratic identification— precisely what I am offering with my Klein-derived theory of democratic *Trauerarbeit*. Butler's recent turn to an identification with a superego derived from the Levinasian "face of the other" does not address this absence but is an idealization that subsists alongside—and, in fact, *requires*—a persecuting face of a hostile opponent, a visage frozen in a permanent sneer. Klein, on the other hand, helps us to see that idealization and persecution go together and feed off each other—Butler's oscillation between the poles of subjective aggression and

ontological vulnerability resemble, in fact, Klein's description of the paranoid-schizoid position. Political theorists concerned with democratic possibilities in the wake of trauma must work to develop a theory of mourning that leaves behind this melancholic compromise, which only serves to reinforce psychological, cognitive and political dogmatism. Hence the third way in which Butler is crucial to this project—namely, as a point of contrast regarding the role of psychoanalysis in democratic theory and the place of democracy in psychic life.   Using the GTRC as an example, I will show how Butler's sublimated agon—while better than all-out violence and more realistic than non-violence— does not go deep or far enough given the profound psychic and political needs of the American polity. Instead we must continue to mitigate melancholic forms of politics through any and all "depressive" means available. But to do this requires a successful—if perpetually fragile—identification with democratic objects and norms through exposure to, and habitual practice within, democratic institutions. In short, what we need is a *democratic* superego.

This chapter proceeds in the following fashion. In the first section I will trace Butler's appropriation of mourning and melancholia as analytic tropes, focusing in particular on what she has called the "conditions of grievability:" the interpretive frames that make certain lives mournable while leaving other losses unacknowledged. Butler's hope is that the recognition of these frames will make citizens more aware of "precarious life:" life that is perpetually subjected to forces outside its own control, given our "unwilled sociality." I argue that Butler's recent work sheds powerful light on processes such as the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and that the labor of "bringing ourselves to grief" has the potential to support democratic reflection on public trauma or loss.

In the second section, however, I argue that Butler's theory is itself "brought to grief" by experiences like the GTRC. Primarily I reveal Butler's problematic assumptions about the ethical orientation of vulnerable or precarious life. While she admits that generosity and openness are contingent—rather than necessary—outcomes from recognition of vulnerability, Butler has not seriously engaged the means by which we could "perform" such outcomes. It is not that individual subjects are incapable of adequately integrating the anxious experience of being-vulnerable-to-others into their lives. But the pathological compromises of group identity often split off this vulnerability only to re-internalize it as persecution, which then feeds denial and disavowal rather than acceptance and working through. Butler is sensitive to this tendency within group psychology, but a) she does not fully acknowledge how her own implicit theory of identification with a Levinasian "face of the other," far from mitigating the pathologies of life in groups, actually re-inscribes them, and b) she does not theorize a mode of democratic identification with plural, contentious and imperfect others that would mitigate cognitive and psychological dogmatism and establish a cultural/political work of mourning in place of these (individual and collective) defense mechanisms. These missteps in her theory have serious political consequences, as I will show below.

In the third section I develop this critique of Butler by tracing her failings to a promiscuous reading of Freud and Klein on the development of conscience and the modes of identification. Starting from Nietzschean and Foucaultian premises, Butler misreads Freud's theories of the superego and flattens his distinction between mourning and melancholia. Both of these moves eliminate the Kleinian supposition that the work of mourning is primarily a *means* of "depressive" identification through the experience of loss.

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Butler instead posits a melancholic structure to identity that can be parodied and worked

against but not overcome or worked through. This leads her to a view of politics as

agonistic struggle over and against any efforts at negotiation, compromise, and deliberation.

Butler is concerned with grief only insofar as it is affective (and hopefully effective)

grievance or protest against what she calls the "reigning epistemes of cultural intelligibility."[4]

However, because she has not yet offered a theory of democratic identification, she has not

been able to any defend existing or emerging epistemes of intelligibility as normatively valid.

Yet surely we want to say that some exclusions are more just than others—the felt loss of

Klansmen who mourn the disappearance of a (phantastic) racial purity should not be

honored as highly as the grief of those threatened or actively persecuted by racial

discrimination. Butler's influential theories of performativity effectively show that the power

of prohibitive norms and interpretive frames is dependent on their repetition over time. Yet

Butler has not shown us which political norms *ought* to be identified with and (re)performed,

if we hope to live a more democratic life; instead she has turned towards Levinas in a move

that supplants political responsibility with ethical responsiveness.

Given these identified lacks in Butler's theory, in the fourth section of this chapter I

turn to Klein's account of conscience and the possibility for reflective subjectivity that goes

beyond Butler's melancholic compromises. I argue that the transition from the melancholic

to the mourning subject is one that Butler needs to make in order for her theories of

precarious life and grievability to have the impact she would like them to have. Butler is

invested in the failures of identification because she fears the violence and denial that are

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4 Judith Butler, Antigone's Claim (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).

behind the assertions of hard, impermeable 'identity.' Yet as the quotes above from Erikson

and Adorno remind us, identity is not optional, and to abandon the search for justified

forms of life is to sanction atrocity. The task is not to flee identity but to locate and practice

a mode of identification that makes democratic politics possible. Along these lines I argue

for a theory of ambivalent identification that would mark the shift from the melancholic to

the mourning subject. By offering institutions and practices like the GTRC as democratic

objects of identification, we can perform a mode of politics that mitigates the pathologies of

group and individual psychology as they intersect, intertwine, and feed off each other—

without reducing politics to psychology or therapy.

3.1 Antigone in Greensboro: Cultural melancholia and precarious life

"The public sphere is constituted in part by what cannot be said and what cannot be shown.
The limits of the sayable, the limits of what can appear, circumscribe the domain in which
political speech operates and certain kinds of subjects appear as viable actors."
— Butler, *Precarious Life*

"Part of what Greensboro needs to address in its own truth and reconciliation process, then,
is to explore and disclose the ways in which the old rules of the 'progressive mystique' and
'civilities' served as a means of reinforcing the racial status quo…unless and until people of
all backgrounds are ready to deflate the mystique and examine its consequences, it will be
difficult if not impossible to arrive at a fresh start where manners and courtesy operate
effectively because people have equal power; not as a means of keeping some people in
subservience to others."
— William Chafe, GTRC Executive Summary

"My City! Rich citizens of my city!
You springs of Dirce, you holy groves of Thebes,
Famed for its chariots! I would still have you as my witnesses,
With what dry-eyed friends, under what laws
I make my way to my prison sealed like a tomb."
— Antigone

Butler's interest in psychoanalytic accounts of mourning and melancholia traces back to her influential account of gender constructivism in *Gender Trouble*. There Butler wrote about "aborted" or "foreclosed" mourning (i.e. melancholia) surrounding homosexual desire. Because this desire faced social prohibition, homosexual losses could not be registered or acknowledged. In this regard, the "absence of cultural conventions for avowing the loss of homosexual love" amounted to a "preemption of grief."[5] Famously, Butler claimed that the disavowed losses of polymorphous desire implicated *all* gender norms in structural melancholia. Drawing from Freud's account of character formation through gender consolidation, Butler argued that a foundational repudiation of same-sex desire inaugurates the gendered subject. In this way, the child internalizes, as "an interior moral directive," a prohibition resulting from social taboo. By accepting this directive, the heretofore loose or anarchic desire of the infant and young child is channeled according to the dictates of cultural prejudice—and the "loss" that occurs at this moment cannot thereafter be consciously acknowledged or mourned. The loss, denied as such, becomes unspeakable. This pattern—of loss, disavowal, and melancholia—is a trope that Butler has evoked again and again throughout her subsequent interventions.

Since her early writings on gender construction, Butler has employed the themes of mourning and melancholia in writing about the AIDS crisis, the American-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the cultural and political climate in the United States following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and U.S. practices of indefinite detention and torture of "enemy combatants" captured during what the George W. Bush administration referred

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5 Judith Butler, The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 147.

to as the "global war on terror." In all of this work Butler has sought to make a political

point about the paucity of available means for the public expression of certain losses—the

inability of the aggrieved to make their grief visible and known because these losses are

proscribed or foreclosed from the very beginning. As Butler argued, the losses from AIDS

could not rise above the stigma attached to gay culture and homosexual desire, just as the

recent deaths of civilians caught up in the global war on terror have had difficulty breaking

through the dominant administrative and media frames of the conflict. In these instances,

melancholia is less an individual pathology than a political phenomenon—or, rather, it is

both. As Butler put it, "where there is no public recognition or discourse through which

such [losses] might be named and mourned, then melancholia takes on cultural

dimensions…."[6]

The preemption or foreclosure of mourning, in effect, doubles the trauma of loss.

Butler cites Orlando Patterson's work on slavery and "social death" to highlight the

deleterious consequences of proscribed grief.[7] On Patterson's reading, slavery not only

deprived its victims of the human rights of dignity and respect, but it denied to the slave the

social and cultural support structures that make human life possible in the first place.[8] To

say "slave" was not to indicate that there was a human being in bondage, but precisely to

demarcate the limits of human life.[9] Losses do not appear because life itself does not appear:

6 Ibid., 139.

7 Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

8 See Butler's citing of Patterson in Antigone's Claim, pgs. 55 and 73. Yet note Butler's disagreements with Patterson on pg. 74, regarding the supposed naturalness of patriarchy. For a compelling account of how American slaves created cultural norms in the face of unspeakable violence and oppression, see John Wesley Blassingame, The Slave Community (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

9 "Whiteness" named not merely a physiological trait, but a social fact. As Malcolm X wryly observed, "When the white man says he's white, he means something else…You can listen to the sound of his voice — when he says he's white, he means he's boss." "After the Bombing," Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements (New York: Grove Press, 1990). See also Joel Olsen, The Abolition of White Democracy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

in order for slavery to be mourned, the human life of the slave had to be (performatively) established. One such performance was Frederick Douglass' speech, "What to the Slave is the 4th of July?" Douglass' reading is profound on many levels, but perhaps the most interesting part of its performance is the way in which Douglass incessantly refers to the speech's "impossibility." It is a matter of "astonishment" that Douglass is present to give the speech, given the immense distance from the speaker's platform and the slave plantation where his life began. This "astonishment" gives way to an incredulity about Douglass' presence on the rostrum: "why am I called upon to speak here to-day? What have I, or those I represent, to do with your national independence?" Douglass creates cognitive dissonance by referring to the crowd repeatedly as "my fellow citizens" while speaking only of "your" (and not 'our') independence, "your" celebration. Ultimately Douglass enacts a reversal by turning a celebratory oration into a mourning dirge: "this Fourth [of] July is yours, not mine. You may rejoice, I must mourn." By insisting on a register of lament, Douglass gives a voice to "the mournful wail of millions!...whose chains, heavy and grievous yesterday, are, to-day, rendered more intolerable by the jubilee shouts that reach them." In so doing he presses for a recognition among the audience: an expanded understanding not only of the American Revolution but also of the boundaries of the human. For Butler, as for Patterson and Douglass, a life cannot be lost or grieved if there is no "life" in the first place—the recognition of a life marks the most essential "condition of grievability."

As the debate surrounding the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission demonstrates, the aborted mourning surrounding slavery and race continues to resonate in both conscious and unconscious ways (despite undeniable if uneven progress). For traumas surrounding racial discrimination and violence, mourning is precluded by a symbolic

framework that structures cultural patterns of visibility. Certain losses or traumas do not rise

to the level of conscious public awareness, and this social fact is not unrelated to histories of

stigma and discrimination. To be sure, the history of racial trauma in the United States has

been more fully developed and worked through in both public and academic forums since

the time of Frederick Douglass. Yet Butler and Patterson would continue to call our

attention to the explicit and unconscious structuring of the public sphere whereby certain

losses are denied or foreclosed upon. The Final Report of the Greensboro TRC does this as

well, by radically altering the interpretive frame by which many had come to see and

understand issues of race and violence in the life of the community. For instance, the report

asks its readers to re-imagine the events of November 3, 1979 by switching the races of the

central protagonists. By reversing the reader's optics, the report is able to reveal a powerful

(yet partly unconscious) framework that goes some distance in explaining why blacks and

whites reflected differently on the events:

> Imagine for a moment that these elements [of the event] would have
> been racially reversed, viewed as a photographic negative. Imagine a
> group of demonstrators is holding a demonstration against black
> terrorism in the affluent white community of Irving Park. A caravan
> of armed black terrorists is allowed to drive unobstructed to the
> parade starting point, and photos are taken by the police as
> demonstrators are shot dead. Most of the cars are then allowed to
> flee the scene, unpursued, even as they threaten neighborhood
> pedestrians by pointing shotguns through the windows. The
> defendants are tried and acquitted by an all-black jury. The first
> shots—fired by the blacks screaming "Shoot the Crackers!" and
> "Show me a Cracker with guts and I'll show you a black man with a
> gun!"—are described by black defense attorneys and accepted by
> jurors as "calming shots." Meanwhile, the city government takes
> steps to block citizen protest of black terrorist violence including a
> curfew in the white neighborhood.[10]

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10 Brown, C., P. Clark, M. Jost, R. Peters, M. Sills, et al. "Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report: Executive Summary" (Greensboro: Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2006).

As the report surmises, the described events are "so unlikely as to be preposterous," yet "in racial reverse, it is exactly what happened."[11]   By asking its readers to reflect not only on the event but on its interpretive context, the final report makes a statement about the difficulty of honoring traumas when they cannot surmount stigma and register at the level of public awareness—in this case the trauma of a racial filter that affects how we interpret and judge the world. By trading on and eliciting deep-seated and largely unconscious prejudices, the Final Report is able to implicate the citizens of Greensboro in a "preposterous" situation. What makes the events unbelievable are habituated stereotypes and preconceptions surrounding race, violence, justice, and terror. As Butler and Patterson would argue, we operate all the time under the sway of powerful (conscious and unconscious) normative proscriptions and prohibitions, which not only make certain events "preposterous" but which make certain losses unmournable and certain lives unlivable. The full impact of the events in Greensboro could not be comprehended by the majority of the community because the events had already been "framed" by a deeply embedded cultural understanding (largely unconscious) that made the difference between acceptable and "preposterous" behavior largely one of color. Because we cannot always see the enframing structure of the visible, we cannot easily bring ourselves to an awareness of how this structure might delegitimize or conceal certain traumas. In order to achieve this awareness, we have to *bring ourselves to grief*: we must scrutinize the conditions by which certain lives are made possible, while others are allowed to disappear in silence.

11 Ibid., 31.

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Butler's work, like Freud's and Klein's, is committed to revealing the unconscious habits of mind and action that proscribe the orders of meaning and mourning—the "reigning epistemes of cultural intelligibility." As she puts it, "a frame for understanding violence emerges in tandem with the experience, and that frame works both to preclude certain kinds of questions…."[12] For instance, in describing the dominant response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Butler laments the fact that efforts to contextualize the terrorists' actions in a history of U.S. foreign intervention, or in global patterns of poverty and religiosity, were delegitimized (almost *a priori*) as rationalizations or justifications for the attacks. Instead media coverage focused on the attackers' personal histories and on shadowy Al Qaeda "masterminds" like Osama bin Laden. On her understanding, this was largely an effort to make sense of the events by situating them within a recognizable frame of subjective agency and charismatic leadership. As she puts it, "isolating the individuals involved absolves us of the necessity of coming up with a broader explanation for events."[13] Recall that a similar process of distancing and "othering" occurred after the events of November 1979 in Greensboro. Citizens and city officials alike adopted the idea that the Klan and GAPP protestors were each "outsiders" to the life of the community. The events were framed as a conflict between two equally repugnant groups that "had nothing to do with Greensboro."[14] We can see how such frames both grow out of and make more convincing the psychological defense mechanism that Klein referred to as "paranoid-schizoid splitting." This melancholic compromise insists on defending an idealized object by projecting hatred and animosity into a persecuting "outside" figure. By splitting the social

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12 Judith Butler, Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence (London: Verso, 2004), 4.
13 Ibid., 5.
14 Lisa Magarrell and Joya Wesley, Learning from Greensboro: Truth and Reconciliation in the United States (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 30.

world into an attacked and vulnerable "us" (the United States; the city of Greensboro) and an aggressive and willfully destructive "them" (Al Qaeda; the Klan, and the CWP), we subsist in a melancholic denial of a more ambiguous reality. In Kleinian language, we remain stuck in the paranoid-schizoid position—incapable of coming to terms with or working through grief because we fail to recognize its full scale.

Public mourning operating under these signs, then, will not be *mourning* at all—at least on Kleinian terms. Instead of starting from an ambiguous picture of social reality born of the depressive (mourning) position—a world inhabited by "dirty…but valuable" objects—public grievance freezes into a melancholic protest against "evil-doers" who threaten our values, our freedom, and—the unspoken anxiety beneath these claims—our innocence. What Butler calls "spectacular public grief" operates less as a meditation on the fragility of life than as a rationale for extreme measures to provide security, or as a justification of retribution. Such "monumental" mourning forecloses spaces of reflection whereby these particular losses can be worked through.[15] By contrast, for Klein, mourning is the work of internalizing, by identifying with, the departed other, but it is also a task of integrating the experience of loss as such, in order to appreciate the fragility of the external and internal worlds. Yet the art of bringing ourselves to grief in this sense is not always practicable, if grief is interpreted only to mean grievance, or if the hurt experienced in the wake of loss is quickly turned around and projected onto those who harmed us. Here Butler (and Patterson and Douglass) provides a corrective adjustment to Klein through her

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15 Thomas Dumm, "Giving Away, Giving Over: A Conversation with Judith Butler," The Massachusetts Review, June, 2008.

attention to the cultural and political support structures necessary for the work of avowing and working through loss and trauma.

Mourning is not always possible, then, even when it seems to be going on all around us. It requires a sympathetic and patient "holding environment," or, in Butler's words, a *frame*. However, both Butler's polemical accounting of the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001, and the patient efforts of the GTRC, reveal that the interpretive frames structuring the "conditions of grievability" are susceptible to rupture and even to radical reconfiguration. For Butler, Antigone—the perpetually troublesome figure of resistance and rebellion who has played a central role in political philosophy since at least the time of Hegel—represents the possibility of refusing or upsetting the hegemonic orders of the intelligible by which grief is portioned out. She does so by revealing what Butler calls the "aberrant temporality of the norm."[16] In other words, Antigone's protest reveals the organizing norm's contingency and vulnerability—its dependency on sustained performances that are never guaranteed. Creon's edict outlawing mourning rites for the traitor Polynieces—standing as it does on the will of the tyrant and the obedience of the citizenry—functions only insofar as it is seen as legitimate by the citizens of Thebes. Antigone's insistent refusal to recognize Creon's law gives momentum to growing doubts within the city—voiced first in the play by Haemon and later by the chorus of Theban elders. Antigone sparks a political conflagration by refusing the frame that organizes the city's grief. For Butler, Antigone's predicament offers an "allegory" about similar crises in our time. As she puts it, "Antigone refuses to obey any law that refuses public recognition

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16 Butler, Antigone's Claim, 29.

of her loss, and in this way prefigures the situation that those with publicly ungrievable

losses—from AIDS, for instance—know too well."[17] By her actions Antigone hints at the

possibility that we might resist, re-perform, and reconfigure the discursive norms and frames

that bind us. She does this, on Butler's reading, less because of whom she *is* than because of

the way in which her actions indicate the proliferating excess of desire that can never be fully

captured by prohibitive edicts. Antigone's politics consist in the way that she temporarily

gives voice a "limit" that is "internal to normative construction itself."[18] Following Foucault

(while modifying Althusser), Butler posits an inherent instability to discursive subjection and

normative "interpellation." The norm or prohibition that structures subjectivity never fully

determines the subject because,

> "the 'subject' created is not for that reason fixed in place: it becomes the
> occasion for a further making…a subject only remains a subject through a
> reiteration or rearticulation of itself as a subject, and this dependency of the
> subject on repetition for coherence may constitute that subject's
> incoherence."[19]

To translate: foundational prohibitive norms by which a subject gains an identity are

less like the solid limestone foundation stones for the Egyptian pyramids than the irregularly

shaped rocks of a New England border fence. And Butler, like Robert Frost, posits

"something there is that doesn't love a wall. That wants it down."[20] Unless identifications

are perpetually shored up, they will fail.[21] Beyond Antigone's particular claims over the body

of her fallen brother, her actions are exemplary because they force a polis-wide recognition

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17 Ibid., 24.

18 Judith Butler, Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable? (London: Verso, 2009), 4. Butler's faith in an immanent limit to normative/discursive subject formation is indebted to Foucault's late work on "conduct of self."

19 Butler, Psychic Life of Power, 99.

20 Robert Frost, "Mending Wall" in The Poetry of Robert Frost: The Collected Poems (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2002).

21 Could this be a hidden Aristotelianism in Butler? Discursive production, like friendship or virtue, is a habit built from and sustained by incessant practice. Compare William Connolly on the micro-politics of sovereignty in Pluralism (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

of the law's inherent instability and the subject's constitutive incoherence. Antigone, in other words, is the first deconstructionist. She "troubles" the rigid distinctions of the polis: over who can speak in public, and over what losses should be mourned and how.

By protesting the frame that delegitimizes her grief, Butler's Antigone has drawn attention to the politics of mourning—a struggle over whose losses will be recognized and honored. Yet in her more recent work, Butler has developed the possibility of a second scene of recognition resulting from the experience of grief. Beyond our ability to discern and challenge the conditions of grievability, the fact of mourning can "indicate something about the precariousness of life."[22] Precariousness heralds a "keener sense of life" through which we recognize our inter-dependence with others—those who are both familiar and strange, near and distant; it means that our bodies are "exposed to social crafting and form," and that, because of this, our "lives are profoundly implicated in the lives of others."[23] Tying her theory of precariousness back to her understanding of melancholic subjectivity, Butler locates the "source of ethical connection to others" in a "wound" that testifies to "my own foreignness to myself."[24] Recall that identification, according to Butler, is an inherently failing enterprise, due to an essential negativity or resistance that troubles the discursive production of subjects via prohibitive norms.[25] If a disavowed loss inaugurates the gendered, cultured subject—by establishing a space of opacity, a loose stitch in a seemingly

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22 Dumm, "Giving Away, Giving Other: A Conversation with Butler."

23 Butler, Frames of War, 3; Precarious Life, 7.

24 Judith Butler, Giving an Account of Oneself (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 89.

25 Butler has been inconsistent in her articulation of this space of noncommensurability that causes identification to fail. Sometimes she speaks of multiple identifications that, in effect, create friction through their incompatible demands and, in the process, have their contingency and vulnerability exposed. This is what she calls the "'non-convergence' of discourses." Contingency, Hegemony, Universality, 37. At other times Butler speaks of unruly or anarchic "desire" or "the body" that simply cannot be fully captured by interpellating forces. At these moments Butler usually draws on Spinoza and his idea of conatus. Psychic Life of Power, 62. Since this latter effort pushes Butler uncomfortably close to an ontological claim, she often retreats from this stance and theorizes a failure of the process of identification: discursive formation cannot help but to incite a desire for resistance as, and insofar as, it attempts to rule out such a desire. This last claim is close to where Foucault seemingly ended up.

smooth pattern—this trauma can be acknowledged in order to form the basis for a more

generous ethical and political orientation to others. This ethical orientation does not take

the form of Rousseauian natural pity (a repugnance to seeing others suffer), but rather is

drawn from a sense of "exposure" to and "dependency" on "people we know, or barely

know, or know not at all."[26] Drawing on Levinas' idea of a primary relation and

responsibility to the absolute face of the Other, Butler—while rejecting Levinas' theological

overtones—wonders whether such inter-dependent relationality is an experience that can be

"tarried with" or held open in order that we can "stay responsive to the equal claim of the

other for shelter, for conditions of livability and grievability."[27]

Mourning for Butler, then, is a scene of double recognition. Through experiences of

the "impossible"—the irruption of Antigone into the public sphere, the interruptions of life

represented by ACT UP "die-ins" during the early years of the AIDS crisis, the performative

re-reading of an American celebration into a mourning dirge by Frederick Douglas[28]—we

can discern the political frames by which grief is organized. Once this structure is revealed,

we can work to destabilize these norms and avow heretofore unspeakable losses. The

second recognition drawn from grief is the other side of Butler's mourning politics: since

"grief limits the will," and reveals the essential precariousness of life, it is a powerful means

by which we can acknowledge and honor our (and others') inter-dependency—leading,

Butler hopes, to a less violent form of politics and life. In other words, we bring our*selves* to

grief; we recognize the incoherent or ek-static nature of human subjectivity. Or, in Butler's

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26 Butler, Frames of War, 14.

27 Ibid., 184. It is interesting that Butler does not connect her discussion of the Levinasian "face" to the Foucaultian image of the panopticonal "gaze." Butler seemingly wants to distinguish between our "ethical impingement" by others (hence the discussion of Levinas) and the "discursive impingement" by norms (i.e. Foucault and Althusser), but she never quite, to my knowledge, establishes this argument.

28 Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the 4th of July?" Selected Speeches and Writings (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1999).

words, we acknowledge, "that the 'I,' first comes into being as a 'me' through being acted

upon by an other, and this primary impingement is already and from the start an ethical

interpellation."[29] An appreciation of subjective precariousness can in turn lead us to reflect

on objective "precarity"—the "politically induced condition in which certain

populations…become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death."[30] Our lives and

desires (even our deaths) are not present within us but are granted or given by socio-cultural

powers over which we have little influence. Recognizing this, Butler hopes, will lead us to a

presumptive generosity for those who are currently marginalized by the reigning epistemes

of cultural intelligibility.[31]

The Greensboro TRC helps us to make sense of Butler's claims (and vice versa). On

this reading the GTRC was not only a public institution designed to investigate a particular

event in the life of the community, but a "scene of recognition" in the doubled sense that

Butler offers: a recognition of the interpretive frames by which losses are made visible and

honored, and an acknowledgement of the inter-dependency and vulnerability of life as such.

In Greensboro, the "progressive mystique" was a style of "monumental" grieving that

sufficed to delegitimize continued grief over racial trauma through celebratory myths about

civil rights victories. In effect, the city's grieving over its violent past served not as a

perpetually refreshed opportunity to reflect on and identify with past violence but to

celebrate its past successes. In many ways such monumental grieving served, in William

Chafe's words, to "reinforce the racial status quo."[32] As the final report put it, "for many of

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29 Butler, Giving An Account, 89.
30 Butler, Frames of War, 25.
31 A generosity extending even to so-called "enemy combatants" currently incarcerated at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. See Butler on Guantanamo poetry, Frames of War, 55-62.
32 Brown et al., "Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report: Executive Summary," 1.

its citizens, Greensboro has been a model of progressive moderation in times of tumultuous social change, while at the same time many in its black community have felt that this enforced moderation has often been another form of refusing change."[33] The GTRC hoped to break through this frame by revealing its (largely unconscious) operation—by showing how norms of "progressivism" and "civility" actually foreclosed grief over discrimination in the past and present.

Secondly, by reflecting on the traumatic events of November, 1979 the GTRC was able to emphasize both a precariousness to individual and collective life (its susceptibility to violent rupture) and the differential distribution of this precariousness within the community. By giving public space to the victims—five empty chairs in the front row were reserved for each meeting—and also to the intransigent voices of Klan members, the GTRC emphasized the ways, in Butler's language, in which the citizens of Greensboro were "exposed" to and "implicated" in each other's lives. In this respect, the experience of the GTRC was a powerful example of how we might bring ourselves (and our*selves*) to grief.

However, as I have claimed in earlier chapters, mourning is not simply a process of recognition, or protest, but a means of working through ("again and again") loss and trauma. Butler has drawn our attention to the politics of grief, but she has hesitated to describe how we might move beyond a "tarrying" with grief towards a work of mourning. Moreover, she has not provided an adequate account of the dense layer of defense mechanisms by which individuals and collectivities evade such "recognition scenes." If Butler supplements Klein with an attentiveness to power and cultural norms, then Klein might provide a necessary

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33 Ibid., 60.

corrective to Butler's incessant melancholia. In the next section I describe why we need to

go beyond such melancholia if we hope to fully appreciate the potentials—and pitfalls—of a

democratic work of mourning.

3.2 Bringing Butler to Grief

In her work that draws explicitly on psychoanalytic theory Butler has avoided or

disavowed the possibility of what Freud called "working through" (*Durcharbeiten*) and the

"work of mourning" (*Trauerarbeit*), and what Klein referred to as the "depressive position."

Her worry is seemingly that these concepts provide cover for edicts to "move on," which

themselves collude with oppressive norms that deny the full scale and scope of loss in our

social and subjective lives. Butler dismisses the narcissistic picture of Freud's early account

of mourning because it heralds a quick forgetting of the other through a denial of

fundamental inter-relationality. But, more importantly, Butler dismisses the idea of working

through because of a worry that its supposed bias towards "closure" or "resolution" will

serve to conceal the remainders and fissures of social and subjective identity. Efforts to

deny this opacity too quickly slide towards violence against those who trouble our sense of

self. It is in this vein that Butler reads President George W. Bush's "time-limit" on grieving

after the events of September 11th as an illegitimate resolution of an experience of grief with

which we needed to tarry.[34] Mourning is too teleological for Butler, who instead sees the

task of bringing ourselves to grief as an endless challenge (endless because the face of the

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34 Dumm, "Giving Away, Giving Other: A Conversation with Butler," 99.

Other will always require more than we are ever prepared to give).[35] Mourning, for Butler, is another word for the infinite task that faces a (collective and individual) subject that can never fully know itself, can never "be" a coherent and unified whole. In this respect Butler seems to follow Derrida when he (playfully) re-inscribed the Cartesian maxim *cogito ergo sum* into *Je suis endeuille donc je suis*: "I mourn, therefore I am."[36]

What would Butler make of the experience of Greensboro during and after the operation of its Truth and Reconciliation Commission? To be sure, the GTRC represented a commitment to re-examining if not "tarrying" with a particularly painful episode in the life of the community. Additionally, as described above, the GTRC gives flesh to Butler's oft-abstract ideas surrounding the conditions of grievability and the precariousness of life. Yet insofar as the Final Report of the Commission heralded and hoped for a restoration and "genuine healing" of the community, Butler would again raise a dissenting voice. So would Klein, as we have seen from previous chapters. However, there is a crucial difference between Klein's and Butler's possible objections: namely, that Klein is still (immanently) committed to a process of mourning whereby individual and social conflict can be mitigated through an inter-subjective depressive working through of trauma. Butler, on the other hand, has evocatively described the power and politics of grief but has hesitated to articulate a work of mourning that could take place at either the political or individual level. In this section I aim to show how Butler's hesitancy to make this move has mitigated the intended political and ethical effects of her work.

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35 Alford, "Levinas and Political Theory," Political Theory 32, no. 1 (2004), 158-159.
36 Quoted in Nicholas Royle, Jacques Derrida (London: Routledge, 2003), 152.

Recent critics have faulted Butler for what they see as an unjustified assumption about the (positive) ethical orientation of precarious life.[37] These criticisms echo earlier concerns that Butler's theories of performativity undermine moral judgments without providing a viable alternative.[38] In light of the events in Greensboro, these criticisms become especially relevant. For instance, was it not a feeling of precariousness—of being "impinged" upon by others—that was at the root of the Klan's actions on November 3rd, 1979? Certainly Klan members tried to justify their actions by the fact that the GAPP/CWP protest was entitled "Death to the Klan."[39] Why should we refuse the Klan's attempted "re-framing" of the "conditions of grievability"—their performative insistence that the loss of a "white Christian nation" should be recognized and mourned? Does Butler give us good reasons to deny the Klan's claims that the real threat is an internal (communist, terrorist, immigrant[40]) enemy out to "destroy all Christians, all our churches…destroy our country"?[41]

This style of argumentation might seem like a *reductio ad absurdum*, and in fact such criticisms, while not entirely baseless, are unfair to the nuances of Butler's arguments. Butler has repeatedly emphasized the possibility that recognition or awareness of vulnerability often leads to violence, if not to all-out war. As she puts it, precariousness does not lead to non-violence or herald an overcoming of aggression; it is instead "a matter of wrestling ethically

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37 Moya Lloyd, "Towards a Cultural Politics of Vulnerability," Judith Butler's Precarious Politics: Critical Encounters (London: Routledge, 2008), 104.

38 Martha Nussbaum is powerful on this point. "The Professor of Parody: The Hip, Defeatist Feminism of Judith Butler," New Republic (1999).

39 Here is an excerpt from the GTRC testimony of Virgil Griffin, a leader of the NC KKK in 1979: "If Paul Bermanzohn and Nelson Johnson hadn't put that poster up [the "Death to the Klan" poster], it wouldn't-a happened….The blame is on Nelson Johnson putting that poster up, and Paul Bermanzohn and the Communist Party for letting him. That's the only reason I came to Greensboro. If they hadn't put that poster up saying I was scum hidin' under a rock, I'd-a been in another town rallying. I don't go around protestin' other people's rallies….That poster is the only reason I came to Greensboro, and it is clearly the Communist Party's fault that poster was put out. I don't put out a poster callin' the Communists - I don't agree with 'em, disagree with 'em - I disagree with 'em, don't believe they have no right in this country period."

40 These terms run together in contemporary KKK literature.

41 These words are taken from a film clip, "Virgil Griffin: In his own words." This video is available at the following web address: http://www.veoh.com/browse/videos/category/education/watch/v687186RKKrZFrp

with one's own murderous impulses, impulses that seek to quell an overwhelming fear…."[42] Butler advises us to accept "the prospects for aggression [that] pervade social life," which—in Kleinian fashion—she thinks are ineliminable features of the human condition. However, Butler often seems to assume that "proper" recognition will make the world less violent, since it will inspire a "way of ceding to the ties that bind and unbind," which takes the form of "resistance" against the "frames by which war is wrought time and again."[43] If we can recognize and break through these frames we might bring about a less violent politics that honors and protects the precarious bodies dispersed throughout the world.

Yet Butler has neglected to fully analyze a crucial cause of mis-recognition, namely the very relational ties that she is constantly invoking. Another way of saying "primary sociality" is to say "groupishness."   As Freud came to understand, the dividing line between individual and group psychology vanishes as we attempt to draw it. Or, as he put it, "in the individual's mental life someone else is invariably involved, as a model, as an object, as a helper, as an opponent."[44] Yet, contra Butler, according to Freud the awareness of our dependency does not result in an appreciation of "precarious life." In fact these primary impingements can lead to a practice of relationality whereby dependency is admitted *only insofar as vulnerability is denied.* To appreciate this irony we must tarry with the "overwhelming fear" that, according to Butler, is at the root of our aggressive impulses.

Whence comes this "overwhelming fear" behind the feelings of murderous rage? Freud and Klein each provide an answer. For Freud, the root of this fear is what he calls "social anxiety" (*sozial Angst*). Social anxiety is the fear of losing the love of others

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42 Butler, Precarious Life, 150.
43 Butler, Frames of War, 184.
44 Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 3.

(*Liebesverlust*); it is a fear of exile, of being, in the words of the slavery-era spiritual, a "motherless child." To overcome this fear we identify with those around us, taking on their characteristics and conforming to their desires.[45] However, Freud thinks these practices of mundane identification will fail to fully assuage the anxiety of social life. To reinforce group identity we bind to particular others, but we must do this through a *shared* bond with an idealized other: a common ego-ideal. Groups are then held together through an erotic power—a shared love of each other through a common identification with a third—and "if an individual gives up his distinctiveness in a group…he does it because he feels the need of being in harmony with [its other members] rather than in opposition to them—so that perhaps after all he does it 'for love of them'" (*ihnen zu Liebe*).[46]

Shared identity implies some level of de-individuation, but it is also the pathway to ethical elevation. By identifying with a larger whole, we gain the ability to care for others and to sacrifice our interests and even our lives for their needs. It is by binding with others that we move away from egoism and towards altruism. Yet for Freud this altruism is not the overturning of narcissism but the latter's natural development. The group—and its commonly held, binding object—serves "as a substitute for some unattained ego ideal of our own." Group identity is an extension, and not a replacement of, fundamental narcissism. Moreover, and perhaps more worrisome, is the fact that our ethical elevation through expanded self-love requires a simultaneous venting of aggression—an "outlet in the form of hostility against intruders."[47] The flip-side of group Eros is the collective version of the death-drive, which takes the form of a desire to destroy or to persecute (and to feel

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45 We will come back to this in Section III, since Freud sees social anxiety as the root of super-ego formation.
46 Freud, Group psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, 31.
47 Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 72

persecuted by) a common enemy: "it is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness."[48] That this enemy does not exist—or does not exist in the way they appear—is irrelevant. As Sartre once put it, "if the Jew did not exist, the anti-Semite would invent him."[49] Freud put it slightly differently, saying that, "groups have never thirsted after truth. They demand illusions, and cannot do without them."[50]

To summarize: our undeniable dependency leads to a fear of losing the others on which we depend. To avoid this fate, we model ourselves after our immediate relations, and we reinforce these particular bonds through an expanded love of a common ideal. The expanded circle of love, however, is constituted not only by the internal ideal, but by the external enemy. This is what Fred Alford has called the "tragedy of group life." We seem to face an irresolvable dilemma between immersion in the group and isolation from it—the first form of life is livable but exclusionary and violent, and the other life is practically unthinkable and certainly terrifying.

Butler is certainly aware of—and deeply dissatisfied with—the tendency towards what she calls group "separatism." As she put it in a 2010 interview:

> "I grew very skeptical of [a] certain kind of Jewish separatism in my
> youth. I mean, I saw the Jewish community was always with each
> other; they didn't trust anybody outside. You'd bring someone home
> and the first question was 'Are they Jewish, are they not Jewish?'
> Then I entered into a lesbian community in college, late college,
> graduate school, and the first thing they asked was, 'Are you a
> feminist, are you not a feminist?' 'Are you a lesbian, are you not a
> lesbian?' and I thought 'Enough with the separatism!'"

48 Ibid., 72.
49 Jean-Paul Sartre, "Anti-Semite and Jew," New York 97 (1965)
50 Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, 16.

Aggressive "policing of the community" has the power to keep at bay the doubled recognition scene that happens when we bring ourselves to grief. Butler is keen to avoid such politics. Yet as we shall see shortly there are moments when her polemical style overwhelms her calls for vulnerability. Moreover, her recent search for an ethical responsiveness to the face of the Other does not so much undo the power of *sozial Angst* at the root of de-individuation as it empowers a cruel and demanding superego that, as it were, doubles down on this anxiety.

Butler's idealization of a vulnerable Levinasian "face" exists alongside and requires a persecution and demonization of defaced others. Who are these others? Those who appear to deny the condition of precariousness; those who seek to separate themselves from "constitutive sociality" or who seek to foreclose grief rather than tarry with it.[51] To those people Butler hopes we can direct our "anger and rage" through a "social and political struggle to make [this] rage articulate and effective." This grief *qua* grievance is what Butler calls "the carefully crafted 'fuck you.'"[52] For her, this is the "political potential" of mourning: it is an affective experience of "outrage" that can be turned against the hegemonic powers that be.[53] *Pace* Antigone, grief is a means by which we can sharpen the contradictions.

On the one hand, this is a powerful response to those critics who think Butler does not provide a normative or political orientation in her work. The precariousness party (not a term that Butler uses)—organized on the basis of a "tenuous 'we'" that is constituted by a common sense of loss[54]—actively resists those who deny the "heightened sense of

51 Butler, Giving an Account of Oneself., 77.
52 Butler, Frames of War, 182.
53 Ibid., 39.
54 Butler, "Afterword: After Loss, Then What?" in Loss. Kazanjian and Eng, editors (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

responsibility" that emerges from the experience of "primary vulnerability and impressionability."[55] From her early work on gender melancholia, Butler has used her analytic as a wedge and a weapon against the hegemonic powers behind the reigning epistemes of cultural intelligibility, speaking on behalf of unmourned bodies in order that these "foreclosed lives" can "take themselves to be 'possible.'"[56]

On the other hand, there is a risk that the "outrage" Butler posits at the base of political action only serves to stigmatize others and undermine the possibility of self-reflection and precarious recognition. To be sure, Butler does not practice a politics of demonization anywhere near the level of the Ku Klux Klan. And yet the agonistic "fuck you"—no matter how carefully crafted—cannot escape this melancholic cycle of fear and aggression (nor does it seek to). Butler does not precisely evoke an idealized common community (beyond the "belonging that takes place in and through a common sense of loss") or enemy; as she puts it, "I don't think there is purity in the domain of political commitment." But if there is impurity in her account of commitment it is due to an inexpugnable negativity—a "constitutive outside" that must be honored if we are to avoid forgetting our own individual and collective incoherence. And this source of impurity is pristine in Butler's eyes. The logic of "constitutive exclusion or antagonism" troubling "all identity-constitution" is the good, noble cause to which Butler is committed, but this commitment cannot be sustained without its own assertion of purity: a pure logic of deconstruction. This source of purity makes Butler's calls for vulnerability determinately one-sided, and instaurates a style of politics that is all agon and little agony.

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55 Butler, Giving an account, 99.
56 Judith Butler, "Politics, Power, and Ethics: A Discussion Between Judith Butler and William Connolly," Theory and Event 4, no. 2 (2000), 5.

Butler's work is not bereft of a response to such charges. She would aver that, because the "reigning epistemes of cultural intelligibility" continue to make impossible a work of mourning whereby loss and precariousness can be avowed, then the only political and ethical (or, more accurate to Butler's account, ethico-political) response is a practice of disruption against these norms in the hopes that we can carve out a more capacious space of response to the traumas of war, hierarchy, and normalization. Certainly, on the one hand, Butler is correct about the paucity of political and cultural space for the work of acknowledgement and avowal. As previous chapters have shown, manifold political and psychic resistances have often mocked attempts to work through the traumas surrounding racial violence and discrimination in this country—ranging from bald oppression to "mild" exclusion through norms of speech such as "civility" that serve to conceal the patently uncivil relations of power in society.[57] Anyone who has examined the Civil Rights struggle in southern cities such as Greensboro would be loathe to discount the essential role that "disruptive" politics played in making the larger patterns of abuse and inequality socially and politically salient. Yet Butler's logic of deconstruction based on the assumption of a "constitutive outside" privileges a politics of disruption above all other styles and modes of political engagement: deliberation, negotiation, and compromise. There is a certain manic purity to the radical who insists always and everywhere on a politics of disturbance (at least when the disturbance comes not from the material reality of the world but instead from an ineffable exterior that always and forever remains purely outside—and remains pure *because* it is outside). This partly explains the periodic romanticization of a figure such as Antigone,

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57 William Chafe, Civilities and Civil Rights (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

whose sublime but terrible beauty or "splendor" emerges through her resistance to the state.[58] Yet such a reading of Antigone obscures the ambiguity of her resistance, or the fact that she mourns not only for her slain brother but, once her fate has been decided, for her city and her life within the polis that will now be cut short.

Butler's privileging of disturbance over and against the difficult work of compromise and deliberation is of a piece with her recent elevation of ethics above politics. The absolute responsiveness to the vulnerable face of the Other is a stirring ethical charge, but it leaves all the messy questions (about imperfect recognition, about possible uses of coercion that might be justified, about real, actual dilemmas between security and liberty, etc) to the side. The "constitutive outside" neglects all the essential work in the compromised and messy middle; Butler's ethics of responsiveness has overwhelmed a (Weberian) ethic of responsibility that is just as essential to politics in a pluralistic democracy.[59]

At the root of this problem is Butler's investment in (cultural and subjective) melancholia, based on her reading of Freud. Freud, thankfully, is not the last word on this matter. To Melanie Klein, Freud's descriptions of group identity reflect the violent oscillations between persecution and pining that occur within the paranoid-schizoid position. What Klein appreciates—and what Freud misses—is the iterable and unfolding nature of human subjectivity and the differences between what Klein calls "persecutory" and "depressive" identity. The form of identification behind the pathologies of groupishness is a melancholic incorporation of the other effected in order to quell social angst. But there are

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58 See Jacques Lacan, "The Splendor of Antigone," The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII. Translated by Dennis Porter (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992). See also Julia Reinhard Lupton, "Tragedy and Psychoanalysis: Freud and Lacan," in A Companion to Tragedy, edited by Rebecca Bushnell (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).
59 Here I am indebted to George Shulman and his paper, "The Idiom of Disavowal and Acknowledgment: ethics or politics?" Presented at the 2009 American Political Science Association Conference.

other possible means and modes of identification that can overcome this agonistic picture. As Klein would have it, there are ways in which we can avoid the denial of aggression and fear: we can learn to periodically express our ambivalent feelings towards both 'good' and 'bad' objects; we are capable of accepting this ambiguity rather than splitting the social world into a Manichean picture that can safely hold apart our love and hatred. As Alford puts it, there are "institutions and practices that encourage individuals to refrain from alienating the most troublesome and scary parts of themselves in others."[60] Klein's struggle was to give this possibility a psychological reality; she called it the depressive position. My concern is to give this possibility a *social and political* reality, and I think we should call it the democratic work of mourning. It is here where the work of Butler and Klein could form a productive critical synthesis that can help us to plumb the depths of our democratic dilemmas.

However, Butler's overriding emphasis on a politics of disruption may keep such an alliance at bay. In the next section, I want to deepen my critique against Butler by showing the roots of her investment in melancholic subjectivity in her playful (mis)reading of Freud. The work of mourning as I am thinking it is a set political and cultural practices and habits that—while certainly not "resolving" grief at the social or subjective level—can mitigate the worst forms of social distrust that pollute American politics and which magnify the lingering effects of trauma surrounding issues of race. The question then becomes: what sort of non-narcissistic superego/ego-ideal can make possible a practice of socio-subjective reflection on

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60 Freud, Group Psychology and Political Theory, 139. Note however that Alford is perpetually pessimistic about the ability of group life to inaugurate the depressive position. In fact, many of our identifications with others are a means by which we assuage the guilt of inter-subjective living and deny and exclude the recognitions and reparations that are essential to the depressive position. See Alford on "reparative individuality" in his Melanie Klein and Critical Social Theory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 183-185.

trauma?[61]   I argue (with Butler) that the work of political theory is one of "cultural

translation" whereby the ways in which the political field is organized are called into question

by experiences of grief and loss. Yet I also argue (against Butler) that this work requires a

successful practice of identification that inaugurates, and hopefully sustains, a socio-

subjective work of mourning that does not limit subjective identity to a melancholic denial of

difference nor reduce the reality principle to the strict prohibitions of hegemonic power. Let

me put it this way: Creon speaks for the state, *but he is not the state.* The

social/political/cultural order is more ambiguous and open than Butler seems to entertain,

and identification does not fail because the prohibitions of the social superego cannot

capture the fractious and polymorphous desire of its subjects. Identification "fails" because

the objects with which we come to identify are themselves imperfect and failing; identity

"succeeds" when it does not insist on idealization or demonization as the costs of

internalization and imitation. That we can accept object ambivalence while still making

distinctions between better and worse forms of life is identity's greatest promise: by failing

(to fully assuage the anxiety inherent to object relations), it succeeds. Or at least this is the

idea that Klein would have us believe and inhabit.

3.3 Performing Freud

Butler pursues a different path. As I will show in this section, Butler's commitment

to melancholic subjectivity stems from a promiscuous reading of Freud's account of the

superego and melancholia. As mentioned above, Butler's original turn to Freud in *Gender*

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61 My suspicion is that Butler would associate anxieties about the democratic work of mourning with Habermasian worries over the abandonment of universal claims for political and social action, or with "constitutional patriots" who argue for allegiance to certain democratic principles before all else, or with a Rawlsian rationalization of a messy and contingent democratic inheritance. See Contingency, Hegemony, and Universality, 14-15.

Trouble was intended to prove two points. The first point is that gender identity is predicated on disavowed loss of polymorphous desire: a loss that haunts heterosexuality despite its attempts to prohibit the very name of non-heterosexual desire. The second—and larger— point Butler draws from her turn to Freud is that *all* identities are constituted through disavowed loss. Recall that Freud came to see melancholic incorporation of lost objects as a fundamental determinant of the ego's character. Identification with others precedes the ego's ability to mourn its losses: "introjection…is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects."[62] Butler interprets this to mean that subjective life is inaugurated by an original experience of loss that predates and inaugurates the ego. In other words, this experience cannot be experienced; it subsists at the unconscious level and haunts the subject formed as a result of its occurrence: "as opposed to grief or mourning, in which separation is recognized and the libido attached to the original object is successfully displaced onto a new substitute object, melancholy designates a failure to grieve in which loss is simply internalized and, in that sense, *refused*."[63] The implication is that all identity is troubled at its origin—haunted by an incompleteness or incoherence that can never be fully acknowledged. By this interpretation Butler seeks to unmask ontological claims about subjective life as "normative injunction[s] that operate insidiously by installing [themselves] into political discourse as its necessary ground."[64] Ontological claims are sociological constructions that can be deconstructed—and reconstructed—through parodic repetition. The supposedly

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62 Sigmund Freud, The Ego and the Id (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 24.
63 Judith Butler, Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 2006), 202.
64 Ibid., 202.

solid ground of human action and the social order can be resisted through a transgressive politics that heralds a "less regular freedom."[65]

Butler's first turn to Freud, then, produces a deconstructive account of identity whereby disavowed losses haunt the ego and trouble its supposedly coherent identity. A decade later, In *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler deepened her Freud-inflected analysis of identification. This second turn to Freud was inspired by what Butler perceived as bothersome inadequacies in both Althusser's theory of interpellation and Foucault's account of discursive subjugation (*assujetissement*). Butler wanted to explain what she refers to as the "reflexive" nature of subjectivity—the ability of the subject to take itself as an object of reflection and judgment—along with what she calls our "passionate attachment" to the very discursive norms that bind us. Butler thought that the Freudian account of superego development could explain the ways in which oppressive social norms replicate themselves by fabricating subjects on the basis of a self-repeating prohibition—a prohibition that is 'taken in' and then 'taken up' by the subject as an *internal* voice of self-criticism.

Butler begins with a genealogy of Foucault's theories of the discursive production of subjectivity (i.e. the way in which social norms and habits come to create and shape individual consciousness, instead of individuals coming to shape their own world voluntarily and freely). Foucault's account owes a debt both to Nietzsche's concept of bad conscience and to Althusser's theory of interpellation. In the latter, the subject is called into being through the power of authoritative speech. Althusser's infamous example is the policeman hailing a passerby on the street, and the passerby turning around and recognizing himself as

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65 Butler is following, in many respects, Foucault here, who spoke about freedom as an "undefined work." See Paul Rabinow, The Foucault Reader (New York: Random House, 1984).

the one who was called. All subjectivity, to Althusser, occurs on this basis: we are inaugurated by and into a social order we did not choose or ask for, and we take up the values and restrictions of this order as if they were our own.[66]

Yet, Butler asks, why does the subject turn around in the first place? Is there a prior relationship that makes the turn possible? More importantly, what gives the subject the ability to reflexively *turn on itself*—to grab its own shoulder ("you there") while transgressing the law with the other hand? This is an extension of Foucault's questions about discursive power: how is the policeman's (or the medical expert's, or the bureaucrat's) norm internalized so that we "police" ourselves? As Butler puts it, "is this a guilty subject and, if so, how did it become guilty? Might the theory of interpellation require a theory of conscience?"[67] To answer these questions Butler returns to Freud. Butler thinks that Freud's theories on superego development might show the ways in which subjugation requires that the subject make an investment in its own subordination. As Butler sees it, "the subject pursues subordination as the promise of existence."[68] Our fundamental relationality—our unwilled passionate attachments to others—leads to a passionate attachment to subordination itself. Or, at Butler puts it, "if there is no formation of the subject without a passionate attachment to those by whom she or he is subordinated, then subordination proves central to the becoming of the subject."[69] The prohibitive voice of the

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66 Louis Althusser, Essays on Ideology (London: Verso, 1984).

67 Butler, Psychic Life of Power, 5.

68 Ibid., 20.

69 Ibid., 7. This sentence demonstrates one of Butler's more annoying habits as a writer—the use of conditional, "if, then" statements that dull the edge of what would be a strong claim by couching it in the form of a question or conditional assertion. It is in this way that Butler promiscuously "reads" texts by teasing out possible implications instead of asserting what an honest interpreter might see as the author's intended claim. Butler would admit to this strategy, but claim that it has a politics behind it—one subservient to her larger political agenda of "opening things up." These "things" are texts as much as they are social possibilities. At its extreme edge, however, this form of doing theory seems to replace politics with theory. Instead of analyzing political reality and the grounds for action, theorists in this vein commit themselves to the positing of "magical words" that might "liberate" us from the hegemonic meaning of the text. For a similar critique of postmodern writers like Connolly and Iris Marion Young, see Fred Alford, Group Psychology and Political Theory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 130-135.

other is internalized and interiorized, which gives subjectivity its "reflexive" nature, but which also makes subjectivity without subordination (and self-subordination) impossible.

At best, however, Butler's reading of Freud is a mild contortion of what the latter actually says. It is true that, for Freud, attachment makes for subjection. As we have seen above, socialization requires a level of de-individuation. This stems from the original helplessness of the infant and child, who is absolutely dependent on those around him. Since we must receive love from our early attachments in order to survive, we treasure these attachments and aim to protect them by adapting ourselves to the demands and desires of others. But, according to Freud, we are not in love with these demands themselves. The superego operates not as a self-enforced panopticonal gaze that subordinates our desires, but a "psychical agency which performs the task of seeing that narcissistic satisfaction…is ensured."[70] We derive satisfaction from matching up to our "ego ideal," and the superego entices and persuades us to pursue this satisfaction. Again, we are not, according to Freud, attached to subjection *as such*. We attach to others due to the *sozial Angst* (and the specter of *Liebesverlust*) that haunts the subject. Because we fear a loss of attachment we identify with others and try to conform to their wishes—as the price of sociality. Yet this is a bargain that, Freud thinks, we are perpetually trying to re-negotiate or break. The strictures of "civilization" are something that permanently chafes us (hence our infamous "discontent").[71] As Freud put it in 1933,

> "From the very beginning, when life takes us under its strict
> discipline, a resistance stirs within us against the relentlessness and

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70 Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XIV. Translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 95.

71 A more literal translation of "Das Unbehagen in Der Kultur" would be "The Discontented in Civilization." For "normal" psyches, there is no sense in positing a "passionate attachment" to subordination.

monotony of the laws of thought and against the demands of reality-testing. Reason becomes the enemy which withholds from us so many possibilities of pleasure. We discover how much pleasure it gives us to withdraw from it, temporarily at least, and to surrender to the allurements of nonsense."[72]

Butler interprets Freudian conscience as a "passionate attachment to *prohibition*, an attachment which takes the form of turning back on oneself."[73] As a result the "formation of the ego takes place as the sedimented result of this peculiar form of reflexivity."[74] Yet Freud, while admitting that the psyche cannot be thought without a differentiation between ego and ego-ideal/superego—and while acknowledging that some restrictions of the ego are necessary for social existence—clearly did not think that the ego comes into being through this differentiation (which Butler also asserts), nor did he think that the strictures and forced repressions of the differentiation are in any way a "passionate attachment" for the ego:

"the ego ideal comprises the sum of all the limitations in which the ego has to acquiesce, and for that reason the abrogation of the ideal would necessarily be a magnificent festival for the ego, which might then once again feel satisfied with itself."[75]

There *is* an exception to this story, however. In *The Ego and the Id* Freud gives another account of superego development in the context of explaining "the painful disorder of melancholia."[76] Freud had long noticed that melancholics seemed to suffer from intense bouts of self-loathing and self-beratement. Freud now understands this as resulting from a particular resolution (and subsequent repression) of the Oedipus complex. The external

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72 Freud, New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1965), 30.

73 Butler, Psychic Life of Power, 68. Emphasis in the original.

74 Ibid., 68-69.

75 Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, 81. Compare Butler's account of the "giddiness" attached to drag performance in Gender Trouble in light of the "magnificent festival" for the ego in its moment of overturning the strictures of the superego. Gender Trouble, 187.

76 Freud, The Ego and the Id, 23.

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prohibition that frustrates the child's incestuous and murderous desires becomes internalized.[77] In normal development the superego prohibits the child's libidinal advances towards the parental dyad but also helps to sublimate them into productive and possible love-relationships. The love of others can compensate us for the lost intimate bond with the sole object of our early affection. The mild, normal superego offers prohibitions alongside enticements. However, the superego can transform into a "one-sided," cruel, and sadistic agency of self-observation and prohibition due to a particularly rapid and violent resolution of the Oedipus complex.[78] When the Oedipal anxieties cannot be adequately expressed, held, and worked through, the fear of *Liebesverlust* gives way to a dread of persecution—what Freud called castration anxiety. The aggression towards the father is turned back on the subject, and the wished for usurpation takes the (internal) form of self-loathing. As castration wishes become castration fears the superego morphs from a mild force into an ever-vigilant monitor of deviant behavior. Since the aggression towards the father cannot be expressed, it turns back on itself, and becomes a masochistic force of self-beratement.[79] Under the dread of castration, the ego undergoes a radical split: the 'normal, mild' superego, which operates by persuasion and enticement rather than prohibition and punishment, disappears. At this point prohibition—over enticement and "persuasion"—rises to the fore: "if we turn to melancholia…we find that the excessively strong superego…rages against the ego with merciless violence…what is now holding sway in the superego, is, as it were, a pure culture of the death instinct."[80] Whereas healthy subjectivity allows for interplay of Eros and

77 Freud, The Ego and the Id, 30. See also New Introductory Lectures, 55.
78 Ibid., 30. See also Civilization and its Discontents, 84.
79 Ibid., 56.
80 Ibid., 54.

Thanatos, the melancholic subject splits these forces and alienates them into separate parts of the psyche. The melancholic is literally at war with himself.

Let us now return to Butler's appropriation of Freud, along with her explicit deviations from the Freudian account of psychic life. First, Butler disregards the original externality of the superego, because on her reading the claim of an a-social/a-historical subject is itself a social and historical projection. For her the externality of the superego is the result of a "melancholic diremption that founds the internal and external horizons;" or, in other words, the very sense of internal life is caused by the "interiorization of a norm that itself requires the "interiorization of the psyche."[81] Moreover, Butler denies the distinction Freud draws between the normal, conscious sense of guilt and the melancholic superego that is a pure culture of the death drive. Instead Butler sees Freud's settled view of conscience as the "effect of an internalized prohibition" that "produces…a psychic habit of self-beratement, one that is consolidated over time as conscience."[82] Butler takes license for her reading—which flattens the distinctions that Freud draws between different superego outcomes—from what she sees as Freud's admission in *The Ego and the Id* that *all* subjective life is predicated on loss that cannot be acknowledged or avowed. Beyond repression of the Oedipus complex (which might be undone through analysis, and certainly Freud thought this was the *goal* of analysis) there is a "foreclosure" of desire, which constitutes the subject through a certain kind of preemptive loss. Melancholia is not simply one possible psychological outcome, but that which "grounds the subject."[83] As Butler reads Freud, "the

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81 Judith Butler, "Moral Sadism and Doubting One's Own Love: Kleinian reflections on melancholia," in Reading Melanie Klein J. Phillips, editor (New York: Routledge, 1998), 184; Psychic Life of Power, 19.
82 Butler, Psychic Life of Power, 22.
83 Ibid., 23.

'character of the ego' appears to be the sedimentation of objects loved and lost, the

archaeological remainder, at it were, or unresolved grief."[84] Identification—the composition

of the superego—results from losses both repressed and radically foreclosed. Hence we

come to consciousness on the basis of denied injury.   Like an amnesiac waking up to the

cold, foreign light of a hospital room, we know we have suffered a loss but we cannot

recover this loss itself. Our scars do not come with testimony. Here is Butler:

> The foreclosure of certain forms of love suggests that the
> melancholia that grounds the subject (and hence always threatens to
> unsettle and disrupt that ground) signals an incomplete and
> irresolvable grief. Unowned and incomplete, melancholia is the limit
> of the subject's sense of *pouvoir*, its sense of what it can accomplish
> and, in that sense, its power. Melancholia rifts the subject, marking a
> limit to what it can accommodate. Because the subject does not,
> cannot, *reflect* on that loss, that loss marks the limit of reflexivity, that
> which exceeds (and conditions) its circuitry. Understood as
> foreclosure, that loss inaugurates the subject and threatens it with
> dissolution.[85]

Again, this is at best a playful appropriation of Freud, more than a faithful

reproduction of the latter's developed thought. It says more about Butler than it does about

Freud—which is perhaps an obvious and banal point. The more interesting point is that it

reveals what can only be described as Butler's investments in melancholia. She goes out of

her way (and out of Freud's text) to assert (1) a reflexive nature to subjectivity that 'takes in'

only to 'take up' social prohibitions and (2) a melancholia underneath this subjectivity that

loosens and troubles the prohibitive identifications that inaugurate conscious life.

To describe Butler's appropriation of Freud as a misreading is itself misleading,

however, since Freud's account of psychic life was itself unstable and constantly changing.

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84 Ibid., 133.
85 Ibid., 23.

It is better to say that Butler capitalizes on some ambiguities in Freud's work in order to give a performative reading of his texts. However, the slipperiness with which Butler treats Freud oftentimes leads to outright distortion. For instance in two separate passages Butler re-translates (without informing the reader) *sozial Angst* as "dread of the community."[86] By this sleight-of-hand Butler has transformed what Freud saw as a mundane feeling of anxiety immanent to social living into a Foucaultian dread of social regulation. Peer pressure becomes the panopticon. This is a performative re-reading that strikes a false chord.

More importantly for the purposes of this project, Butler is content to let Freud's "Ego and the Id" silently incorporate his "Mourning and Melancholia"—a means by which the logic of cathexis (forgetting) is replaced by endless subjective melancholia (fixation). This partial reading of Freud may assist Butler in her project of describing gender identification as a process of disavowing and thereby pathologizing a lost poly-sexuality— thereby deconstructing "natural" gender roles and pluralizing the field of subjectivity. This is valuable work, to be sure. Yet in the process *Trauerarbeit* and *Durcharbeiten* are read out of Freud, replaced by infinite subjective melancholia. This carries forward, more than it troubles, the Freudian dichotomy between fixation and forgetting that pollutes socio-political attempts to remember and work through shared traumas.

Butler is always careful to point out that she is not making an ontological claim or positing an a-historical theory of the subject. Melancholic subjectivity is not historically or ontologically necessary (everything is contingent, for Butler). Yet neither, she seems to say, is it optional. If this seems paradoxical, or incoherent, it is because Butler is of two minds

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86 Ibid., 104 and 141.

on the subject. Melancholia is, to put it polemically, Butler's trump card. It is on the one

hand a description of an impoverished social order that can be used as a source of

mobilization and resistance for subaltern counter-publics.[87] But, on the other hand, it is also

a deeper guarantor of subjective and political resistance, because it describes the condition of

"haunted" subjectivity (individual and collective) that can never fully know itself.[88] We could

not be further from Freud at this point.

   Which isn't necessarily a bad thing. As previous chapters have shown, I think we

need to move well beyond Freud if we are to think clearly and productively about political

and cultural practices of mourning public traumas. However, Butler's reading of Freud

makes two crucial missteps that keep her from contributing full-heartedly to such a project.

The first is to flatten Freud's account of the superego into its melancholic instantiation. The

second (tied obviously to the first) is to deny a distinction between mourning and

melancholia.[89] For Klein, however, the difference between melancholic subjectivity and the

"mourning subject" is the difference between an (subjective and political) identity that denies

internal and external conflicts while living in "bondage" to a sadistic superego, and an

identity that can be enriched through shared experiences, conflicts, and losses with others.

For Butler, by contrast, *all* identity is bondage, though through parodic repetition we can re-

signify the chains that bind us to mean something else. The guarantor of this resistance is

the gap within the melancholic structure of reflexive subjectivity: a loss that inaugurates us

and which can be used as a point of resistance against the very prohibitions forming this

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87 See Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," Public Culture 14, no. 1 (2002)

88 Butler, "Moral Sadism and Doubting One's Own Love: Kleinian reflections on melancholia," 187.

89 Strangely, once Butler has contorted Freud into a position where he can be seen to make these claims, she uses this new Freud as an authority in arguments against psychoanalytic and social theory that aims to reinstate a distinction between mourning and melancholia.

"us."[90] Hence Antigone's politics (and one would have to say, the GTRC, or Frederick Douglass' "impossible" speech) are not exemplary for Butler because they create more public space for the working through of traumatic loss. No. Antigone is exemplary because she signals the "scandal" by "which the unspeakable…makes itself heard through borrowing and exploiting the very terms that are meant to enforce its silence."[91] Antigone's speech acts are, as literal claims, themselves meaningless; what is significant is the way in which her speech leads to a "fatality [that] exceeds her life and enters the discourse of intelligibility as its own promising fatality, the social form of its aberrant, unprecedented future."[92]

Melancholia, in Walter Benjamin's phrase, "forsakes the world for the sake of truth."[93] Butler, interpreting Benjamin, finds the "tenacious self-absorption" of melancholia to be the means by which we "sustain a loyalty to the world of things."[94] Yet psychoanalytic theory gives us reason to doubt this loyalty. As Freud and Klein understood, in melancholia the ego has—instead of severing itself from the lost object—*incorporated* the object, which in turn becomes a pathogenic presence. The work of mourning is forestalled, and "the shadow of the object [falls] upon the ego."[95] The ego cannot simultaneously mediate the demands of both the incorporated object and the outside world that, through reality-testing, proves the absence of the other. This desire to maintain one's investments, to keep alive the lost other,

90 Again, Butler backs away from making an ontological claim on this point. As she puts it, "I do not understand…foreclosure as the vanishing point of sociality…the unconscious is not presocial, but a certain mode in which the unspeakably social endures." Contingency, Hegemony, Universality, 153 (italics in original). Yet one then wonders why Butler is so insistent about melancholic subjectivity, and why she does not emphasize its contingent character or herald a moment when these "contingently foundational" losses could be avowed and worked through.

91 Butler, Antigone's Claim, 79.

92 Ibid., 82. Butler's investments in melancholia are, ultimately, less an intellectual commitment based on a reading of Freud than a strategy of her agonistic politics. "The President can't avow his loss" is just an updated version of "the Emperor has no clothes." Ever since Gender Trouble, Butler has been using melancholia to diagnose serious social maladies (see Section I above). Yet just as often she has used melancholia as a bludgeon to attack her foes. Perhaps Butler's first "carefully crafted 'fuck you'" appeared in Bodies that Matter, and was aimed at heterosexual identity: "the 'truest' gay female melancholic is the strictly straight woman; and the 'truest' gay male melancholic is the strictly straight man." One wonders how Butler resisted the temptation to follow this sentence with, "take that!"

93 See Wendy Brown, "Resisting Left Melancholy," boundary 2 26, no. 3 (1999).

94 Butler, "Afterword: After Loss, What Then?", 472.

95 Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Translated by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 251.

is an indication of an over-weaning dependence on one's object-loves. Replacing the ego with the other destroys both. The cruel irony of melancholic attachment is that affection for the other has not, by this incorporative process, been sustained but *precluded*. "The object itself is given up" and the "refuge" of narcissistic identification serves to replace affection with abhorrence. As Freud puts it, "hate comes into operation on this substitutive object [i.e. the altered ego], abusing it, debasing it, making it suffer and deriving sadistic satisfaction from its suffering.[96] Because the object and the ego have been conjoined, this hatred operates as both blame and guilt—as projected disgust of the other and internal self-loathing.[97]

If identity is not optional, and if melancholic subjectivity is a pathology that poisons subjective and political life, then the question becomes: what sort of identifications can we acquire that will make possible a work of mourning that is no longer just a subjective but a social requirement? Or, put slightly differently, how will we inter-subjectively mourn the constitutive traumas of our history in the interests of a democratic identity capable of non-dogmatic and non-dominative politics? In the last section of this chapter, I turn directly to this question by re-engaging with the work of Melanie Klein.

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96 Ibid., 251

97 Some defenders of Butler might point out that these passages are taken from Freud's 1917 manuscript, and that Freud's admission in The Ego and the Id (1921) that we "did not know how common [melancholic identification] was" makes these earlier reflections irrelevant. However, despite Freud's suspicions that identification predates object-cathexis (ego-directed investment), this does not mean that Freud changed his mind about melancholia or mourning. In the later writings (post-death drive), Freud still speaks of melancholia as pathological, and mourning as reality-testing/renunciation. Butler takes Freud's description of melancholia from 1917 and uses the loose stitch in his account from 1921 to make a decidedly non-Freudian argument about melancholic subjectivity. Certainly I would not want to deny the possibility of moving beyond Freud, but one should do so explicitly and carefully.

3.4 The work of mourning and the democratic superego

"If I now apply [my] description of the superego organization, as compared with Freud's super-ego, to the process of mourning, the nature of my contribution to the understanding of this process becomes clear. In normal mourning the individual reintrojects and reinstates, as well as the actual lost person, his loved parents who are felt to be his 'good' inner objects. His inner world, the one which he has built up from his earliest days onwards, in his phantasy was destroyed when the actual loss occurred. The rebuilding of this inner world characterizes the successful work of mourning."

—Klein, "Mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states"

 "A successful internalization of the good object is the root of an identification with it which strengthens the feelings of goodness and trust both in the object and the self. This identification with the good object mitigates the destructive impulses and in this way also diminishes the harshness of the superego. A milder superego makes less stringent demands on the ego; this leads to tolerance and to the ability to bear deficiencies in loved objects without impairing the relation to them."

—Klein, "On the sense of loneliness"

"One should honor even the enemy in one's friend."

—Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

In the end, Butler distorts Freud's accounts of mourning and melancholia and the development of the superego—only to then display a strange allegiance to the image of Freud she has fashioned. Given Butler's explicit concerns—exposing social melancholia, and thinking about ethical and political life on the basis of inter-subjective vulnerability (the doubled task of "bringing ourselves/our*selves* to grief)—her work at the intersection of psychoanalytic and political theory would have been more helpful and more convincing if she had started with Melanie Klein. Since Butler's turn to Klein postdates her appropriation of Freud, this reading is prejudiced by her commitments to melancholic subjectivity. Because of this, she misses the key elements of Klein's work as it deviates from Freud's— the emphasis on early and continual object-relations that exceed the narcissistic ego, the development of reparative morality that begins from a native concern for the well being of others, and the vital role of the depressive position as an instantiation of how we might

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"bring ourselves to grief." In *Frames of War*, Butler interprets Klein as insisting on the primacy of the ego and its search for survival over and against a moral responsiveness to the other that would exceed and call into question a fundamental egoism. Butler explains away Klein's language of guilt and reparation by suggesting (strangely, falsely) that "for Klein, the question of survival precedes the question of morality; indeed, it would seem that guilt does not index a moral relation to the other, but an unbridled desire for self-preservation."[98] She goes on to flatten Klein's understanding of depressive identification by reading the internalization of the other that takes place in mourning as a "melancholic solution" that "constitutes a reflexive turn that constitutes the surviving subject's self-annihilating soliloquy."[99] Perhaps the clumsy phrasing "constitutes…that constitutes" betrays a repetition compulsion: Butler repeats the "melancholic solution"—that melancholia is the ground of subjectivity—which, as she admits, is no solution but only a symptom of 'contingently foundational' duress. At the very least Butler's interpretation betrays a displacement of Freud's (undeniable) subjective narcissism into Klein. This is all quite unfortunate—not only because Klein's account of conscience and the superego is richer than Freud's, but because Klein understands that *sozial Angst* is not the only basis for object attachment. For Klein, love and concern for others is an essential part of what makes us human; the task of social and psychoanalytic theory and practice is to make this love operational while resisting the temptation to see it as socially salvific or redemptive (because it will never fully overwhelm or transcend our native fractiousness and aggression).

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98 Butler, Frames of War, 45.
99 Ibid., 175.

Klein begins her description of the superego by distinguishing her account from Freud's. According to Klein, Freud had over-emphasized the role of castration anxiety in the resolution of the Oedipus complex. Beyond fear of the father's prohibitions, the Oedipal child experiences guilt regarding his own murderous rage. Aggression and fear form one part of an ambivalent relation to the father (and to the mother); love and concern are also operational at this and at every point in object relations. Klein well understood the wisdom of Nietzsche's idea that we must "respect the enemy in our friend." But just as surely we must respect the "friend" in our "enemy."[100] As Klein sees it, "the Oedipus situation loses in power not only because the boy is afraid [of] a revengeful father, but also because he is driven by feelings of love and guilt to preserve his father as an internal and external figure."[101] What Freud saw as two radically different superegos—one mild and persuasive, the other sadistic and cruel—was to Klein's understanding a description of two stages of superego development. The first superego, formed under pressure of persecutory fantasies, corresponds to Freud's melancholic superego that rages against the subject with incompatible and impossible demands. The outsized character of the superego results from the inability of the ego to tolerate its feelings of anxiety and danger; hence this anxiety is displaced into an 'internally external' entity, which dominates the ego with "unimaginable cruel attacks."[102] This melancholic superego is pathological, but also mundane. For Klein, every infant's first superego is outsized in its cruelty, and since the "paranoid-schizoid" position from which this superego is formed is a perpetual temptation throughout life, we

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100 This is what Nietzsche referred to as the "spiritualization of enmity." See Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, Walter Kaufmann translator (New York: Vintage, 1989).

101 Melanie Klein, "The Oedipus Complex in Light of Early Anxieties," Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Words 1921-1945 (New York: Free Books, 1975), 418.

102 Melanie Klein, "Development of Conscience in the Child," Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Words 1921-1945, 251.

will all feel the excessive and impossible condemnation of this menacing face from time to time.

The melancholic superego is but one possibility, however. If the conditions are right, the paranoid-schizoid positions transitions to the depressive position, where persecutory anxiety can give way to depressive anxiety. This heralds the appearance of a milder superego (corresponding to Freud's descriptions of the ego-ideal[103]): "there emerge beneficent and helpful imagos…which approximate more closely to the real objects; and [the] super-ego, from being a threatening, despotic force…begins to exert a milder and more persuasive rule."[104]   This second superego overcomes the "slavery" to which the ego had submitted when complying with the "cruel demands and admonitions" of the melancholic superego. Within the depressive position, we are able to come to terms with the ambivalence of our beloved objects—we mourn their deaths as perfect and idealized forms by coming to understand them as imperfect beings. In this way these objects become part of our identity: they allow us to mourn future losses and negotiate new traumas because they give us a sense of stability. Mourning makes mourning possible. Or, the identity we consolidate (temporarily) within the depressive position helps us to integrate our experiences of loss and to hold and work through the dread, hatred, love and guilt touched off by these experiences. Kleinian identity—against Butler's understanding of identity—is not a dogmatic core but a living "complex inner world," an "assembly" of internalized others that remain in their otherness and ambiguity; it is close to the idea of identity as "community"

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103 Before Freud dropped altogether the distinction between the super-ego and ego-ideal, and gave both a persecutory edge. See New Introductory Lectures, 35.
104 Klein, "Development of Conscience in the Child," 252.

offered by Erik Erikson: a pluri-vocal superego that orientates our interactions with self and others by inspiring engagements outside the frozen terms of "friend" and "enemy."[105]

Such identities are not *sui generis*, however. Healthy "depressive" identity requires a supportive context that honors, avows, and helps give a shape to the losses inherent to subjective and collective life.[106] Here is where Klein's psychoanalytic theory reveals its immanent social content. Bringing about the depressive position is not solely a task for the analyst or the subject, but a socio-political and cultural project. Why is this the case? Because identity is, in Butler's language, an iterable process: it is continually being established and dissolved, torn and restored, over the course of our lives. Because of this we require the presence of reflective, sympathetic objects that make possible a working through of grief ("again and again"). For Frederick Douglass, this implied a living understanding of American history that could hear and honor the "mournful wailing of millions" (and that wouldn't turn the wailing of the past into a monument of its present greatness). The GTRC provides a powerful example of what such institutions might look like: as an open, participatory body of meaning-making it analyzed not only violent events of November 3rd, 1979, but operated as an object of reflection on the larger contexts of class and racial conflicts in Greensboro and the south. By creating public space where particular losses can be avowed—held, honored, made public—the Greensboro TRC showed that citizens can

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105 The complexity of an enriched ego's internal "assembly" also mitigates the dogmatisms inherent to group identity. Because we are able to respect the enemy in our friend, we do not collapse the difference between others but respect and honor that difference.

106 And this may not even be enough. See Alford on "Object Relations Revisionism" Melanie Klein and Critical Social Theory, 185-197. For Alford, Klein's focus on how internal phantasy affects our perception of the outer world means that our actual experiences in the world could have limited impact on our development. If we only see and interact with a world that we ourselves create (through fantasy and projective identification), then we will not mirror what's going on in the world or even respond to it in any recognizable way. So what can be said in reply to such claims? First, we have to admit that Klein herself did admit of a constant interaction between external reality and inner fantasy (or unconscious phantasy), even if the circuit is often broken or distorted. See her "On Identification" in Envy and Gratitude and Other Works, 1946-1963 (New York: Free Books, 1975), pg. 140. Secondly, we have to say that, as social scientists and political theorists, we remain convinced that people do respond to external cues and incentives (though not in a uniform or entirely predictable fashion). If we are all just living in transferential relation to each other (which is to say, not relating to each other or our external world at all) then the entire enterprise of social theory is a sham. Our own experiences of relational living, however, beyond transference, should convince us that the strictly internalist picture (seen by many as Kleinian "orthodoxy," but which, I would argue, is a severe distortion of the latter's mature thought) is untenable.

create democratic institutions that can come to be trusted as honest, non-partisan (though hardly non-political) bodies. Such public institutions can set the "frames" by which grievance is honored and grief worked through—they do not herald a resolution of the conflicts that persist in every polity, but they can make possible an open engagement with these conflicts that will exceed official denial and silence. In this respect they are both institutions of democratic mourning and objects for a democratic identity.

Here is where Butler's work on the "frames" of grievability gives us some critical purchase on deciding when or whether the "conditions" for the work of mourning obtain in a given political and cultural environment. And this is also where her emphasis on a disruptive politics against political and psychic resistances to grieving and grievability proves its essential mettle. After all, the story of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission—like the story of the sit-in movement in Greensboro and other early Civil Rights-era activities—is a story of disruption, based on a decades-long struggle for a more thorough accounting and public acknowledgement of the trauma of November 3rd, 1979 and the larger structural forces that made the event possible. It is worthwhile to emphasize, then, that (unlike Klein), Butler's descriptions of melancholic subjectivity and a cruel, sadistic super-ego are obviously meant to be *social* theory rather than psychoanalytic theory. She is not interested in the psychic life *per se*, but the psychic life *of power*. She is concerned with the super-ego only insofar as it is the internalized reality of social/historical norms, not as a careful delineation of internal experience (which is what Freud thought he was doing). Stigma and discrimination make certain lives impossible and certain losses unmournable—a situation that can only be called cultural or social melancholia. Hence Butler is more concerned with "disidentificatory" possibilities because she is leery of the social forces that

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structure and uphold identity. She is leery, moreover, of identity claims that are too dogmatic—too much in denial over identity's contingent and iterable foundation.

For Klein, however, non-dogmatic identity results from the identifications with ambiguous internal and external realities that take place in the depressive position. In this position we experience loss but manage to internalize objects that make this loss bearable and continued life possible. This is not a burial of the dead in an internal crypt, but the only way we can continue to *give life* to the dead—introjecting and remembering them in their ambiguity and otherness, their friendliness and their aggressiveness, their lovingness and their hatred. By establishing the internal polis (the super-ego *qua* "assembly"), we are better able to respond to the external polis. For Klein, the work of mourning succeeds if it results in "depressive" identity that will make possible the integration of our aggression and our love—which will not eliminate our grief or grievance with others or the world but will make this grievance more realistic, more effective, and more reparative. In this respect, Butler's leeriness of identity claims is of a piece with her hesitancy to think about mourning outside of its affective politics of resistance. The greedy infant would destroy the world in an expression of its grief; so would Antigone. The work of mourning in democratic life means that we mitigate this all-consuming passion with the very love for ambiguous others that is at the root of our undeniable, haunting pain. As such, if Butler can help us to leaven Klein's work with an essential attentiveness to inequalities of speech and power, then Klein can give Butler the vocabulary and theoretical and political tools for advancing a vision of politics *beyond* disruption.

Butler's rehabilitation of melancholy, however, as it stands, turns mourning into the pathology—a "crime" of forgetting both the particular object and the melancholic

substratum of our own identity.[107] The pathologizing of mourning elevates melancholia to

pride of place; yet far from preserving an open relationship to the past and others,

melancholia actually *precludes* a reflection on the boundaries between self and other. As Eric

Santner puts it, rather than honoring and protecting difference and otherness, the

melancholic subject "grieves…for the fact of otherness and all that that entails."[108] Butler

has dedicated much of her career to the task of loosening the strictures of social superegos

in order to make possible a "less regular freedom." But a superego denied is merely a

superego deferred. The irony is that Butler's recent work (implicitly) acknowledges the need

for a superego-like figure to facilitate a less violent politics. However, this superego—the

Levinasian face of the Other—is a melancholic specter that rages against the ego with

impossible and contradictory demands.[109]

The melancholic is not only at war with himself, but sees the whole world through

the lens of this Manichean struggle. The task is not to deny or "resolve" this internal and

external conflict, but to make it livable. By pathologizing (and misunderstanding) mourning

as a teleological process of closure rather than an iterable work of reflection, Butler has let

her description of subjective melancholia creep into her politics (or vice versa, but the effect

is the same). Butler remains an essential interlocutor in debates over trauma, loss, and

mourning—mainly because her work helps us to identify the melancholic pathologies in the

social and political world and to challenge the ways in which power downplays or denies the

effects of trauma in the polity and in the self. But the task of democratic theory and praxis

today is not only to indicate the absence of grief, but to describe what its presence could—

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107 Butler, "Moral Sadism and Doubting One's Own Love: Kleinian reflections on melancholia," 187.

108 E. L. Santner, Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

109 Alford, "Levinas and Political Theory," 154.

and *should*—look like. Butler has evolved from a fixation on a politics of disruption to being *fixated by* an ethical responsiveness to the precarious face of the Other—but politics in the wake of trauma requires an iterable process of identification that keeps identity fluid rather than fixed—mourning rather than melancholic. The democratic superego, on the other hand, marks the possibility that we can locate and inhabit norms and practices of working through traumas that keep identity fluid, and which mitigate the pathological compromises of fixation and forgetting and the politics of disavowal, denial, and endless agon that persists on this frozen terrain.

Chapter 4: Liberal Melancholia: John Rawls's Silence on Race

Chorus: What could it mean? The woman's gone inside. She did not stay for a word, good or bad.

Messenger: I'm astonished, like you. But I feed on hope. Probably, when she heard her son was dead, she chose to mourn indoors, rather than make a public display of grief…

Chorus: I don't know. If you ask me, a silence so extreme is as dangerous as a flood of silly tears.

—*Antigone*

The task which the psychoanalytic method seeks to perform may be formulated in many ways, which are, however, in their essence equivalent. It may, for instance, be stated thus: the task of treatment is to remove the amnesias. When all gaps in memory have been filled in, all the enigmatic products of mental life elucidated, the continuance and even renewal of the morbid condition are made impossible.

—Freud

The challenge for political theory as presented in this dissertation is discovering how we should confront and work through the enduring traumas surrounding racial violence and discrimination in the United States, a task made all the more difficult by the shift from explicit to aversive racism as the dominant form of discrimination and bias. Influenced by the work of Melanie Klein, I have sought to locate the means by which these traumas can be "mourned"—with mourning considered less a momentary response to particular loss than as a process of identity formation through recognition of, and reflection on, formative traumas in the polity. With regards to race, this process involves a willingness to openly engage the discomforting fact that our present polity is in many respects implicated in the living aftereffects of historical practices of domination and discrimination. By taking guidance

from Klein, we can appreciate the iterable quality of identity achieved through mourning: we have to confront loss "again and again" because we so easily slide into refusals or denials of its presence. Along these lines, comforting ideas about the achievement of a "post-racial" society are not so much undesirable as they are disingenuous—they coalesce into an amnesia that pollutes political life by denying the traumas underlying current malignant inequalities.[1] Klein's depressive position is an essential means of countering a triumphalist reading of American history whereby our sins regarding race can be finally repaired or reconciled. Again, mourning our racial traumas should not be seen as "getting past" them but as in clarifying the *presence* of the past, of "getting" or acquiring a "past to look forward to."[2] Through such work we can avoid narratives of political life that displace or replace this history with a progressive account of redemption. In addition, the counter-narrative I am highlighting provides a better means of engaging the realities of the contemporary polity and the demands of democratic life because it insists on ambiguity, tension, and tragedy within our political and subjective lives.

In the previous chapter, I argued that the radical democratic theory of Judith Butler is, in some ways, crucial to understanding how to develop collective and individual "mourning" identities. Butler's insistent focus on cultural and political frames that delegitimize certain losses illuminates the "boundaries of the mournable" and helps to trouble those boundaries. Moreover, Butler's articulation of a fundamental vulnerability inherent to human inter-subjectivity resembles a philosophical and political translation of Klein's depressive position—the place from which we recognize and accept object ambiguity

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1 Lydia Lum, "The Obama Era: A Post-Racial Society?" Diverse: Issues in Higher Education. 25 no. 26 (2009).
2 Bert Van Roermund, "Never Again: Time Frames in Anamnesis and Reconciliation," Colloquium on Time, Law and Reconciliation. University of Johannesburg, December 2004.

and our inter-dependence with imperfect others. Yet Butler has hesitated to offer a theory of democratic identification because of fears that identity claims as such represent a mechanism of denial of subjective incompletion or incoherence. Butler's playful and performative reading of Freud compromises her best political and theoretical intentions by offering an account of subjective identification and political action that is decidedly melancholic in its refusal to discursively mourn or work through the losses surrounding gender, race, and war in the late modern world. As I read Butler, her refusal to take this last step is tied to a leeriness that such calls for working through will inevitably be co-opted by those who prefer a sanitized version of history, or who will use the affect of mourning to galvanize violent and aggrandizing projects of state militarism. We might call this the *specter of the funeral oration*—the worry that the particular grief of those who have suffered will be mobilized to support nation-building projects at home and abroad. Butler, in resistance to this possibility—of what she calls "spectacular" or "monumental" grieving—articulates a Janus-faced theory of mourning as, on the one hand, affective grievance against exclusionary norms and, on the other hand, a recognition of fundamental subjective vulnerability. Both sides to this 'mourning politics' are meant to resist state-centric forms of grieving that would justify or subsume particular losses through a narrative of civic progress.

In this chapter, I turn a very different orientation within contemporary political theory by examining the work of John Rawls. If Butler practices a certain politics of fixation, then Rawls's theory exemplifies a politics of *forgetting*—a redoubt of "ideal theory" that suffers from amnesia over the historical and enduring trauma of race in the United States. In fact, as I will argue, despite the immense gulf between Butler's and Rawls' rhetoric and subjects of concern, Rawls's work—like Butler's—suffers from a melancholic approach

to democratic identity and praxis. As previous chapters have described it, the democratic

work of mourning is the work of establishing (and re-establishing, again and again) objects

that enrich the polity's and the citizen's capacity to integrate historical and enduring traumas

into its collective identity. Central to this work is a style of political theory that emphasizes

the place of injustice, violence, and discrimination alongside, and in conversation with, our

considered reflections on justice. Rawls' work takes a decidedly different tack; in fact as

many critics of Rawls have noted, the theories of justice as fairness and political liberalism

suffer from both a structural blindness on the issue of race and a radical forgetting of

historical patterns of racial abuse and trauma.[3] By seeing racial discrimination as an

outgrowth of class inequalities, Rawls' early theory treats race as symptomatic of a larger

problem. Through his focus on "ideal-theory," Rawls sought to describe a "realistic

utopia"—a well-ordered society where the principles of justice are honored and protected,

and in such a world racial discrimination would be impossible, since race (like talent, or hair

color) is not a morally relevant feature of the human condition. That is, the two principles

of justice as articulated in *Theory* include the provision of fair equality of opportunity, which

rules out letting morally arbitrary factors influence people's life chances. In this early work,

race is barely on Rawls' radar screen.

However Rawls's ideal theory is not created in an historical vacuum. It is intended as

a guide for fractured but relatively stable liberal democracies, and certainly there is no greater

fracture in the history of the American democracy than the race line. It is somewhat ironic,

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3 Anita Allen, "Race, Face, and Rawls" Fordham Law Review 72, no. 5 (2004). Charles Mills, The Racial Contract (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), "Rawls on Race/Race in Rawls," The Southern Journal of Philosophy 47 (2009), "Symposium on Charles Mills's The Racial Contract," Racial Liberalism and the Politics of Urban America (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003), Carole Pateman and Charles Mills, Contract and Domination (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007). Ingrid Robeyns, "Ideal Theory in Theory and Practice," Social Theory and Practice 34 no. 3 (2008). Bart Schultz, "John Rawls's Last Word," Philosophy of the Social Sciences 39, no. 1 (2008). Seana Valetine Shiffrin, "Race and Ethnicity: Race, Labor, and the Fair Equality of Opportunity Principle," Fordham Law Review 72, no. 5 (2004).

then, (if not tragic) that Rawls had little to say about the violent history of race in this country. The most famous work on justice in American political thought says next to nothing about the greatest injustice in American history. On the terms of the previous chapters, Rawls's refusals to explicitly mourn or work through the legacies of racial trauma coalesce into a form of melancholia. The question for this chapter is whether or not liberal (melancholic) theory produces or encourages liberal (melancholic) subjects, who will be reluctant to, and uncomfortable with, the very idea of recognizing the violence and terror of our history. In other words, does Rawls' work prepare the grounds for, or create obstacles to, a democratic work of mourning about American racial trauma; i.e. does it help or hinder our moving into a socio-political version of Melanie Klein's depressive position?

By neglecting the messy history and lingering effects of racial trauma, Rawlsian theory has, I will argue, ignored the importance of creating, nurturing, and sustaining a democratic identity that would be committed to achieving justice through an incessant reflection on, and awareness of, racial *in*justice.[4] The possibility of identity formed in this crucible lends support to a vision of a democratic citizenry capable of accepting the inevitability of conflict (both about and beyond race) without forsaking the difficult work of compromise and deliberation. This is the theory of identity (as iterable identification in a social depressive position) I have been encircling with the idea of a democratic work of mourning. I will further develop this account by juxtaposing it to the "extreme silence" of Rawls on racial violence and injustice.

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[4] As Derek Barker points out, Rawls's does not articulate how and why we develop a sense of injustice—a reason for reshaping the world in the first place. Furthermore, Rawls limits the "sense of justice" to a willingness to comply with the rule of law and the dictates of public reason. Derek Barker, Tragedy and Citizenship: Conflict, Reconciliation, and Democracy from Haemon to Hegel (New York: SUNY Press, 2009)

This chapter proceeds as follows. In the first section I detail the charges that

Rawlsian liberalism practices, in Charles Mills's language, a "studied ignorance" and

"amnesia" about race and racism. I then describe Rawls's attempts—and the attempts of his

sympathetic critics and successors—to exonerate his work from such charges. Rawls himself

admitted that the question of race had been an "omission" in his theoretical reflections, but

held that the "omission is not as such a fault."[5] By focusing on crafting an ideal theory of

justice Rawls explicitly refused to deal with "partial compliance" theory—or ameliorative

efforts to address current injustice. Rawls therefore not only avoided an examination of our

particular racial legacy, but of *any* historical legacy whatsoever. The abstract and ahistorical

principles of justice as fairness (in both its metaphysical and 'political' modes) are intended

to exclude the possibility of racial discrimination as such; they are the hypothetical starting

point from which we can achieve clarity about the structural features of a well-ordered

society. Race is not only irrelevant, then, to the principles of justice as fairness; it is

irrelevant to the whole of Rawls's enterprise.

I argue that this line of defense misses the point. The issue is not whether Rawls's

ideal theory would make racism impossible. The issue is whether or not we will nurture and

sustain a democratic identity that sees the work of mourning over this violent (and living)

historical legacy as an integral part of citizenship. In this respect Rawls' work falls short, and

in the second section of the chapter I argue that this is due to what I call the "melancholic"

features of both justice as fairness and political liberalism. In this section I briefly chart the

meaning of melancholia for both Freud and Klein, and argue that Rawls's work suffers from

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5 John Rawls, Justice as Fairness, A Restatement (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2001).

a deficit of memory that heralds a repetition compulsion (Freud) and an idealistic avoidance of "non-ideal" reality that prevents his readers from fully confronting the lingering traumas of the polity (Klein). My reading of Rawls through the lens of Kleinian psychoanalysis is more compelling than Mills' treatment of Rawls because it sheds light on both Rawls' early conception of justice and his later "political turn" towards discovering the fair terms of public engagement for a stable and just polity.

In the third section of the chapter, I inquire as to whether or not Rawls's work, despite the limitations noted above, can serve democratic theorists and actors in confronting and working through trauma and loss. I argue that Rawls—even after his infamous political turn—in fact cannot play this role, due to what I refer to as his three-pronged strategy of containment, avoidance, and reconciliation. Rawls's abstract principles about the well-ordered society protected by a civic commitment to public reason constitute, on my reading, less a "realistic utopia" than an extreme silence about the lingering effects of racial trauma in our contemporary polity. Moreover, this silence is combined with a fear of a participatory political culture that would make reflection on such traumas a central part of its self-understanding. The primary effect (unintended, of course) of Rawlsian theory, then, is a refusal to mourn that leaves us as denuded and melancholic subjects, bereft of a political vocabulary of injustice and redress to parallel the cycle of subjective guilt and reparation that Klein took to be central to the depressive position.

However, in the fourth section of this chapter, I argue that Rawls's work could be coaxed out of its melancholic position in order to contribute to a better understanding of our decidedly non-ideal social reality. In fact, public reason as articulated by Rawls embodies some of the strongest insights of the Kleinian account of psychic life. A modified political

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liberalism sensitive to the insights of Klein might become a valuable object for the work of

mourning racial trauma in the United States. To do this, however, it would have to

overcome both its willful splitting between 'ideal' and 'nonideal' theory and its anxiety over

participatory politics in order to develop a depressive awareness of the real effects of racial

trauma in our actually existing democracy. In the conclusion I highlight the Rwandan

Reconciliation Radio Project as an example of a how deeply-wounded community can reflect

and work through its traumas—or, at the least, combat the temptations of denial and

splitting that keep discomforting realities out of public discourse.

4.1 Mills on Rawls; Rawls on Race

For Charles Mills, Rawls's race troubles begin on the first page of *Theory of Justice*,

where Rawls takes up the social contract tradition in order to "generalize" and "carry [it] to a

higher level of abstraction." By stepping into and revitalizing the heritage of social contract

theory, Rawls inherits that tradition's analytic cachet, its elegant simplicity, and its powerful

normative valences. But Rawls also inherits—yet does not reflect upon—the historical

realities of "group power and domination" that have accompanied the social contract

tradition as a shadow. As Mills argues, the social contract has historically been "color-

coded:" the "free and equal" participants in the contract were axiomatically defined as white

males, and nonwhites were seen as incapable of achieving full human status due to their

ignorance of the natural law.[6] The abstract language surrounding the adoption of principles

of governance (whether in a pseudo-historical state of nature or a willfully abstract "original

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6 Mills, The Racial Contract, 16.

position") serves to obfuscate these facts, with the result that the social contract tradition amounts to what Mills calls a "collective self deception" and a "consensual hallucination."[7] Therefore, a social contract theory such as Kant's can be seen to operate in isolation from Kant's anthropological writings, in which he articulates an epistemological and moral hierarchy based on skin color.[8] For later readers of Kant, the fact that he considered full personhood to be dependent on race is an embarrassing accompaniment to his moral and political writings, and as such it is often quietly excised from the record (including Rawls's own lectures on Kant[9]). Therefore, the focus shifts towards the principles of autonomy and freedom (seen as untainted by Kant's anthropology) while Kant's regrettable or lamentable—but undeniable—racism is marginalized. As Mills sees it, in contemporary liberal theory that takes its cue from Kant (including Rawls's), there is a willingness to look past—or not to *see* in the first place—the intertwinement of abstract and inclusive moral and political principles and the history of racial domination and hierarchy in European colonies and in the white settler states. By "looking the other way" when it comes to race, modern inheritors of the social contract tradition carry forward what Mills calls the "most pervasive mental phenomena of the past few hundred years," namely "white misunderstanding, misrepresentation, evasion, and self deception on matters of race."[10] These practices of self-deception enable a colorblind reading of Western history, which has been continually shaped

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7 Ibid., 18.

8 As Kant wrote in the Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime, "so fundamental is the difference between the races of man…it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color" so that "a clear proof of what [a Negro] said was stupid" was that "this fellow was quite black from head to foot." Quoted in Mills, The Racial Contract, 70. See also Emmanuel Eze, "The Color of Reason: The Idea of 'Race' in Kant's Anthropology," in Anthropology and the German Enlightenment, ed. Katherine Faull (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1995), pp. 196-237.

9 Schultz, "John Rawls's Last Word."

10 Mills, The Racial Contract, 19.

by the changing definitions of insider/outsider and governors/governed that have themselves been governed by the color line.[11]

In the United States, the abstract principles of the founding ("all men are created equal") existed alongside legally enforced inequality. As Mills sees it, this schizophrenic split between inclusive principles and exclusive practices not only created what W.E.B Dubois called the "double consciousness" of black Americans, but nurtured what James Baldwin called the tortured "innocence" of white Americans, who "do not know…and do not want to know" the violent legacy of racial trauma with its manifold, lingering effects.[12] As such, those educated about political principles through a (sanitized) version of the social contract are, in Mills words, "morally handicapped from the conceptual point of view in seeing and doing the right thing."[13] The "right thing," on Mills' reading, would involve serious reparative efforts to decrease the inequalities in income, education, health, and life opportunities between the black and white communities of the United States. Such efforts require an education in history that makes apparent the lingering effects of color-coded discrimination rather than emphasizing the colorblind attributes of our social contract heritage.[14]

Rawls, on the other hand, in his efforts to carry the social contract tradition to "a higher level of abstraction," sidesteps the issue of race, articulating the principles of justice as

11 Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (New York: Routledge, 1995).

12 W.E.B. Dubois, The Souls of Black Folk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). James Baldwin, The Fire Next Time (New York: Vintage, 1992), pp. 5-6.

13 Mills, The Racial Contract, 93.

14 These are not mutually exclusive projects. In fact as I argue below the projection of ideals needs to operate alongside and in concert with the depressive narrativizing of historical and enduring trauma. Ideals must be joined by the non-ideal, as both a testament to their inadequacy and as a goad to further action. In a similar vein Theodor Adorno argued that philosophy is forced to consider material reality in the wake of the Holocaust: "The course of history forces materialism upon metaphysics, traditionally the direct antithesis of materialism…the somatic, unmeaningful stratum of life is the stage of suffering, of the suffering which in the camps, without any consolation, burned every soothing feature out of the mind. The point of no return has been reached in the process which irresistibly forced metaphysics to join what it was once conceived against. Negative Dialectics (New York: Continuum, 2004).

fairness from an abstract "original position" where participants deliberate beneath a "veil of ignorance," which keeps them from knowing their assigned place in the social order. Curiously, given the contentious politics swirling around race in the broader American culture during the composition of *Justice*, racial identity is *not* one of the things that Rawls explicitly enumerates as being restricted by the veil (although he does include it in later iterations). But Rawls does explicitly condemn racial discrimination, writing, "we are confident that religious intolerance and racial discrimination are unjust."[15] Moreover, he maintains that the original position would rule out a racial configuration for a just society's basic structure; as he puts it, "from the standpoint of persons similarly situated in an initial situation which is fair, the principles of explicit racist doctrines are not only unjust. They are irrational. For this reason we could say that they are not moral conceptions at all, but simply means of suppression."[16] From these scattered remarks, we can discern that Rawls was sensitive to the presence of racial discrimination as a potent force in American history. However, by reducing the social contract tradition to a skeletal thought experiment, Rawls promotes an idealizing abstraction away from the cruel realities of the American polity.

Of course, Rawls might respond that this is precisely the point—that we need to get clear of our entrenched biases and prejudices if we are to ever understand what justice requires of us. In making this move, however, Mills argues that Rawls has left us few (if any) "conceptual point(s) of entry to start talking about the fundamental way in which (as all nonwhites know) race structures one's life and affects one's life chances."[17] In fact, the abstract quality of Rawls's principles creates its own "veil of ignorance" that shadows the

15 John Rawls, A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999).
16 Ibid., 149.
17 Mills, The Racial Contract, 76.

neutral language in which it is couched. As several scholars of race have demonstrated, the apparent neutrality of principles such as "reasonableness" and "merit" often conceal a racial subtext.[18] Even "justice" has a different meaning depending on one's social standing: Mills quotes the oft-expressed idea among African Americans that "when white people say Justice they mean 'Just Us.'"[19] What appears self-evident to some is often an 'innocent' dogma, which, in Bourdieu's words, "goes without saying because it comes without saying."[20] Rawls's liberal theory would be, on Mill's reading, complicit with such dogma because it gives insufficient weight to our history of racial trauma.[21]

This angle of attack against Rawls, however, seems to ignore Rawls' stated intentions about his particular use of social contract theory. Rawls fully acknowledges the racial and class-based inequalities of our actually existing democracy, while nonetheless constructing a theory that does not give present problems a central role. And although a certain version of the social contract tradition might indeed paper over such inequalities, Rawls' intention is to take up this tradition and to use it as a tool in crafting a conception of justice that could apply to everyone, and not simply to the dominant group ("just us"). Moreover, Rawls' stated concern is not with historical inequalities or injustices, but with the analysis of "justice" as an abstract concept. Rawls gives "insufficient weight" to the history of racial trauma not because he is blind to it, but because his theoretical approach is to give little to no weight to history *as such*.

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18 Jody David Armour, Negrophobia and Reasonable Racism: The Hidden Costs of Being Black in America; David B. Wilkins, "On Being Good and Black," Harvard Law Review (1999); Charles R. Lawrence III, "Two View of the River: A Critique of the Liberal Defense of Affirmative Action," Columbia Law Review Vol. 101, No. 4 (2001); Susan Storm and Lani Guinier, "The Future of Affirmative Action: Reclaiming the Innovative Ideal," California Law Review (1996).

19 Mills, The Racial Contract, i.

20 Bourdieu, Outline of a Theory of Practice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 167.

21 Glenn Loury, The Anatomy of Racial Inequality (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 7.

In view of what seem to be hermeneutic problems for Mills's argument, it is worth emphasizing that Mills does not think that the legacy of racial domination and discrimination leaves an indelible stain on the social contract tradition. To paraphrase Habermas on the public sphere, the abstract language of the social contract is at once "ideology and more than ideology."[22] It is ideological when it serves to conceal the history of racial violence perpetrated by those who simultaneously espoused the principles of autonomy and equality, but it potentially exceeds an ideological defense of racial domination because such principles are fundamentally available to all those who are recognized as full, equal persons—a gesture of recognition that, through centuries of struggle, now applies (at least in theory) to all humans and not only those supposedly "blessed" with fair skin. In other words, the colorblind aspects of the social contract tradition should not be rejected but honored as matching up to our considered understandings of justice. However, this work must operate alongside and in tandem with efforts at unveiling the lack of fit between these considered judgments and a blatantly unjust past and present.[23]

While a *Theory of Justice* may be read as an attempt to take up the social contract's potential to be more than ideology, Rawls's work is nonetheless missing this latter emphasis on exposing the injustices of the present. His reiteration of the social contract as a purely normative and hypothetical account confined to the realm of ideal theory is, then, not so much a willful concealment of racial injustice as what Mills calls an "evasion" that serves to obscure the "centrality of racial subordination" and that therefore "makes the achievement

22 Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society. Translated by Thomas Burger, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).
23 Along these lines Mils suggests a revival of a neglected strain of social contract theory, which he refers to as the "domination contract" and whose greatest practitioner is Rousseau in the Discourse on the Origins of Inequality. "The First person who, having enclosed a plot of land, took it into his head to say this is mine and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, The Basic Political Writings (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987).

of corrective racial justice a less pressing matter, if it is seen as necessary at all."[24] So even as

the presence of race in Rawls's theory grows over time—in *Political Liberalism* race is

explicitly mentioned as something you do not know behind the veil of ignorance, and

whereas in *Theory* Rawls only referred to ancient slavery, in *Political Liberalism* he expressly

refers to American slavery and its legacy—these concessions to the violent legacy of

discrimination are subordinated through Rawls's commitment to ideal theory.[25] From the

perspective of the realistic utopia, race "would not specify [a] relevant point of view."[26]

Therefore, the "serious problems arising from existing discrimination and distinctions based

on…race are not on its [*Theory's*] agenda."[27] Rawls held to the hope that others could take

up the conception of justice as fairness in order to "deal with" the lingering effects of racial

discrimination, and that such a conception would be "seriously defective" should it lack the

"resources to articulate the political values essential to justify the legal and social institutions

needed to secure the equality of…minorities."[28] Yet Mills insists that ideal theory proves to

be "patently non-ideal" for the theorizing of racial justice. As he puts it, "it is absurd to

utilize without modification a conceptual apparatus that presupposes race-neutral inclusion,

colorblind universalism and egalitarian political input" in a polity where racial oppression has

been a central experience.[29] This is due to Mills' suspicion that colorblind idealism about the

hypothetical polity (without the friction provided by an awareness of racial injustice) too

quickly slides into an idealization of the *actual* polity, a move that serves to marginalize both

historical and contemporary experiences of discrimination and injustice. Since Rawls'

24 Mills, "Rawls on Race/Race in Rawls."
25 Ibid.,
26 Rawls, Justice as Fairness: A Restatement, 66
27 Ibid., 66.
28 Ibid., 66.
29 Pateman and Mills, Contract and Domination, 108.

principles of justice for the well-ordered society are intended as corrective guides—as inspirational horizons towards which we will strive—the amnesia of race at their core is a troubling lack.[30] If political theory—whether in the social contract tradition or not—does not draw its readers towards both structural and casual experiences of injustice, then these might cease to be relevant features of our theoretical landscape, a result that would deplete not only the motivation for remediation but deny us a vocabulary for describing and understanding the world in which we find ourselves.

4.2 Amnesia or Melancholia?

In this section, I argue that what Mills identifies as Rawls's racial amnesia is more profoundly a racial *melancholia*—a deficit of memory that keeps us from confronting and mourning the violent history of racial discrimination and its lingering effects in the present. Moreover, Rawls's insistence on ideal theory is a melancholic mechanism of defense—which Klein calls splitting—that saps the motivation for remediation drawn from a patiently cultivated sense of injustice. To say that Rawls's theory is melancholic is not the same thing as calling Rawls himself—or any individual—melancholic. Rather, it means that Rawls's theory fails to draw us into a depressive or mourning position vis-à-vis racial trauma. In other words, liberal (melancholic) theory produces liberal (melancholic) selves. The language of melancholia is both more descriptive and more compelling than amnesia because it adds motive force to Rawlsian forgetting—namely, the fear that reasonable disagreement will tilt into unreasonable and violent conflict. We might call this the specter (not all that unlikely,

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30 Shiffrin, "Race and Ethnicity."

given American history) of a race war. While this possibility should never be discounted—especially by those influenced by Melanie Klein, the theorist *non pareil* of the death drive—persecutory anxiety and fear about this very possibility (and the silence following from this fear) are some of the primary impediments to the achievement of a democratic identity drawn from depressive awareness of the violent racial history with which we continue to live. In other words, by not speaking the name of our anxiety or greatest fear we make its realization all the more likely. In what follows, I flesh out these claims by returning to Freud and Klein, before showing (in Section III) how Rawls's political turn also suffers from a melancholic approach to political life.

What does it mean to say that Rawls's work is effectively melancholic? Freud described melancholia by negative relation to *Trauerarbeit*, the healthy work of mourning. In melancholia the ego has—instead of severing itself from the lost object—*incorporated* the object, which in turn becomes a pathogenic presence. The work of mourning is thereby forestalled, and "the shadow of the object [falls] upon the ego."[31] What results is a curious, if not tragic, situation whereby the trauma is denied and excised from conscious memory only to subsist as a malignant presence within the self.[32] Karl Abraham—a contemporary of Freud's and a profoundly influential figure for Melanie Klein—hypothesized that the blocked grief witnessed in melancholia represented less a refusal to mourn than a miscarried introjection of the object due to a weak and persecuted ego.[33] Unable to face the trauma, the subject incorporates or consumes the object (psychologically) in a cannibalistic fury, all in a desperate effort to keep the object alive. Unfortunately, the cruel irony of melancholic

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31 Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 249

32 As described in the previous chapter, Freud thought the development of an excessively cruel super-ego had its origins in a refusal or inability to mourn the Oedipal traumas.

33 Karl Abraham, "Notes on the Psychogenesis of Melancholia," Selected Papers on Psychoanalysis (London: Hogarth Press, 1927).

attachment is that affection for the other has not, by this process, been sustained but *precluded*. As Freud put it, "the object itself is given up" and the "refuge" of narcissistic identification serves to replace affection with abhorrence.[34]   Unable to bear the sting of trauma, the melancholic subject refuses to reflect on its loss. What follows is a certain deficit of remembrance that prevents a full and complete introjection or identification with the lost object—with the result that the subject is denuded and impoverished, incapable of facing the traumatic crucible from which it originates.

As we have seen in earlier chapters, Klein modified the Freudian account of both mourning and melancholia, while acknowledging the latter's connection to amnesia over "miscarried" introjection. For Klein, mourning only takes place when the melancholic defenses are overcome. These include not only denial (what Klein calls scotomization) but splitting and idealization. Splitting is perhaps the most difficult melancholic defense to surmount. Even if denial is overcome and the loss is acknowledged, its full impact on our lives can be avoided: we can split the internalized object into idealized good and bad parts, and we thereafter defend the memory of a lost, perfect object while neglecting its ambivalent nature. Melancholia comes to resemble life in the paranoid-schizoid position. From this position, the lost object assumes an outsized character, and we feel compelled to defend it at all costs from internal and external threats. We thereby project the hatred that is mixed up with the object—and we have no attachments that do not involve hatred[35]—into another object, or we absorb it into the ego and enter a period of self-loathing. Enslaved to the other and beset by persecutory phantasies, we suffer from a paralyzing fear that keeps us

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34 Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 251.
35 "Scientists prove it really is a thin line between love and hate." The Independent. 29 October 2008.

from acknowledging both our and others' imperfections. Only when the pieces of the object are brought together can we come to internalize a more realistic "assembly" of objects that keep us sensitive to the mixed-up, contentious and tragic world of intersubjective life. Through this work of mourning we thereby transition from a vicious cycle of denial, distrust, and extreme fear into a virtuous cycle of acknowledgment, concern, and reparation. While Klein spoke about the crucial place of guilt in the depressive position, perhaps even more important is the shattering of our presumed innocence. Melancholia is a state of mind that sanitizes or idealizes our history and denies our dependency on others over whom we have little to no control. The depressive position, by the mitigation of persecutory anxiety, allows for steps in ego integration (identity-formation), which results in a "greater capacity to acknowledge the...poignant psychic reality."[36]

Yet how exactly do the insights of Klein and Freud on melancholia translate to the work of Rawls? Put briefly, melancholia is, on Freudian terms, a deficit of memory and, on Kleinian terms, a splitting of experience into idealized and denigrated components that keep us from engaging an ambiguous or imperfect reality. It is no stretch to say that Rawls's work suffers from similar maladies. On the one hand, as Mills has pointed out, there is a practiced amnesia over historical and enduring patterns of racial discrimination—an amnesia that privileges reconciliatory efforts to "calm our rage and frustration" over our violent history.[37] On the other hand, Rawls' insistence on practicing "ideal theory" is intended as an exemption from the need to theorize racial *injustice*—especially since the latter's very presence only inhibits the articulation and acceptance of the principles of justice. We have

36 Melanie Klein, "Some Theoretical Conclusions regarding the emotional life of the infant" Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963 (New York: Free Press, 1975), 73.
37 John Rawls, Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2007), 10.

to extract ourselves from our fleshy encumbrances (our interests, our biases, our private commitments) in order to better learn and apply the principles of justice. The various attachments and entanglements to which we are prone are precisely those that prevent us from understanding the conditions and requirements of justice.

Rawls imagines that political philosophy serves reform or social improvement by creating a picture of what justice would look like, which would then, by its lack of fit with our present world, call us to the work of matching ideal and reality. Yet in the face of historical trauma and its lingering aftereffects, the resources of ideal theory are inadequate for this challenge. Simply put, we cannot get from an unjust present to a more perfectly just future without taking stock of—and coming to terms with—how we got here in the first place. There is a whole dimension of historical education (and, I will argue, identity formation) required to bring justice into the world—and this is a register that Rawls's theory ignores.[38] In the terms of the previous chapters, Rawls's work forestalls the democratic work of mourning whereby we strive to create, nurture and sustain a democratic identity that is aware not only of the racialized history of this country but attuned to the denials and distortions over this history and its continued presence. What is more, Rawls limits his theory's engagement with this history *in the name of justice*.

I am not the first person to address Rawls' work from the perspective of Klein, however. As Fred Alford has argued, Rawls's original position *is* Klein's paranoid-schizoid position. According to Alford, Rawls' theory is—from a Kleinian perspective—initially promising. The "maximin" solution in Rawls' original position is intended to allow for some

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38 I am in debt to James Bourke for much of the preceding argument.

measure of distance from the fear that is in-built to the Rawlsian representatives. It is only

after such distance is established (in Klein's account this is due to the presence of good

enough objects that can hold both our love and hate) can we talk about justice in terms that

are "more abstract, universal, and caring than [from within] the self-interest of the fearful."[39]

The original position is on this reading a "transitional space" where we can be released from

our anxieties—a protected site where our paranoid-schizoid fears may be quelled under

terms of justice and just engagement that are mutually agreed-upon.[40] Yet Rawls'

imaginative fiction is ultimately felled because it is couched in the language of severe

paranoid anxiety. This is exemplified by the fear of those in the original position that their

social position will be assigned by malignant forces, an outcome that Rawls's calls "the

worst." The fear of the worst counteracts the reparative impulses that Klein feels are so

important to ego (and social) development, and which Rawls himself saw as essential to the

strengthening of civic friendship and commitment. The original position, then, is

compromised at its root. Here is Alford:

> "Rawls's original position is the paranoid-schizoid position, in which
> our greatest fear is that others will respond with a greed and
> aggression equivalent to our own. Such a position is deeply moral; it
> is the morality of *lex talionis*, in which the possibility that others will
> do unto us what we would do unto them frightens us to death."

Rawlsian anxiety is a magnifier even in the rational original position, and it buttresses

the continuation of a melancholic—because essentially closed, frozen—relationship to

others and the social world. Rawls gives a powerful (if unconscious) reminder of the

intensity of paranoid-schizoid fears, and he, in Alford's words, "designs a system to quell

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39 Fred Alford, Melanie Klein and Social Theory: An Account of Politics, Art, and Reason Based on Her Psychoanalytic Theory (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 182.

40 The language of "transitional space" in indebted to Winnicott. D.W. Winnicott, Home Is Where We Start From: Essays by a Psychoanalyst (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986)

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them…a more secure space in which reparative impulses may emerge."[41] However, as

Alford notes, Rawls "does not even begin to create a society built upon these impulses."[42]

Alford's reading of Rawls, though, like Mills', seems to depend on a willful denial of

Rawls's stated intentions. In Alford's case, it depends on a misunderstanding of what the

original position is intended to be. Rawls sees the representatives in the original position not

as actual persons with a developed psychology, but rather as 'stick-figures' pursuing only the

instrumentally rational motive of maximizing their share of primary goods. Rawls' aim is not

to describe how actual people would bargain/negotiation/disagree/discuss about just

society, but to arrive at principles of justice with a minimum of controversial assumptions.

He is not saying that economic rationality *simpliciter* counts as morality, as Alford seems to

imply.

However, since my reading of Rawls will surely come under similar criticism (that I

am applying a vocabulary and a project alien to Rawls' own), this line of response needs to

be partially corrected. Alford is wrong if he insists that Rawls' intention is to generalize the

attitudes of the original position stick figures back into a theory of human psychology. But

Alford is right insofar as the *effect* of Rawls' original position is to instaurate a melancholic

attitude towards self and other. If we think of the original position in terms of a dream (or

even a noble fiction), then its anxiety and paranoid fear continue to have effects even after

we wake up. Indeed, if Rawls's political philosophy took on the public role he envisions for

it and the original position did in fact become a commonly deployed "device of

representation" for clarifying and interpreting our considered convictions about justice, it

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41 Alford, Melanie Klein and Critical Social Theory, 183.
42 Ibid., 183.

seems plausible to suppose that the rational utility-maximizing logic of the original

position—the logic that Alford links to anxiety and melancholia— would "bleed into" the

moral conception that Rawls ostensibly seeks to promote. The original position is, in

Alford's view, a symptom of a more general anxiety that shadows the history of liberal

thought, and it is this anxiety that Rawls fails to acknowledge and work through.[43] In other

words, Rawls' early work cannot escape paranoid-schizoid fears because it refuses the

social/political possibility of the depressive position.

Yet it is precisely Rawls's so-called political turn that is intended, in part, to address

such concerns—by moving away from comprehensive doctrine of justice as fairness and

towards a political conception that understands the elimination or foreclosure of conflict to

be impossible. Additionally, over time the social pathologies surrounding race gained

prominence in Rawls's theory. Both of these moves can be interpreted as a retreat from

paranoid-schizoid fears about the "worst" and towards an engagement with the conflictual

nature of life in (relatively) well-ordered liberal democracies. Therefore in the next section

of this chapter I inquire as to whether or not Rawls's late work, despite its melancholic

origins, can serve democratic theory in its attempts to mourn the traumas surrounding race,

or whether this late work only recapitulates the pathologies of Rawls' original account.

4.3 Political Liberalism's strategies of containment, avoidance, and reconciliation

Thucydides tells the story of the fated self-destruction of the Greek city-states in the long
war between Athens and Sparta. The history ends in midstream, as if it is broken off. Did
Thucydides stop, or was he unable to finish? *It is as if he said: "and so on…"* The tale of folly

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43 Ibid., 183. Here Alford follows Sheldon Wolin, "Liberalism and the Decline of Political Philosophy," Politics and Vision: Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

had gone on long enough. What moves the city-states is what makes the increasing self-destruction inevitable.

--Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*

I don't really know why I took the course I did.

--Rawls, *Political Liberalism*

Rawls' late work (*Political Liberalism, The Law of Peoples, The Idea of Public Reason Revisited*) extends and refines his early reflections on liberal conceptions of justice, while simultaneously overturning key precepts of those original arguments. The basic content of justice as fairness—society as a system of fair cooperation between free and equal citizens, each engaging others in concordance with the principle of reciprocity and the duty of civility—emerges in the late work relatively unscathed. Yet the context of articulation for the theory of justice has been altered by Rawls' recognition of irreducible pluralism in late-modern democracies—specifically a pluralism of "incompatible but reasonable comprehensive doctrines." These doctrines are comprehensive in that they offer their adherents both a fundamental orientation to the world and a conception of the good. Such worldviews are comparable in their scope to the salvific religious doctrines that clashed violently across Europe in the centuries following the Reformation—competing doctrines whose claims could not be settled or adjudicated on the political bases of compromise and deliberation. These conflicts generally were settled only by "exhaustion and circumstance," or through the development of a *modus vivendi* social order based on a precarious balance of power between competing doctrines. Rawls begins *Political Liberalism* by declaring that a plurality of these irreconcilable comprehensive doctrines is not an accident of history but the

"normal result of the exercise of human reason."[44] The enduring presence of conflicting

doctrines represents the haunting possibility of a slide towards violent conflict, and as such it

cannot be blithely acknowledged or lightly passed over. The problem posed by the

Reformation is a sobering one: "how is society even possible between those of different

faiths?"[45] The liberal theory that Rawls inherits and extends "takes to heart" the depth of

this violence, but it is also marked by a hope that such conflict can find respite within a just,

constitutional settlement.

There are a few things to note here. While the violence over doctrinal differences

sparked by the Reformation is Rawls's ostensible subject, there are other conflicts within

present-day liberal democracies that periodically bubble to the surface in *Liberalism*. In fact,

the Reformation is in some respects a stand-in for other disagreements such as those

surrounding redistribution, tolerance, and identity. The presence of the last in *Liberalism*

implies that Rawls has moved past his racial amnesia. Race now has a place in his theory: it

is explicitly mentioned, for instance, in Rawls's re-construction of the original position and

the veil of ignorance. But Rawls turns from amnesia over race to a marginalization of it as a

serious problem. Race is suddenly more important but still, ultimately, irrelevant. The

challenge of religious/doctrinal conflict trumps the hostilities surrounding race, which are

taken to be immanently soluble given liberalism's commitment to equal respect and color-

blind justice.

Famously, at this stage Rawls no longer believes that the full theory of justice as

fairness, as articulated in his early work, can provide the terms for a comprehensive

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44 John Rawls, Political Liberalism: Expanded Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), xviii
45 Ibid., xxvi.

reconciliation of reasonable but incompatible doctrines. To be sure, Rawls does not think

that his systematic rejections of utilitarianism and libertarianism in *Justice* have been

weakened; nor does he feel that the core of justice as fairness must be reworked. Instead,

the problems of his earlier work stem from Rawls' conflation within that work of the distinct

undertakings of moral and political philosophy. The moral "baggage" of *Justice* must be

discarded (or 'bracketed') so that the theory of justice articulated there can be reconstructed

as political "all the way down." In other words, justice as fairness is to be stripped of its

"comprehensive philosophical" presumptions in order to serve its reconfigured purpose, i.e.

the securing of a stable and just pluralistic society.

The presence of "stable" next to "just" here is not incidental—the immodesty of

Rawls' early comprehensive approach is checked in his later work by an enlarged focus on

social stability.[46] Rawls has forsaken the "unrealistic" stability of his earlier "well-ordered

system of justice" in favor of a "political" conception of social stability compatible with

justice as fairness but independent of any comprehensive claims about the good.[47]

Reasonable but incompatible doctrines exist and will continue to exist as long as citizens

freely employ their reason. *Political Liberalism*, then, begins with an acknowledgement of

irreducible social contestation. Yet *Liberalism* goes on to articulate a "political" theory

whereby this conflict can be diffused, restricted, and silenced. The specter of stasis, as

heralded in Thucydides's account of factious infighting during the Peloponnesian war,

requires an adequate (if noncomprehensive) response.

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46 Of course, Rawls still holds on to the idea of stability "for the right reasons," not simply for its own sake. More below.

47 Samuel Freeman. "John Rawls—An Overview," Cambridge Companion to Rawls (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Rawls' fear is not so much a return to religious warfare (though this is a haunting possibility that overshadows his entire work) but "sharp and divisive political controversy" that "may prove intractable and may never be fully settled."[48] On Rawls' reading, the role of political philosophy is not to describe the antecedents (historical, economic, psychological or otherwise) of current conflict but to uncover common areas of agreement across reasonable doctrines, and—failing this—to find means by which the "divergence of opinion can be narrowed sufficiently so that political cooperation on a basis of mutual respect can still be maintained."[49] If conflict cannot be softened by the discovery of unexpected convergence, then it must be properly filtered. The problem of stability resulting from the "fact of reasonable pluralism," therefore, pushes Rawls towards a three-pronged strategy of *containment*, *avoidance*, and *reconciliation*. This strategy can be clearly seen through a description of the "new ideas" required as a supplement to justice as fairness: public reason, the "political" conception of the person, and the "overlapping consensus." My intention is to show how each of the elements of Rawls's political turn can be re-described in terms of Kleinian pathology. This is done not in order to psychoanalyze Rawlsian theory, but to show how political theory can incorporate the insights of Klein into its native concerns with justice, democracy, and identity.

4.3.1 Public Reason

Public reason typifies the Rawlsian strategy of *containment*. It serves to protect the fundamental public spaces of constitutionally sanctioned deliberation and decision from the encroachments of "unreasonable" or "mad" comprehensive doctrines, which exhibit a "zeal

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48 Rawls, "Justice as Fairness: Political not Metaphysical," Philosophy and Public Affairs 14, no. 3 (1985), 226
49 Ibid., 226. For Rawls's view on political philosophy as the search for resolution drawn from an awareness of deep conflict, see Political Liberalism, pp 44-5.

for the whole truth" and can only achieve hegemony over other doctrines through acts of oppression. Public reason specifies, "at the deepest level, the basic moral and political values that are to determine a constitutional democratic government's relation to its citizens and their relation to one another."[50] These specifications—Rawls hopes—will insulate the public realm from zealots of any and all stripe. However, it is important to note the limited scope of the idea of public reason. Rawls splits the polity by drawing a line between "public political forums" and the "background culture." Public reason only claims sovereignty in the former—the space of law courts, government affairs, and campaigns for public office. The "background culture" of civil society, the private economy, universities, and religious organizations is not responsible to the dictates of public reason. Moreover, Rawls limits public reason not only to fundamental constitutional spaces but to certain questions within these duly appointed bodies—questions of "constitutional essentials and matters of basic justice."[51] Here we can clearly witness Rawls's strategy of containment: the constitution is a container of the basic rights and liberties of the citizen body, the "non-public" demands of the civil society are contained in a free-wheeling "background culture" and deliberation and decisions in constitutional bodies are contained (or, at least, constrained) by the contours of public reason. Additionally, this constitutional space is attended to and guarded over by "free and equal" citizens who are each and severally committed to *self-containment* as dictated by the "ideal" of public reason. This ideal elevates citizens until they become hypothetical legislators and judges themselves, thereby capable of articulating their political beliefs and desires in the language of public reason guided by the duty of civility and the principle of

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50 John Rawls, "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited," The Law of Peoples (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 132.
51 Ibid., 133.

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reciprocity. Insofar as we approach this ideal we will be better equipped—Rawls thinks—to hold our public officials accountable (at least to the requirements of public reason). In the process, we take on the ideal of citizenship offered by Rawls's theory, whereby we will become aware of and honor the difference between our public or political commitments and our "nonpolitical" or nonpublic selves.[52]

4.3.2 The political conception of the person.

With this last move we begin to detect the shift from Rawls' strategy of *containment* to the strategy, or "method" of *avoidance*—i.e. his "political" conception of persons above and beyond "metaphysical" or "philosophical" theories of the self. These elements of Rawlsian theory are deeply intertwined. Strong moral views of the person raise anew the specter of intransigent conflict. Individuals who are "encumbered" by "attachments and loyalties" to any particular conception of the good are—by virtue of these attachments—reluctant to accept, or incapable of reaching, fair terms of cooperation and agreement with those who bear different but equally reasonable conceptions. Rawls admits that it may seem "strange" to think we can "stand apart" from these commitments, loyalties, and affections when deciding or debating matters of public importance, but this seeming concession to his many communitarian and feminist critics is then quickly withdrawn. These doctrines and self-conceptions—as benign or natural as they may seem to those situated within them—can become "mad" when they enter into public forums, unless they submit to the constraints of public reason. Convinced of the truth of their convictions, individuals will press their claim

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52 See Political Liberalism, I:5.

to the exclusion of any others; opposing doctrines are seen in this light as "unreasonable" solely because they stand in opposition, and not because they possess any particular content.[53]

Just as Rawls hopes to contain "mad" doctrines so that they do not encroach upon or threaten the basic constitutional structure, so too does he ask citizens to contain their diverse and contingent passions and attachments to the "nonpublic" side of their identities.[54] Yet beyond this injunction, Rawls does not want to entertain or develop a comprehensive conception of the self to fit his theory. This is his famous "method of avoidance," the result of which is a self split between a "political" or public identity guided by public reason and a "nonpublic" or "background" self in which our passions and attachments are (presumably) given free play. Unlike our unique subjective inheritance, public/political identity is not contingent on accident of birth; it is available to all "reasonable" people. Rawls does not intend to build his theory of the self from the "ground up"—no Freudian *Trieben*, no Hobbesian *nosce teipsum*, no Platonic *psyche*—but from the "top down." As he puts it, "justice as fairness starts from the idea that society is to be conceived as a fair system of cooperation and so it adopts a conception of the person to go with this idea."[55] Diverse subjects *impersonate* an abstract conception of the "free and equal" citizen—a conception which in turn imposes the principle of reciprocity as fair treatment of (free and equal) others. In this respect, Rawls seemingly retreats from the psychological presumptions of his earlier theory,

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53 Race, on these terms, becomes a kind of "comprehensive doctrine" in the eyes of Rawls's theory. Because race is undertheorized in Rawls's account—at points he implies that it is a natural rather than a sociological fact—it is reduced to "identity politics," i.e. another form of "nonpolitical" identity that heralds discord, disagreement, and stasis. Rawls acknowledges the presence of historical conflicts over race, but counts on race's ultimate irrelevance from both the standpoint of justice as fairness and his idealized version of the public sphere. In this respect Rawl's public realm comes to resemble the original position itself: a space of forgetting where our contingent inheritance of a violent, racialized politics will be left behind.

54 Rawls, "Justice as Fairness, Political not Metaphysical," 242.

55 Ibid., 233.

where he describes our human liability to moral feelings based on (among other things) love received in infancy and childhood.[56] In *Political Liberalism* Rawls explicitly says that his conception of an ideal citizen's moral psychology is "drawn from the political conception of justice as fairness" and "not psychology originating in the science of human nature."[57] Hence there is what Sheldon Wolin has referred to as a "dualism" in Rawls' theory of the citizen.[58] Rawls maintains that a hypothetical conception of a citizen can be divorced from (and subsequently become a model for) actual citizens. However, actual citizens have psychological realities that theories of citizenship would be wise to consider. Rawls' avoidance of controversial claims about subjective needs, desires, and impulses becomes self-defeating when those same impulses and desires challenge (if not mock) the strictures of *Liberalism's* principles.

Ultimately in *Liberalism* both society and subject are split between public and nonpublic sides—the former guided by public reason and thus guided toward stable agreement and just reconciliation, the latter a (supposedly) more raucous and contestatory space of competing doctrines and visions full of encumbered and motivated selves posturing, performing, and protesting. This background noise is tolerated until it threatens the constitutional order (and hence the sanctity of the split itself). When it begins to influence the settled constitutional bodies—either as external pressure or internal interference—then all good "political" selves must step forward to re-establish the discipline demanded by the idea and ideal of public reason and the conception of justice as fairness.

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56 Alford sees Rawls as holding a Freudian view of eros, though Rawls explicitly attributes his view on love in Theory to Rousseau, see paragraph 70. For the only mentions of Freud in Theory, see pages 471-473 (where Rawls discusses Freud's view that justice begins with envy), and 402 and 428 (where Rawls discusses Freud in the context of moral learning). Freud is unmentioned in Political Liberalism.
57 Rawls, Political Liberalism, 86-7.
58 A dualism that Wolin finds to be problematic. See "Liberal Justice and Political Democracy," Politics and Vision, 544.

4.3.3 The overlapping consensus

But what if the strategies of containment and avoidance falter? What will protect the (relatively) well-ordered polity when citizens, judges, or politicians neglect their commitments to a salutary amnesic politics and remember the attachments and loyalties of their nonpublic selves?   Rawls's ultimate solution to the problem of stability in a society of plural comprehensive doctrines and potentially "excessive" subjects is the conjoining of *reconciliation* to the intertwined (but admittedly fallible) strategies of *containment* and *avoidance*. However, this strategy appears at first glance to be more of a *discovery*. Rawls discerns "deeper moral intuitions" across regnant comprehensive moral conceptions—an area of "fundamental moral agreement" that, moreover, "happily accords" with the core substance of justice as fairness. It is as if Rawls was sketching out our troubled pluralist map and noticed that it began to resemble a Venn diagram: while each doctrine has aspects of belief that fall outside the contours of public reason, there is a happy space of convergence, which "when worked up into a political conception of justice turn(s) out to be sufficient to underwrite a just constitutional regime."[59] The unnerving pluralism within the polity—the ever-present threat of a slide towards violent doctrinal conflict, or towards oppression by unreasonable or mad conceptions of the good—is found to be an illusion resting on a partial perception of social reality. Rawls has corrected our optics, and identified the "deeper bases of agreement embedded in the public political culture." All that remains is to shape it into a "coherent view," which he refers to as the "overlapping consensus." Political reconciliation

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59 Rawls, Political Liberalism, 247.

is by this conjuration not only possible but *already implied* by the practices and principles built into the culture.

Note, however, that Rawls does not think such practices, principles, and beliefs are naturally occurring or always available. Rather he thinks they are the effects of the long history of legitimate governance and a supportive culture organized around honoring and protecting the constitution.[60] Consensus is originally merely a "constitutional" creation—an institutional settlement of divisive issues on par with the drafting and ratifying of the American constitution from 1787-1788. This consensus only achieves "overlapping" status as and if the order is legitimated by approximation to the principles of justice as fairness. Through this process and practice, comprehensive doctrines in the "background" begin (though Rawls is vague on this point) to incorporate features of public reason, just as the individual raised under "just institutions" will acquire a "normally sufficient sense of justice so that they comply with its just arrangements."[61] The ability to shape ourselves to fit the overlapping consensus is part of Rawls' faith in "moral learning" but it could also be styled as the effects of his particular form of "political" education—the peculiar Rawlsian form of "becoming political" whereby we identify with public reason over and above our inherited identities, with their motley and messy collection of loyalties, attachments, passions, desires, fears, and hopes.

Critics of Rawls such as Sheldon Wolin and Bonnie Honig have dismissed Rawls's reconciliatory overtures as being profoundly anti-political, since politics on their view is an

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60 There are obvious problems with such an (abstract) account: Rawls mentions the presence of slavery in the constitution only in passing, and for someone as interested in judicial review as Rawls is, the lack of historical examples of Supreme Court rulings - from Dred Scott onwards, is surprising if not disturbing.

61 Rawls, Political Liberalism, 141. Note the similarity here to Plato's ideas on the just city in the Republic. As we could say about Rawls, the trick for Plato is not maintaining the just city but in founding it. Once the ideals and values of the city are soaked into the polis (as dye into fabric), then a rough equilibrium will result (though Plato's tragic sense keeps him from claiming immortality for the polis). The comparison breaks down when we consider that Rawls did not have to travel to Syracuse; he found himself already where he needed to be.

agonistic struggle dependent on deeply-felt grievances and even rage.[62] Without raw

emotions drawn from a sense of injustice or wrong, the argument goes, citizens will remain

apathetic and disenfranchised, and power will be wielded by well-placed actors until

government becomes, in Dewey's phrase, the "shadow cast over society by big business."[63]

Rawls would respond by arguing that political theory's task is not to dwell upon the non-

ideal realities of inequality, discrimination, or bias—or, rather, to engage such imperfections

only by the light of the well-ordered society governed by the principles of justice. He

explicitly rejects the idea that efforts for achieving justice are motivated by the baser

emotions of envy and rage.[64] Establishing—if only in theory—the possibility of resolving

the conflicts born from the free exercise of human reason helps us to avoid a fetishization of

agon that blithely passes over the terrible things we are capable of doing to each other.[65]   By

the three-pronged strategy of containment, avoidance, and reconciliation, Rawls thinks we

can exorcize the specters of endless conflict and divisive contestation—the "and so on" of

factional strife and doctrinal *stasis*—and achieve a "realistic utopia." As he says of the

overlapping consensus, "this is the most we can expect, nor do we need more."[66]

And yet the attempt to expunge serious contestation (and even intense emotion)

from democratic societies is perhaps the clearest sign that Rawls is still pushed from behind

by overwhelming anxiety and fear. Perhaps his admission that "he does not know" why he

charted the course he did gives us a ground from which we can raise (immodest) conjectures

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62 Wolin, "The Liberal Democratic Divide: On Rawls's Political Liberalism," Political Theory 24, no. 1 (1996). See also Bonnie Honig, Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993) and William Connolly. Why I Am Not a Secularist (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

63 Dewey, Quoted in Robert Westbrook, John Dewey and American Democracy (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993). 440.

64 Rawls, Justice, 471-473.

65 Lisa Disch, "Political Theory and the Displacement of Politics (Review)," Political Theory 22, no. 1 (1994)

66 Rawls, "Justice as Fairness, Political not Metaphysical," 247. For more on Rawls' idealization of stability, and the problems with his account, see George Klosko, "Rawls's Argument from Political Stability," Columbia Law Review 94 (1994).

about the presence of powerful unconscious affects behind his "reasonable" *rejection* of

affect. Rawls does not consciously endorse a liberalism of fear, à la Judith Shklar, but fear is

a persistent if unacknowledged presence in his description of liberalism's historical

development and current form. It is this fear that, Rawls thinks, drives us to political

philosophy as a potential generator of solutions to unnecessary conflict and tension.

Rawlsian liberalism "takes to heart" the destructive violence of the religious wars, but it

dreams of ending the cycle of revenge with a constitutional (and ultimately a substantively

moral "overlapping") consensus that will not only provide a political solution to seemingly

transcendent disputes but moreover "calm our rage and frustration" against any residual

suffering by "showing us the way in which (our) institutions, when properly understood,

from a philosophical point of view, are rational, and developed over time as they did to

attain their present, rational form."[67] Reconciled to our institutional inheritance, we won't

have any reason to mourn.[68]

　　　Yet what are the concealed costs of Rawls's efforts at reconciliation? Mills has

argued that Rawls's amnesia about race serves to obfuscate the place of racial violence and

discrimination in American history. Wolin has argued that Rawls's efforts at calming rage

and frustration serve to de-politicize the citizenry and, in effect, make the identification of

injustice a harder task.[69] My claim, while indebted to the two above, is that Rawls's theory

provides an incomplete and inadequate political education that mitigates the formation of a

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67 Rawls, Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy, 11

68 Here I agree with Derek Barker when he charts the connections between Rawls and Hegel on the immanence of social reconciliation to current social configurations and institutions. As Barker puts it, "pluralism is for Rawls…what 'conflict' is to Hegel: the critical problem, in social and political life, but one that can be overcome by philosophy once the world is seen in a new light." Barker, however, says that Rawls does not explicitly argue that political philosophy's task is show our world to be rational (as it was for Hegel), yet note Rawls' Lectures on Political Philosophy (cited above) where he does explicitly say that one role of political philosophy is to "calm our frustration and rage against our society and its history by showing us the way in which its institutions, when properly understood, from a philosophical point of view, are rational, and developed over time as they did to attain their present, rational form" Ibid., 10.

69 See Supra note 4 above.

democratic identity capable of acknowledging and working through the living legacy of racial discrimination and bias in the United States. In the next section of this chapter, I will develop this claim.

4.4 From the Original Position to the Depressive Position

In this chapter I have faulted Rawls's theory for its melancholic approach to the living legacy of racial discrimination and violence in the United States, arguing that it fails to draw its readers into a work of mourning over this legacy—a work that is crucial not only for the achievement of racial justice but for the development of a democratic identity sensitive to trauma and tragedy in the polis. However, clearly there are elements of Rawlsian liberalism that are promising from a Kleinian perspective. Writing about a *Theory of Justice*, Fred Alford praised Rawls's psychological understanding in the latter's construction of the original position. According to Alford, the original position mirrors the analytic situation whereby we attempt to gain some measure of distance from our persecutory fantasies and fears in order to reflect more clearly on our situation (and, in Rawls's case, the principles of justice). As Alford puts it, "the maximin solution is at the core of [Rawls's] schema not merely for the formal, analytic reasons…but for sound psychological reasons as well. Only by mitigating the anxieties of the liberal self can we begin to talk about justice in terms more abstract, universal, and caring than the self-interest of the fearful."[70] Alford's reasoning is Kleinian: only by making the transition from persecutory to depressive anxiety can we clarify our connections, debts and obligations to others. In other words, we can begin to establish

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70 Alford, Melanie Klein and Critical Social Theory, 182.

a shared world with others, which Rawls himself took to be integral to the establishment of "bonds of civic friendship" and the "general desire for justice."[71] The transition to the depressive position allows us to develop such bonds because our persecutory fears have been mitigated through acting and being in common with others who do not match our out-sized anxieties—this is not only a psychological achievement but, I would argue, an education in democracy.

However, it is clear that, for Klein, the others with whom we identify in the depressive position remain *other*: they are not extensions of our narcissism but direct challenges to it. Our autonomy—the ability to act in a shared world—is simultaneously achieved with our acknowledgement of interdependency. This is the "poignant psychic reality" whereby our fantasies of omnipotence (and even of *potency*) are shattered by the "assembly" of ambiguous objects in both external and internal worlds. The persecutory "enemy" of Rawls's original position can yield to become part of our fluid, plural internal world of objects if we speak, listen, and act in cooperation with them. In fact, it is possible that only through such action in common with others can we achieve the ethical maturity that Klein saw as the end of analysis.

Yet all of this is denied to the representatives in the original position, which is intended only as a "guide to intuition"—a process of introspection that all rational agents can take up and practice. Hence its limited value: in the absence of social practices whereby paranoid-schizoid defenses can be countered, anxious fantasies of persecution will continue to plague us. Fantasies are only countered effectively by realities—through experiences with

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71 Rawls, Theory, 5.

others that mitigate our worst fears (and, one hasten to add, chasten our outsized hopes). The original position cannot, by itself, effect a transition from paranoid anxiety to depressive anxiety—this happens only when our internal objects and fantasies come to more closely match our external experiences. Unfortunately, as Alford laments, Rawls's did "not even begin to create a society built upon" the reparative impulses that emerged from the work of introspection in the original position.[72] There is no attention paid to the political practices and experiences that could replicate—and make *real*—the psychological and cognitive development that Rawls hopes might take place in the original position.

Rawls, in moving away from the comprehensive approach to justice and towards a "political" conception, added the operation of public reason to that of the original position. Unfortunately this does not move in the direction that Alford suggests: in fact it now creates a public/political version of the paranoid-schizoid position, whereby public discourse is filtered through public reason in an effort to keep contentious politics and emotions off the table. There *are* sound psychological reasons for supporting the Rawlsian understanding of public reason. Public reason, for instance, asks us to imagine the perspectives of others and reasoning from the standpoint of disagreement rather than consensus. Rawls' conception of public reason, then, comes to resemble in some respects a Kleinian super-ego "assembly" (where we sympathetically engage and identify with the different perspectives of others). Yet where precisely is the "public" in this practice of reason? It seems that we are to make our own individual reasons public by imagining whether another (hypothetical) reasonable person could agree with our arguments and principles, or whether or not they depend on

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72 Alford, Melanie Klein and Critical Social Theory, 183.

controversial premises. But like the original position, public reason is a thought experiment, rather than an experience of interaction. It remains a purely intellectual achievement because Rawls is, in Wolin's words, "singularly cool" about the value of participation in public affairs.[73] In other words, Rawls is still tripped up by lingering anxiety about the "worst"—only the worst in *Justice* has been replaced by the idea that divisive political conflict will inevitably lead to outright violence if not checked by the constraints of public reason and political philosophy geared towards political and subjective reconciliation.   Once again, Rawls's sound psychological presumptions (that we need distance from persecutory anxiety in order to sympathetically engage with others in the difficult work of sharing a common world) are compromised by the most 'liberal' of fears: the fear of democratic politics.[74]

Rawls failed to appreciate that certain political and ethical virtues may only be achievable through active participation in public life.[75] What is more, by beginning with a political conception of the person, Rawls has avoided the task of describing how these autonomous agents might come to be in the first place. As the work of Klein and subsequent object-relations theorists shows, there is an inescapable social dimension to subjectivity. We (ironically) become autonomous beings through our awareness and admission of inter-dependency on and with others. Recall the acceptance of object ambiguity and inter-subjective dependency detailed by Klein's analysis of Richard: Richard

73 Wolin, "The Liberal/Democratic Divide."

74 Wolin., Politics and Vision. Wolin's reading of the tradition of liberalism is, of course, not the consensus view. However, one does not have to agree with the extremes of Wolin's argument in order to acknowledge that liberalism has historically sought means of controlling or containing the dangerous passions supposedly let loose in any form of participatory politics. Recall Madison's famous dismissal of Athenian democracy: "had every Athenian citizen been a Socrates, every Athenian assembly would still have been a mob." Federalist 55. Madison was certainly wrong about Athenian democracy, as the work of Josiah Ober makes clear: the greatest threat to Athenian stability came not from the hoi polloi but from the kalokagathia. See Ober's Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). In addition to this Madisonian strain in the liberal tradition, liberalism is also predominantly a view that seeks to limit the scope of what politics, as a domain, can include or address. Rights-based liberal theories describe a zone of inviolability that ought to be secure from political interference (originally by an encroaching government, but also by one's fellow citizens). And the laissez-faire-cum-capitalist strand of liberal ideology also favors a contraction of the political sphere, on the grounds that markets are superior to political decisions in efficiently allocating resources. Thus, to the fear of raucousness we can add the fear of predation and the fear of waste as paradigmatic liberal anxieties.

75 Jane Flax, "The Play of Justice: Justice as a Transitional Space," Political Psychology (1993), pg. 333.

came to appreciate "how difficult it is with so many kinds parents in his mind."[76] This

insight seems close to Habermas, for whom autonomy is not a given but a precarious and

relational social achievement. It is not achieved through introspection or internal dialogue

but depends on the individual subject's ability to use the intersubjective resource of reason

giving in concert with others.[77] Our identity is not a birthright, but a fragile achievement that

is susceptible to rupture and dispersion.

Participation in political action with others is not an incidental component of identity

formation. As Gal Gerson puts it, "participating in society and taking interest in it are

not…the activities of the well-formed personality, but are rather the means through which

this personality forms."[78] Active civic engagement can lead to a broadened sense of history

and responsibility through an expanded sense of sympathy and relatedness across difference

and disagreement. This, in turn, can nurture a resilient democratic identity that would

mitigate paranoid anxieties and passions.[79] But participation has other benefits Rawls clearly

missed. As other critics have mentioned, Rawls did not seem particularly concerned about

the development of a sense of injustice or wrong, taking it almost as a given.[80] But without

witnessing injustice in the lives of others, will we be able to develop more abstract, universal

ideas on justice that put our own suffering—however great or small it is—in proper

perspective? A more participation-centered view of politics would seek, by comparison, to

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76 Klein, "Narrative of a Child Analysis," 26.

77 This itself is near to Freud's understanding of the self. As Richard Shusterman puts it, "Freud implicitly realized what a pricelessly important and yet perhaps fragile achievement the unity of self was, and how difficult and painful such a unified self or self-narration was to contruct, and yet how necessary it was to lead any pleasurable version of a good or satisfying life in human society." "Postmodern Aestheticism." Theory, Culture and Society. No. 5 (June): 350. Habermas, Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995). See also Mark Warren, "Can Participatory Democracy Produce Better Selves? Psychological Dimensions of Habermas' Discursive Model of Democracy." Political Psychology (1993).

78 Gal Gerson, "Object Relations Psychoanalysis as Political Theory," Political Psychology 25, no. 5 (2004), 781.

79 Flax, "The Play of Justice."

80 Barker, Tragedy and Citizenship

show how citizens' sympathetic horizons expand through the difficult work of speaking with and listening to others.[81] This is the achievement of (precarious) identity in a social depressive position, and it only comes with the transition to a super-ego *qua* "assembly" that is most clearly obtained when we come to appreciate the actual similarities and differences existing between those with whom we share a common space.[82]

Rawls' vision of the well-ordered society, on the other hand, becomes through incessant re-iteration a univocal object of identification—a rational but demanding super-ego (recall that in the original position the "same principles are always chosen"[83]) to which we are "liable" despite the displeasure we get from our obedience.[84] Our ultimate reward for compliance, however, is stability—both subjective and political—"for the right reasons." In other words, we become reconciled to the original position's insistent demands because they herald not only an end to public conflict but to private or internal strife. In its widest application, then, Rawls' work is a cure for envy, resentment, rage, and frustration at a cruel and imperfect world. The well-ordered society is the idealized mother. However, in politics, as in our subjective lives, we have more than one parent—more than one unambiguous source of authority. The American founding could not more clearly demonstrate this poignant fact: the same "Fathers" who held beliefs about the inherent dignity and equality of

81 See Ibid, pp 3-6.

82 Here is where I depart from Alford, who holds that Freud's insights into group psychology (like Madison's "insights" into democracy) make the search for a participatory politics futile and naïve. Alford does admit that "developed" groups have (limited) potential for holding rather than splitting the destructive sides of our psyches, but this is dependent, in his analysis, on "constitutional liberalism plus interpretive leadership." Instead I would argue that the ability of interpretive leadership to make "felicitous" claims that would correct the excesses of group behavior is itself dependent on a listening audience—a psychologically educated and politically engaged populace. Moreover, I am following Gerson in making the (stronger) claim that we cannot be psychologically educated (in the sense that we can understand and overcome our tendencies towards splitting, denial, and idealization) unless we are politically engaged. See Alford, Group Psychology and Political Theory (New Haven: Yale Unviersity Press, 1994), pp. 68-76. For what makes for a felicitous claim, see J.L. Austin, How to Do Things with Words. To see Austin's theory applied to Athenian political culture, see Ober, "How to Criticize Democracy in Late Fifth- and Fourth-Century Athens" in Euben, Wallach, and Ober, Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy. See also Ober's Political Dissent in Demcoratic Athens (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

83 Rawls, Justice, 120.

84 Ibid., 428.

all men also held actual men in bondage.[85] Rawls' melancholia about race, then, seems to be

of a piece with his anxiety about participatory politics. Both keep us in the equivalent of the

paranoid-schizoid position, providing us with an incomplete political education that

promotes a truncated form of democracy identity.

Instead of continuing on the Rawlsian trajectory, or with the conceptual tools that he

has offered, I argue that we should take a different approach to the questions of justice. The

enduring problems of how communities understand and work through injustice, trauma and

violence will be with us for the foreseeable future. Facing this fact (the fact, as it were, not

of our reasonable disagreement but our *unreasonable* historical inheritance), the pressing task

is to integrate the legacies (living and otherwise) of these traumas into the structure of our

identity. The work of Melanie Klein can give us a sense for what this kind of politics would

look like—even if Klein's limitations as a *political* thinker are clear (insofar as she neglects the

inequalities of power and privilege that are "outside" the analytic space). By helping us to

accept the ambivalent and conflictual nature of social life, while avoiding persecutory

fantasies of dissolution ("is society even possible?") or idealized dreams of perfect union,

Klein, in the words of Isaac Balbus, "taught us something new and important about the

emotional demands of democracy."[86] By confronting and working through the enduring

traumas surrounding racial violence and discrimination in the United States, we commit

ourselves to a work of mourning that makes conflict conscious over and against denials

drawn from either civic or subjective versions of the pleasure principle. As the experience of

the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission reminds us, such efforts are neither

85 Paul Finkelman, Slavery and the Founders: Race and Liberty in the Age of Jefferson (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2001). Michael Paul Rogin, Fathers and Children: Andrew Jackson and the Subjugation of the Americna Indian (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975).

86 Isaac Balbus, Mourning and Modernity (New York: Other Press, 2005), 66.

easy nor obviously rewarding; instead they are, as Commissioner Muktha Jost said of the GTRC, often "splintering and shattering" activities that "leave [us] standing on a lonesome precipice for a long time."[87]   For Klein, the value of such activities—however painful, however terrifying—is that they yield a certain form of ethical and political maturity that forms the basis of a better means of engaging and interacting with others.

4.5 Conclusion

"Keep your mind in hell, and despair not."

—Theodor Adorno

The thesis of this chapter, which I have advanced by way of a critique of Rawls's competing view, is that the search for justice in the wake of trauma necessitates habits of attentiveness and acknowledgement towards the lingering effects of violence and discrimination among oppressed, oppressors, and 'bystanders.' In such a context, "ideal" principles of justice unmoored from tragic realities too easily become mechanisms of denial and avoidance. What is more, the repeated invocation of such principles serves to instaurate a melancholic approach to subjective and political life—where conflict is excluded and pathologized rather than integrated and worked through. In this respect, the influential work of John Rawls is, from a psychological perspective—unhealthily compromised by a pervasive melancholia.

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87 Quoted in Lisa Magarrell and Joya Wesley, Learning from Greensboro: Truth and Reconciliation in the United States (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 241.

This (polemical) charge has real stakes when we turn to address the painful history of race in the United States—or when we look to any society as it attempts to cope with violent events in its history. Rawls himself, as I have demonstrated, was not insensitive to the legacy of racial inequity in this country. Even if racial inequality was, for Rawls, symptomatic of larger material inequalities, he was confident that racism was both "unjust" and "irrational," and he felt that the principles of justice he outlined would promote the progressive elimination of legal racial discrimination. Yet even though Rawls was concerned with the history of racial trauma, his work is inadequate for appropriately addressing this legacy. As I put it above, a Rawlsian political education is an incomplete one—the univocal super-ego of the original position and the curiously nonpublic iterations of public reason leave us ill-prepared for the messy conflicts of political and subjective life, and the ahistoricism of Rawls' "ideal theory" leaves us bereft when we have to confront the living historical legacies of racial inequality and injustice. Rawls saw himself as crafting a "realistic utopia," but in many respects his utopianism has overwhelmed his realism.[88] The work of envisioning and practicing justice is dependent upon and grows out of the integration of narratives and experiences of *injustice*. Rawls' concern (in *Political Liberalism*, for instance) is that the bitter memories tied to historical injustices will—if given public space—only threaten the stability of the well-ordered polity. Yet following Klein we might argue instead that isolated traumas, spinning on their own axes, only grow in strength and bitterness. What happens to a *nightmare* deferred? To return to the example of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* from the first chapter,

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[88] This is not to say we should all become "realists"—if by realism we mean the rejection of ideals or idealism. What I am trying to chart here is a distinction between idealism (as a form of realistic striving for an improved society) and idealization (as a manic defense against admitting our dependency and fragility in a contingent world). The former requires a connection to historical realities and the lasting impact of trauma on individual subjects and political communities, whereas the latter is fed by a disgust or hatred of reality and a fantastical wish to "leap out of" or "escape" it. We should hate the American living legacy of racial violence. But, like the scars on Oedipus' ankles, this inheritance cannot be repressed or ignored but must be worked through. On the distinction between idealization and idealism see Hanna Segal, "Interview with Jacqueline Rose." Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow (London: Routledge, 2007).

the challenge for democratic societies represented by the Furies is not merely the replacement of the law of retribution with procedural justice. After all, the actual procedure in the play (the creation of the Aeropagus) fails twice over: it fails to settle the case against Orestes (the god Athena must cast the deciding vote), and it fails to mollify the Furies, who refuse to relinquish their claims. These claims are only worked through by Athena's (and Athens') welcoming of the terrifying "mind of the past" into the life of the polis. This is what Fred Alford called Aeschylus' "higher integration…one that puts the Furies in their place while not denying their power."[89] The Furies are "still monstrous, but they are monstrosities contained in the service of justice."[90] We should read this higher integration as a metaphor for the difficult task of making public room for the expression of traumatic narratives—a democratic work of mourning that represents a more complete political education and provides the basis for a more healthy and mature form of civic identity.

Yet perhaps the above critique of Rawls' ahistoricism and abstraction has itself been too abstract. To close this chapter, then, I will offer a more concrete example of what the democratic work of mourning could look like in a country with an undeniably traumatic history—Rwanda. In 2004—ten years after the genocide in which hundreds of thousands of Rwandans (upwards of twenty percent of the population) were murdered—a Dutch NGO called Radio Benevolencija began broadcasting in Rwanda a radio drama series entitled *Musekeweya* ("New Dawn").[91] In collaboration with the Rwandan government's Reconciliation Radio Project, and designed in collaboration with trauma specialists and the

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89 Alford, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Greek Tragedy, 17.

90 Ibid., 17. As Alford points out here, this form of resolution (where the terror of the Furies is modified by integration into an enlarged structure of identity) is similar to what Klein called depressive integration.

91 "Musekeweya Marks Five Years On Airwaves." New Times [Kigali, Rwanda] 24 May 2009

psychology department at Yale University, *Musekeweya* represents an ambitious social experiment designed to test whether the representation of conflict and trauma can positively affect social norms and political behavior in post-traumatic situations.[92] The soap opera features a fictional story of two Rwandan communities set in tension against each other due to land shortages and migration pressures. The conflict is conflagrated by demagogic actors seeking to aggrandize their own group's power by demonizing the out-group. In short, the story is a transparent allegory for the conflictual and violent history between Rwandan Tutsis and Hutus. Against the backdrop of ethnic tension, the central protagonists—star-crossed lovers from the separate communities—establish a coalition for peace that attempts to mediate the conflicts between the communities. The program is intended to portray these efforts for reconciliation and peaceful mediation in a positive light—to 'heroize' the lonely struggle of integration against great odds.

Aesthetic considerations aside, *Musekeweya* has had an interesting effect in the Rwanda communities where it has been broadcast.[93] It has not been a panacea—measures of social distance and mistrust in these communities remain high. Yet these communities have also displayed a dramatically increased willingness to *admit and acknowledge* the presence of social conflicts and mistrust. Compared with control groups, these communities showed a marked readiness to "speak out on difficult subjects."[94] These acts of "speaking out" lay the groundwork for future social cooperation because they help establish parameters of

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92 Elizabeth Levy Paluck and Donald P. Green, "Deference, Dissent, and Dispute Resolution: An Experimental Intervention Using Mass Media to Change Norms and Behavior in Rwanda," American Political Science Review (2009).

93 To create a control group for this experiment, other communities received broadcasts of a completely different radio program—one centered on issues of health (including AIDS). See Paluck and Green, "Defence, Dissent, and Dispute Resolution," 629.

94 Paluck and Green, "Defence, Dissent, and Dispute Resolution," 629.

collective remembrance—a process I referred to in previous chapters as "mutual understanding."[95]

There is strong evidence, then, that the dramatization of conflict in a post-traumatic situations—far from enflaming bitter memories and re-igniting a cycle of violence—actually allows lingering conflicts to escape stigma and silence and become part of public debate, discussion and deliberation. Moreover, the *failure* to create such narratives increases the likelihood of denial over the legacies of traumatic violence—in control groups denials of social mistrust became much more frequent over time. Trauma scholars describe this work of representation in terms of "narrative reconstruction"—the re-telling of a traumatic past so that it can be integrated into the individual's sense of self.[96] *Musekeweya* demonstrates that this work of reconstruction can take place at the collective level, and that it can have profound (but certainly not miraculous) effects.

Like the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the *Musekeweya* experiment is predicated on the idea that reconciliation in the wake of a traumatic past requires an acknowledgement of the lingering effects of this past. Yet due to the Rwandan government's restrictions on public discussion of ethnicity, the Reconciliation Radio Project has to take a more indirect route towards this history. Despite this handicap, *Musekeweya* deserves to be called a success, as it has seemingly nudged Rwandan social norms towards the legitimization of dissent and the (more) open acknowledgment of social conflicts without resort to demonization of out-groups or the idealization of in-groups. These efforts, however—also like the GTRC—could be enhanced by a Kleinian understanding of

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95 See above, Pg. 33

96 Judith Herman, Trauma and Recovery (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 128.

psychological development and health. As Hanna Segal puts it, Klein's description of the

transition (fragile and always subject to reversal) from the paranoid-schizoid position to the

depressive position is the "evolution from an insane world determined by misperceptions

into a saner world…in which conflict and ambivalence can be faced."[97] *Musekeweya* seems to

be internalizing norms of acknowledgment and openness that will, it is hoped, feed efforts to

deliberate about the possibilities of collective or shared life in a wake of a most terrifying and

nightmarish trauma. By moving towards a "saner world," these Rwandan citizens are

engaged the democratic work of mourning (and vice versa).

In sum, political theory, influenced by Klein, should aim to move us far beyond

where Rawls takes us. We could describe this as the journey from the original position to

the depressive position. As a result of this transition we will be more attuned to the torn

nature of our subjective and social worlds, while hopeful that efforts like the GTRC can

become—like the Rwanda Reconciliation Radio programs—internalized objects of reflection

that, unlike the original position, are not (only) guides for introspection but powerful

reminders of our connections to actual others. The integration of monstrous legacies into

our public narratives, political philosophies, and civic actions is a difficult and ongoing

undertaking, but it captures the normative force—and also the psychological richness—

behind Adorno's maxim, "keep your mind in hell, and despair not." In the next two

chapters, I turn towards practices and institutions that might help us to carry out this

seemingly paradoxical task.

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97 Segal, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, 49

Chapter 5: Greek Tragedy and Transmuting Internalization: Democratic Identification and the Work of Mourning in the Ancient Polis

It is an essential part of psychoanalytic therapy…that the patient should be enabled by the analyst's interpretations to integrate the split-off and contrasting aspects of his self; this implies also the synthesis of the split-off aspects of other people and of situations. Such progress in synthesis and integration…while giving relief, also brings up anxiety…

It is in fact striking that very painful interpretations—and I am particularly thinking of the interpretations referring to death and to dead internalized objects…could have the effect of reviving hope and making the patient feel more alive. My explanation for this would be that bringing a very deep anxiety nearer to consciousness, in itself produces relief. But I also believe that the very fact that the analysis gets into contact with deep-lying unconscious anxieties gives the patient the feeling of being understood and therefore revives hope.
<div align="right">—Melanie Klein, Narrative of a Child Analysis</div>

The covert theme of all drama is identification, the establishment of a self that in some way transcends the confusions of self.
<div align="right">—Michael Goldman, The Actor's Freedom: Toward a Theory of Drama</div>

It should be of the pleasure of a poem itself to tell how it can…it assumes direction with the first line laid down, it runs a course of lucky events, and ends in a clarification of life—not necessarily a great clarification, such as sects and cults are founded on, but in a momentary stay against confusion.
<div align="right">—Robert Frost, The Figure A Poem Makes</div>

I come, goddess, before your statue and your house
to keep watch here and wait the issue of my trial.
<div align="center">(The Chorus enter severally, looking for Orestes)</div>
<div align="right">—Aeschylus, The Oresteia</div>

Where should we look—and *how* should we look—to find public spaces and

practices of reflection on living legacies of trauma, in the hopes of nurturing a democratic

identity capable of acknowledging and working through (again and again) the implications of these legacies? How can political theory develop and employ a vocabulary of loss, remembrance, mourning, and recovery while avoiding the intellectual and political dead-ends of fixation and forgetting? How should we understand and practice, in other words, the iterable and quite possibly interminable democratic work of mourning? In this chapter and the next, I try to fill in the positive response to the questions.

In the previous two chapters, we have seen such practices primarily through absence. In chapter three, I argued that Judith Butler's poststructuralist anxieties over "hard" identity-claims lead her to focus on methods and practices of disentanglement from identificatory norms and bonds that constrict the manifold possibilities of anarchic desire. Heralding a less regular form of freedom, Butler's emphasis in her early work is on deconstructing conventional identities that she describes as fundamentally melancholic. Butler takes license for her theory of melancholic identity from a playful reading of Freud that serves to flatten the latter's description of psychic life. Above all, Butler's early work searches out ways of re-describing, refusing, and reworking the edicts of a harsh social super-ego—the external voice of prohibition that has been internalized by the subject. From this foundation, Butler's politics of mourning emphasizes disruptions of interpellated identity—grief *qua* grievance against the "reigning epistemes of cultural intelligibility."[1]

In her more recent work, Butler has added a different emphasis to her understanding of mourning. Influenced by Levinas, Butler sees mourning as a means of acknowledging fundamental human vulnerability and inter-subjective dependency ("precarious life") in the

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1 Judith Butler, Antigone's Claim (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000)

face of the "Other." The other in Butler's account is both an actual suffering other (Guantanamo Bay prisoners, Palestinian refugees, undocumented workers killed—and unmourned—on 9/11) and a stand-in for Freud's *das Es*—the unconscious that perpetually trips up and troubles the conscious ego/self.[2] This other, however, simply takes up the vacated space of the cruel superego whose epitaph Butler had earlier sought to write. In fleeing the specter of the melancholic social super-ego Butler has fallen right into its gaze. The political implications of this move are shown through Butler's incessantly agonistic view of politics, which focuses on disruption and disturbance at the cost of community-building through a more open process of democratic deliberation, negotiation, and compromise—a style of politics as the "slow boring of hard boards" (Weber) that is at the root of citizen-led democracy.[3]

Despite these limitations, Butler is an essential interlocutor for a democratic work of mourning, even if the important emphasis in her work on iterable identity and inter-subjective dependency is over-shadowed by a melancholic politics of fixation. If Klein helps us to sound out the political costs of Butler's promiscuous reading of Freud and psychoanalysis, then Butler's emphasis on social and political melancholia supplements

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2 Butler conflates the ego, the self, and the "I." Therefore she is incapable of theorizing a self that is larger than the ego, and which includes the unconscious as part of who this "I" is. What is more, in her recent work Butler comes dangerously close to ontologizing subjective 'lack'—of seeing the unconscious as a completely foreign country towards which our only attitude should be one of awe-struck acknowledgment (elsewhere she is critical of exactly this move). To trace the difference see Butler, "Competing Universalities," in Contingency, Hegemony, and Universality (London: Verso, 2000), Giving an Account of Oneself (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), Frames of War (New York: Verso, 2009). The attitude towards the unconscious is a crucial factor in psychoanalytic theory and practice, and marks one of the dividing lines between object relations and Lacanian psychoanalysis. Should we see the unconscious as a dead weight of opacity and lack? Or as a fluid and interactional realm of repressed desires, thoughts, and actions? In the former, it simply acts as a God—impregnable, unreachable, atopos. In the latter, it is part of who we are and, as such, not beyond the realm of communicative action; it troubles such action, causes it to stutter, but it does not make it impossible. Freud straddles this line; Lacan is on the first side; Klein on the latter.

3 For a mapping of the tension between radical and deliberative democracy, and the competing conceptions of politics underlying this divide, see the following. James Bohman and William Rehg (editors), Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997). Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, Why Deliberative Democracy? (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) and Democracy and Disagreement (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1996). Jürgen Habermas, The Inclusion of the Other (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), Adrian Little and Moya Lloyd (editors), The Politics of Radical Democracy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), Iris Marion Young, Inclusion and Democracy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a resource on citizen-led democracy, see The Kettering Foundation, We Have to Choose: Democracy and Deliberative Politics. Available online at http://www.kettering.org/media_room/publications/We_Have_to_Choose

Klein's theory of inter-subjective health with a crucial attentiveness to inequalities of power, speech, and—even—of grief.

In chapter four, I argued that the political liberalism of John Rawls also instaurates a melancholic approach to political and subjective life—though not through fixation, *à la* Butler, but through *forgetting*. Rawls' dependency on "ideal theory" encourages an amnesic political theory and democratic politics whereby our traumatic legacies are pushed out of conscious awareness in order that we might better envision the terms of a just and stable political order. Rawls trusts that such forgetting is salutary since it will help us to overcome the encumbrances and attachments that serve to obscure the abstract and universal principles of justice; in this way we can achieve a "realistic Utopia." Yet I argued that Rawls' reliance on a strategy of forgetting is the means by which his utopianism has overwhelmed his realism. The work of envisioning and practicing justice is dependent upon and grows out of its integration with narratives and experiences of *in*justice. Influenced by Melanie Klein, I diagnosed Rawls' ahistorical idealism as a form of paranoid-schizoid splitting issuing from persecutory fantasies about the dangers inherent to collective life. Rawls gives us certain incredibly powerful tools for engaging others and practicing a (more) just politics—including public reason—but these are drained of their power due to Rawls' liberal anxiety over participatory politics. The unintended effect of Rawls' work, I argue, is a truncated form of democratic identity insensitive to the living legacies surrounding racial trauma and discrimination and incapable of engaging others in the difficult work of building powerful democratic citizens and communities. Rawls's public reason, like Butler's attention to power and inequality, could be seen as necessary supplement to Klein's (ahistorical, and only immanently political) view of analytic interpretations. By broadening the space of discourse

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out beyond the analyst's couch, we might be able to engage in a democratic work of mourning that neither Klein nor Rawls by themselves can bring about. A modified political liberalism—starting not from the original position but the depressive position—would be better enabled to acknowledge the continuing relevance of racial trauma in the American political and cultural landscape and thereby effectuate a socio-subjective process of working through this legacy.[4]

In this chapter, I turn to a very different space in order to locate positive practices of the democratic work of mourning: the city-state of Athens in the 5th century BCE, and specifically its annual festival, the Great Dionysia (where the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides were originally performed). Greek tragedy and the Athenian polis have long provided a distant mirror in which moderns (and now post-moderns) can search out and even "problematize" their own identities through an appreciation of both difference and similarity.[5] Only the Greeks seem to offer that strange brew of familiarity and otherness that makes them eternally productive interlocutors in our own (necessarily narrow) conversations. This return to the Athenian city-state is worthwhile *not* because the Athenians' practices of politics and ethics are identical to our own.[6] The Athenians owned slaves, excluded women from the public realm, and—during the heyday of tragic drama—

4 Glenn Loury seems to embody this possibility when he repurposes the Rawlsian original position in order to engage the racial disparities in the American prison system. Loury, Race, Incarceration, and American Values (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008).

5 G.W.F. Hegel, The Philosophy of History. Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, The Dialectic of Enlightenment. Jacques Derrida, Plato's Pharmacy. J. Peter Euben, The Tragedy of Political Theory and Corrupting Youth. Euben, Ober, and Wallach (editors), Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy. J. Peter Euben (editor) Greek Tragedy and Political Theory. Christopher Rocco, Tragedy and Enlightenment. Patchen Markell, Bound by Recognition. Martha Nussbaum, The Fragility of Goodness. Derek Barker, Tragedy and Citizenship. For the image of the distant mirror, see Barbara Tuchman, A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century and The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam.

6 Peter Euben, following Margaret Leslie, has argued that a return to the Greeks can be productive due to "analogical thinking." In analogical thinking our own concerns and ideas are expanded and enriched through an engagement with the evocative mix of strangeness and similarity that ancient texts can provide. Leslie's example is Gramsci's appropriation of Machiavelli in his theory of the party as "the new prince." Euben sees the "perception of similarity in otherness" as the "lifeblood" of analogical thinking, and, quoting Leslie, argues that it is the "commonest way in which we extend 'the limits of our thought and break out of the straightjacket of commonplace assumptions.'" Euben, Greek Tragedy and Political Theory, 4-5. Christopher Rocco has argued that we can avoid nostalgia towards the Greeks by seeing our engagement with them in terms of "conceptual displacement"—a "forced mapping of the Greek concepts onto our modern (or postmodern) context…[which] does not reconcile them with our contemporary social and political reality…[but] underscores the differences between them." Tragedy and Enlightenment, 27.

ruled a vast empire held together through force and coercion. The Athenian democratic institutions and practices are not pristine objects of admiration; they are more like ambiguous objects of ambivalent identification—"dirty…yet valuable" interlocutors that can help us to sound out the depths of our own democratic commitments.[7]

More directly relevant to the concerns of this project, the Athenian tragic spectacle offers an intensely rich practice of representing and honoring trauma and violence—an institution without parallel in contemporary democracies.[8] The extant tragedies—all composed during the 5th century democratic period—display a frankness and openness about violence, cruelty, hatred and injustice that continues to grip our imagination.[9] Tragedy's representation of transgression and trauma show "a world ripped apart," a world with "civic foundations shattered and the noble values of citizenship turned against themselves in violence, confusion, despair, and horror."[10] In tragedy, mothers murder sons, sons kill mothers and fathers, husbands are slain by wives, queens become slaves, cities are leveled, and legendary families are brought to utter and complete ruin. The strong are laid low, the pure are polluted, the peaceful turn violent, and the certain become confused. Nobody wins in tragedy—except perhaps for the gods (who then mock the suffering of the fallen mortals). Yet tragedy is not simply the waking dream of a violent society; it reveals a keen sensitivity to the dilemmas of collective life and the oftentimes-disastrous consequences

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7 Klein, Narrative of a Child Analysis, 366.

8 As Simon Goldhill points out, the Great Dionysia was a performance "integral to democracy in action." Hence theater in the Athenian context is "not so much a commentary on ta politika as part of it." Certainly there are contemporary institutions and practices that offer the opportunity for reflection on trauma, (for instance, truth commissions) and we might even call some of the institutions "political" in a meaningful sense. But they are not as directly political as the Athenian festival, since the participants in these contemporary institutions have only an incidental connection to actual power. The audience at the Great Dionysia was also the constituent power of the polis. Goldhill, "Civic Ideology and the Problem of Difference: The Politics of Aeschylean Tragedy, Once Again." The Journal of Hellenic Studies, Volume 120, 2000, 35.

9 For the development of Athenian democracy see Cynthia Farrar, The Origins of Democratic Thinking. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). M.I. Finley, Democracy Ancient and Modern (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988). A.H.M Jones, Athenian Democracy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), Kurt Raaflaub, Josiah Ober, and Robert Wallace (editors), Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

10 Simon Goldhill, Love, Sex, and Tragedy: How the Ancient World Shapes Our Lives (Manchester: John Murray, 2004).

of our actions. Tragedy shows the unforeseen costs of our necessarily blind choices, and

provides room for the regret and lamentation that follows. Again and again, tragedy gives

voice to the dangerous and to the repressed.[11]

What makes the tragic spectacles even more compelling is that the audience

members could not (for long, at least) maintain a detached posture of aesthetic appreciation.

The theater-goers (*Theates*) at the Great Dionysia were also the citizens (*Polites*) at Athens:

just as they sat in the Theater of Dionysus and witnessed the potential consequences of

action, so too would they sit in the Assembly in order to debate and decide on the polis' best

course of action. The same citizens who watched representations of Trojans, Persians, and

Thebans bemoan the disastrous effects of warfare would later sit in the Assembly and vote

to support (and to fight themselves) wars of their own. The same citizens who beheld

Athena's delicate negotiations with the Furies would sit in the Law Courts and adjudicate

between competing claims of guilt and innocence. Participation in the theater, then, was but

one aspect of a comprehensive political experience for enfranchised Athenian citizens. As

such the issues represented on the stage had an immediate relevance for the democratic life

of Athens that we do not always discern or appreciate when we read the plays themselves.

Lastly, Greek tragedy was a crucial site of discovery for Freud's understanding of

psychic life. Oedipus has been a prominent character in the Western imagination since

before the time of Sophocles, but Oedipus has a life and a meaning for us now that simply

did not exist before Freud. Psychoanalysis' vocabulary owes a debt to tragedy, and when we

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11 As Helene Foley sees it, the tragic genre "permits excessive behavior that was seemingly discouraged in the practice of the [Athenian] society." "The Politics of Tragic Lamentation,"
Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis, edited by Sommerstein, Halliwill, Henderson, and Zimmerman. (Bari: Levante Editori, 1993). Froma Zeitlin sees the predominance of female
representations in the tragedies in a similar light. By "playing the other," Athenian males were able to question, explore, and (ultimately) reinforce and patrol the boundaries of
civic/masculine identity. "Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality, and the Feminine in Greek Drama," in Winkler and Zeitlin (editors), Nothing to Do with Dionysos? Athenian
Drama in Its Social Context. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

read tragedy now we do so decidedly beneath the shadow of Freud.[12] Melanie Klein herself

could not resist the gravitational pull towards tragedy. In fact, her essay on the *Oresteia*

(written late in her late life and published posthumously) represents a moment of integration

when she was able to condense her views of the depressive position, the superego, and the

work of mourning through an interpretation of Aeschylus' drama. It is in Greek tragedy,

then—as an object of reflection on trauma in a democratic context—that the concerns and

questions of this project (trauma, mourning, identity, and democracy) converge. Tragedy is a

conceptual crossroads that—once surveyed—will give us a richer vocabulary and store of

practices for working through the traumas of our own time.[13]

This chapter proceeds as follows. In the first section I rehearse the debate over the

democratic meaning of the Great Dionysia and its tragic performances. I counter three

prominent arguments that tragedy had little to do with democracy, and trace the more

convincing claims that the festival nurtured and supported the "mental infrastructure" for

democratic life at Athens.

In the second section, I go beyond this literature to argue that tragedy also provided

a "psychological infrastructure" that made Athenian democracy possible—a psychological

infrastructure understood in Kleinian terms as an acceptance of ambiguity, conflict, and

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12 However this fact should not completely blind us to the differences between the Freudian and the Greek understanding of psyche. Freud's use of the term gives a meaning to internal life that goes well beyond what the Greeks in 5th century Athens would have understood—although the picture gets messier with Plato. See Jan Bremmer, The Early Greek Concept of the Soul (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

13 For the idea that tragedy and psychoanalysis can speak to each other on the topos of mourning, see Olga Taxidou, Tragedy, Modernity and Mourning (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004). Taxidou's account is compelling in its general approach but lacking in its specific details. She combines a willfully flat reading of Freud ("Freud's view of character…relies…on a straightforward Platonic view…the appearance of the law of the father puts an end to all the 'creative and artistic' activity that preceded it" (172)) with a seriously inadequate and oftentimes confused reading of the Greek polis (at one point she argues that Sophocles' use of the "cave-cum-stage" is "a nod towards Plato's cave" (29). This radically confuses the timeline of composition. Plato was born approximately five years after Sophocles' Antigone was first performed. The poets were often thought to possess prophetic powers, but this stretches well beyond any generous conception of foresight. I should make it clear at the outset that I am not interested in tracing the representations of mourning in the extant tragedies, nor am I interested in seeing the origin of the tragic festival in the sublimation of banned affect following Solon's edicts outlawing certain practices of lament in the polis. There is, however, a rich literature on these two themes. For the former, see Margaret Alexious, The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), and Robert Garland, The Greek Way of Death (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); for the latter see Garland, "The Well-Ordered Corpse: An Investigation into the Motives behind Greek Funerary Legislation." Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, 1990, and Nicole Loraux, Mothers in Mourning (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998).

trauma in inter-subjective life, and a willingness to see trauma as constitutive of individual and subjective identity. Tragedy nurtured the civic identity of the *Theates/Polites*, but it also nurtured what Josiah Ober has called the "democratic soul."[14] This understanding of tragedy is reinforced by Klein's reading of the *Oresteia*, which, I argue, captures the democratic import of the play better than many competing interpretations inside and outside of political theory.

If Klein gives us some purchase on the socio-psychological meaning of tragedy, then the Greek polis and its practices in turn give us a means of sounding out the lacks in Klein. For instance, Klein's theory of mourning/integration misses (or at least downplays) the constitute role that social and political forces play in making mourning possible in the first place. An appreciation of the Great Dionysia as a cultural and political institution at Athens, then, will correct an absence in Klein—an absence, as it were, of the *polis* itself, with its native fractiousness and disparities of power and communicative efficacy. Klein's articulation of the depressive position can give us insight into collective practices, but, as earlier chapters have noted, the analogy between psyche and polis fails us if we push it too far—if we reduce the polis to a psyche writ large.[15] In making the argument that tragedy was an "analytic" space, then, it is also worth emphasizing how the analytic space is also a "political" space—how the individual and the democratic work of mourning are intertwined and mutually implicated in each other. By recognizing this, we are already somewhat beyond Klein. Klein gives us resources for understanding relational possibilities and inter-subjective

14 Ober, Athenian Legacies, 129.

15 Of course the same holds true for the opposite tendency of reducing our rich inter-subjective lives (full of fantasy, desire, and fear) to a simple reflection of external pressures.

ways of being, but these resources have to be supplemented by attentiveness to the messier and more complex world outside the walls of the analyst's office.

In the concluding section of the chapter, I take on two challenges to my reading of Greek tragedy in the wake of Klein—namely, tragedy's imitative and distancing character (tragedy assiduously avoids direct representations of actual traumas in the polity's history in favor of distant places and mythical heroes), and the supposed "cathartic" effect of tragedy. "Catharsis" is a term that haunts both tragedy and psychoanalysis, and I argue that to understand it in terms of purgation or healing keeps us from appreciating the full depth and relevance of tragedy as a democratic work of mourning. Instead we should understand catharsis as the act of making pity/fear (and the trauma and terror that elicit these emotions) public—giving them an account in the interests of working through or mourning them.

5.1 The Great Dionysia and Athenian Democracy

In the past thirty years, a scholarly consensus has developed that the Great Dionysia—the Athenian festival held annually in the spring at which the tragedies and comedies were performed—had an important civic function, and therefore that our understanding of the plays is enhanced by an attentiveness to their location within the larger context of political life in Athens.[16] The Great Dionysia is now itself seen as a constitutive part of the Athenian democratic experience—a "vigorous civic practice" as relevant to the democracy as the institutions of the assembly, the council and the law courts.[17] Accordingly,

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16 For a (sympathetic) review of the literature in this vein, see Monoson, Plato's Democratic Entanglements, 88. For a critical view of this developing consensus, see Jasper Griffin, "The Social Function of Tragedy," The Classical Quarterly (48)1, 1998, and P.J. Rhodes, "Nothing to do with Democracy: Athenian Drama and the Polis," The Journal of Hellenic Studies (123), 2003.
17 Monoson, Plato's Democratic Entanglements, 89.

Josh Beer reads the plays in the light of the novel "conflicts and policy decisions" faced by the enfranchised demos; as he sees them, "the plays raised serious ethical, social, religious, and political problems that provided a major part of all Athenians' education."[18] Peter Euben notes that funding of a chorus was "a liturgy equal to the maintenance of a trireme…as if to suggest that the cultural survival of the Athenians depended on the courage of its people in confronting the risks of tragedy in the same way as its physical survival depended on its sailors' courageously meeting the risks of battle."[19] Helene Foley identifies the reciprocal connection between democratic debate and tragic narrative, arguing that drama required its audience to "negotiate among points of view as it would in a court of law or an assembly."[20] The festival itself is said to have had a "democratic ambience"—ordinary citizens danced in the choruses and acted on the stage,[21] and judges were selected by lot.[22] The procession—or *komos*—on the first day of the festival mixed rich and poor citizen together in a celebratory atmosphere that emphasized the commonalities binding Athenians together over and against the class and factional lines that cut across the polis at all other times.[23]

The tragedies were performed, then, in a "political forum" that "allowed the Athenians to consider the nature of their own society."[24] The Great Dionysia was a "democratic institution" and tragedy was "a form of public discourse."[25] Because ordinary

18 Josh Beer, Sophocles and the Tragedy of Athenian Democracy. (Westport: Praeger Press, 2004).

19 Euben, "Introduction," Greek Tragedy and Political Theory, 22-23.

20 Helene Foley, "Tragedy and Democratic Ideology," in Barbara Goff (editor), History, Tragedy, Theory: Dialogues on Athenian Drama (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995).

21 That is, until acting became more professionalized at the close of the 5th century. See Greek and Roman Actors: Aspects of an Ancient Profession, edited by Pat Easterling and Edith Hall. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

22 Justina Gregory, Euripides and the Instruction of the Athenians. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

23 Monoson, Democratic Entanglements, 88.

24 Josiah Ober, Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

25 Euben, "Introduction," Greek Tragedy and Political Theory, 23. Euben cites William Arrowsmith, who wrote that tragedy was "a democratic paideia complete in itself." Arrowsmith, "A Greek Theater of Ideas," Arion 2 (Autumn 1963), 33.

Athenian citizens had to exercise sovereignty—to "engage in politics on a grand scale"—they needed to "have answers ready for all the conscious and unconscious questions and doubts that arose."[26] Tragedy (perhaps) provided some of these answers, but more importantly it provided a space for the examination and exploration of these questions, doubts, and anxieties. The Great Dionysia was one of the crucial components of the democratic imaginary at Athens—it responded to the Athenians' need to "think themselves into being democratic citizens."[27] Tragedy by its very nature as a periodic but extraordinary liturgy could "introduce perspectives which might otherwise have been overlooked" in a polis concerned with day-to-day survival.[28] Released from the immediate pressures of decision, the Athenians could reflect on the values and practices of their polis, explore alternative imaginaries, sound out new and even uncomfortable ideas, and then return to the challenges of self-government—their skills of discernment and judgment sharpened by the experience. Ultimately tragedy "helped the Athenians to work through difficulties, threats, and uncertainties which would otherwise have hampered them in their thinking, feeling, and acting."[29] Tragedy was not only a democratic space, then: it was an analytic space as well. Like the structured space of the analyst's office,[30] the theater of Dionysus was a place where dreams and nightmares could be re-created, re-enacted, and worked through.

If the "political" reading of tragedy amounts to a new orthodoxy, it still suffers from a rash of heretics who continue to see the festival in a radically different light. Such critics maintain that the Great Dionysia's origins under the despotism of Peisistratos belie its

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26 Christian Meier, The Political Art of Greek Tragedy. (New York: Polity Press, 1993).

27 Goldhill, Love, Sex, and Tragedy, 179. See also The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy, edited by P.E. Easterling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

28 Ibid., 214.

29 Ibid., 273.

30 At least, the office of a non-Lacanian. For Lacan's controversial therapy practices, see Luepnitz, "Thinking in the Space between Winnicott and Lacan."

democratic nature, or that tragedy was primarily a religious ritual designed to provide answers and reassurance in a confusing time and place. Still others see the Great Dionysia less as a space for reflection, debate, and collective self-examination and more as an occasion for collective self-aggrandizement, or as a venue for ideological socialization that concealed class divisions beneath a façade of communal consensus. It is important to examine and counter these claims—not merely in order to see tragedy as a democratic institution, but, more importantly, to see *how* it was a democratic institution.

5.1.1 Despotic Origins

The first known tragic performance at Athens was a play by the poet Thespis in 534 BCE, during the reign of the tyrant Peisistratos, and well before the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes in 508/507 BCE. There is evidence to suggest that Peisistratos created this elaborate festival in the city—modeled along the lines of the small-scale rural Dionysian festivals—in order to provide distraction and relief for the common people while simultaneously creating a new venue for elite agon or competition (sublimating energy that might otherwise be used to destabilize his rule).[31] The Great Dionysia came to be marked by an excess of celebratory passion and energy—an escapist spectacle and a living fantasy of revelry and immoderation (wine, sacrifice, and circuses). To emphasize the exceptional nature of the event, prisoners were even released from bondage for the duration of the festival.[32] As the festival was held during the early spring, the entire event must have had an

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31 Winkler, "The Ephebes' Song," in Winkler and Zeitlin, Nothing to do with Dionysos.
32 Monoson, Plato's Democratic Entanglements, 88.

atmosphere of rebirth and renewal—a veritable orgy of delightful spectacle and spectacular delights.

All of this has seemingly very little to do, then, with sober civic education about the thorny dilemmas surrounding democratic governance. Yet regardless of its origins as a mere distraction meant to lend glory to the Peisistratid regime, the performance of tragedy only came to flourish in the late 5th century, when the Athenian demos was at the apex of its power. All of the extant tragedies were performed during the democratic period—beginning with Aeschylus' *Persians* (first performed in 472 BCE) and ending with Euripides' posthumously-staged *Bacchae* (performed in 405 BCE, only a year before the final defeat of the Athenian empire at the hands of the Spartans). The festival did not begin under the democracy, but democracy seemingly created the conditions for the full development of the tragic form. Much has been made, for instance, of the fact that Aeschylus was the first poet to introduce a second actor to the tragic stage (Sophocles later added a third).[33] The second actor, of course, is the precondition for agon, conflict, and debate. With this innovation suddenly the emphasis shifts from the monologue of the great hero and the musical performance of the chorus to the dialogues and negotiations of the actors—conversations that would have seemed immediately familiar to those engaged in the political agon and disputations of the polis. The democracy gave a new purpose, then, to the tragic performances, and in turn the tragic performances reflected and modified the Athenians' democratic imagination. The tragedies that we have are the product of the intellectual and political ferment of the Athenian democracy, as even critics of the "political" reading of the

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33 Aristotle, Poetics, IV: "Aeschylus first introduced a second actor; he diminished the importance of the Chorus, and assigned the leading part to dialogue. Sophocles raised the number of actors to three…the iambic measure then replaced the trochaic tetrameter…Once dialogue had come in, Nature herself discovered the appropriate measure."

festival are begrudgingly forced to acknowledge.[34] If the origins of the tragic festival were

despotic—and there is some debate even on that point[35]—then the festival was also clearly

reworked and repurposed as Athenian society became more democratic.

5.1.2 Ritual Reassurance

Another view of tragedy that downplays the democratic meaning of the Great

Dionysia focuses on the ritualistic and religious aspects of both the festival and the plays

themselves. The processional *komos*, during which a statue of the god Dionysos was ushered

into the city, is seen as a ritual means of honoring and appeasing the god of excess. These

rites serve to protect the city from "anomic disorder" by allowing circumscribed and

delimited disorder into the polis for a pre-determined amount of time.[36] Along these same

lines, the tragic performances are seen as responding not to political and intellectual ferment

but to "moral and religious turbulence."[37] The tragedies provide less an occasion and

opportunity for reflection and doubt than "answers, which were ultimately, in very complex

ways, reassuring."[38] On this reading the acknowledged ambivalence within the tragedies

finally yields to conclusions that provide closure and reassurance for the witnessing audience.

If the audience enters the theater confused about the cosmic order and humanity's place

within it—if social transformation, religious upheaval, and natural disasters make the old

order seem precarious and unstable—the festival provides them with answers and

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34 Rhodes, for instance, admits, "it is as hard to envisage our more thought-provoking tragedies in Sparta as to envisage the Sophists in Sparta" and finds it hard to believe that Ajax or Antigone "would sit easily in Spartan ideology, or the ideology of any Greek state which had the institutions and the corporate feelings of the polis." "Nothing to do with Democracy: Athenian Drama and the Polis," 118.

35 W.R. Connor, "City Dionysia and Athenian Democracy," Classica et Mediaevalia, 1989.

36 Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, "Something to do with Athens: Tragedy and Ritual," in Ritual, Finance, Politics edited by Hornblower and Osborne. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

37 Sourvinou-Inwood, "Greek Tragedy and Ritual" in A Companion to Tragedy, edited by Rebecca Bushnell (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005).

38 Ibid., 22.

consolations about the limits of wisdom and the appropriate ways of living with uncertainty. The rites and rituals in the plays—and the ritual of the festival itself—invite a stirring of emotions and anxieties that are then collectively released or purged.[39] The audience leaves reassured that the power of human artifice can placate the gods and mitigate the capriciousness of fate.

This reading of tragedy, however, seems willfully blind to the fact that rituals and rites within the dramas are often interrupted, and that the much-heralded closure or release of emotions is often aborted or left unresolved. Antigone's burial of her brother Polynieces, for instance, is twice interrupted, and in *Oedipus at Colonus* the rites for the dying protagonist are not dramatized—they take place off stage. What is more, in the same play the daughters of Oedipus are explicitly forbidden from carrying out their own rites of burial and reverence for their dead father. Time and again in the tragedies the "stabilizing mediation" of myths and rituals is "disrupted" or distorted.[40] The actual effect of such disruptions on the audience is, of course, mere conjecture on our part. Yet it is hard to locate moments where ambiguity yields to certainty and openness gives way to closure. It is comparatively easier to find moments where tragedy "parodies, distorts, subverts, and…even invents ritual."[41] Tragic drama, at best, had a vexed and ambiguous relationship to ritual. Clearly we should not dismiss the religious and ritualistic aspects of tragedy and the Great Dionysia *tout court*, but a ritualist approach may keep us from appreciating the ways in which tragedy went beyond religious ritual in important (and importantly *political*) ways. As Scullion puts it, the tragic performances were "not cultic worship of the god Dionysos…[but were] characterized

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39 Segal, "Catharsis, Audience and Closure in Greek Tragedy," in Tragedy and the Tragic edited by M.S. Silk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

40 Segal, Tragedy and Civilization: An Interpretation of Sophocles (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999). 21.

41 Scullion, "Nothing to do with Dionysos: Tragedy Misconceived as Ritual," Classical Quarterly (52) 2000, 137.

by an astonishing artistic sophistication and an intellectual openness one is happy to call democratic."[42] The Greeks believed in and practiced a great number of religious rituals, but these are clearly not the sole subject of concern in the extant tragedies, nor does a ritualistic reading of the festival itself serve to address the latter's strange and evocative power in the Athenian democratic imaginary.

5.1.3 Polis Ideology

There is also a strain of interpretation that acknowledges the political meaning of tragedy but denies that it has little connection to what we take to be the "democratic" aspects of Athenian society. The Great Dionysia was, on this reading, less a space of self-examination than a practice of polis-aggrandizement. Since the festival audience included visiting members of rival and allied poleis, some interpreters see the proceedings as little more than a grand effort at public relations.[43] The subtext of the festival was not the difficulty of democratic governance but the greatness of the Athenian polis and its empire. The sheer magnitude of the spectacle was a demonstration of Athenian wealth and power. Moreover, in the plays themselves Athens is generally portrayed in a positive valence—at the end of the *Oresteia* it stands as a champion for self government,[44] and in other plays it serves either as a place of refuge and hospitality (*Oedipus at Colonus)* or as a home to stunning feats of daring and strength (*The Persians*).

A related reading of tragedy emphasizes the political import of the festival only to argue that its relevance was not one of "problematization" but of indoctrination. The

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42 Ibid., 135.

43 D.M. Carter, "Was Attic Tragedy Democratic?" Polis (21) 2004, 16.

44 As Millet put it, "the Oresteia ends with five pages of local chamber of commerce rhapsody." Quoted in Alford, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Greek Tragedy, 36.

performances not only celebrated the greatness of the polis but offered up the 'great polis' as

an object of identification and admiration—the entire spectacle was "deliberately aimed at

maintaining social identity, and reinforcing the cohesion of the group."[45] By putting the

entire polis on display, the festival demonstrated not only the power of Athens but

particularly its power as a "unified state."[46] This promoted "a common cultural identity" at

the expense of local and factional affiliations and divergences.[47] Tragedy amounted to little

more than a "passing hypostasis of the actual polis, but without its inevitable conflicts and

cleavages."[48] This hypostasis of the fluid and contentious Athenian democracy served to

benumb the audience to the tensions within collective life in favor of consoling ideas of a

common origin and destiny.[49] Far from emphasizing differences and divisions alongside

commonalities, and modeling democratic means of engaging these tensions, the Great

Dionysia promoted a civic ideology in which divisions were erased or subsumed by a

mythical unity.

However, this again seems like a sclerotic or simplifying reading of the Great

Dionysia and the tragic performances. If civic greatness was the subtext of Greek drama,

then the multiform ways in which the tragedies represent greatness being laid low need to be

explained away.[50] The *hubris* of the polis demonstrating its power through spectacular

displays would need to be reconciled with the incessant destruction of hubristic characters

and poleis in the actual dramas. Moreover, the emphasis on a unified civic ideology is hard

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45 Oddone Longo, "The Theater of the Polis," Nothing to do with Dionysos, edited by Winkler and Zeitlin, 16.
46 Ibid., 16.
47 Eric Csapo and William J. Slater, The Context of Ancient Drama (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).
48 Longo, "Theater of the Polis," 19.
49 Barbara Goff, "History, tragedy, theory,' in History, Tragedy, Theory: Dialogues on Athenian Drama.
50 Zeitlin and other do just this, by, for instance, arguing that disaster only strikes other poleis in the extant tragedies: Thebes, Persia, and Troy, for instance. Athens, by comparison, is portrayed in a positive and exemplary light. "Thebes: Theater of Self and Society in Athenian Drama," in Nothing to Do With Dionysos.

to reconcile with all the ways in which the dramas put deeply cherished civic and cultural beliefs at risk and into question.[51] As Simon Goldhill puts it, tragedy "seems deliberately to problematize, to make difficult the assumption of the values of the civic discourse."[52] This is not to say that *everything* the Athenians held dear was made doubtful—the value of the polis as such is never seriously questioned—but rather that there was a profound tension in the tragic performances between the confirmation and questioning of Athenian identity.[53] The tensions between elite and mass, and between competing factions of each, were not obliterated in a Dionysian revel, but interrogated by the plays and "mapped" by the festival itself.[54] As a result, these differences did not melt away but become all the more apparent and visible during the five days of the Great Dionysia. All of this goes to show that Athenian civic "ideology" was fluid and open. For instance, as the work of Josiah Ober has demonstrated, Athenian society was consistently responsive to innovation and critique, and tragedy was one of the crucial venues through which such critique filtered into and influenced the Athenian imaginary.[55] The tragedies can be read as part of the process of subtle adjustment to new social demands and problems.[56] The effect of the festival seems less to have been an acceptance of civic ideology—understood as the unquestioned values of a militaristic and masculinist society—than a peculiar and tensional mix of ideological transmission, transformation, and transgression.[57]

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51 Goldhill, "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology," The Journal of Hellenic Studies, 1987.

52 Ibid., 74.

53 Paul Cartledge, "Deep Plays: Theater as Process in Greek Civic Life," The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy, edited by Paul Cartledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

54 Monoson, Plato's Democratic Entanglements, 88-90.

55 Josiah Ober and Barry Strauss, "Drama, Political Rhetoric and the Discourse of Athenian Democracy," in Nothing to Do with Dionysos. See also Ober, Democracy and Knowledge (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

56 Gregory, Euripides and the Instruction of the Athenians, 185.

57 Heath, "The Social Function of Tragedy: Clarifications and Questions."

In sum, it is clear that the Great Dionysia was an overdetermined object—the result of a confluence of plural factors only one (prominent though it might be) of which was the intellectual and cultural ferment provided by the new political realities of an enfranchised population. Charting these debates does not allow us to conclude that there only "democratic" elements in the plays, or that a simple understanding of democratic life at Athens emerges from the performances. If anything, the preceding discussion leads us to say that—if the Great Dionysia was a part of and also an active form of commentary on Athenian democracy—the central 'message' of tragedy is that democratic life is *demanding*. It asserts that there are no easy answers or obvious courses of action, and that dilemma and perhaps even trauma will continue to haunt us despite our best intentions. In offering this message, tragedy helped to nurture what Christian Meier called the "mental infrastructure" necessary for democratic life at Athens. Below I detail the critical components of this structure as it emerged from the experience of tragedy.

The reforms of Cleisthenes at the close of the 6th century BCE, and the subsequent development of the Athenian democracy, reconfigured and redefined the public space of the polis, and this in turn redefined the "mental space" of the Athenian citizenry.[58] Tragedy played a constitutive role in shaping the character of this space, and creating a civic identity to match the new responsibilities and roles pressed upon the population through their inclusion in power. As such, tragedy nurtured what Christian Meier has referred to as the "mental infrastructure" of democratic citizenship. As I see it, this infrastructure included an open-minded willingness to hear and respond to criticism, courage to listen to and express

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58 Euben, Wallach, and Ober, "Introduction," Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy.

frank ideas and opinions, comfort with playing multiple roles in the life of the polis, and—

perhaps most importantly—respect for the ever-present tension between norm and

transgression, tradition and innovation, that kept the democratic imagination at Athens from

ossifying into a stale piece of ideology. Through witnessing and participating in the tragic

performances, the Athenian citizenry practiced and honed the skills necessary for democratic

life. Moreover, as I will argue shortly, by witnessing and working through the traumas

represented on stage, the Athenians also nurtured a psychologically resilient and integrated

identity in a socio-subjective depressive position. Such resiliency, developed in and through

democratic participation, allowed the Athenian polis to integrate challenges, critiques, and

innovations—and to survive in a robustly democratic form for nearly two centuries.

Sara Monoson locates three primary elements of Athenian democratic culture

emerging from tragedy: unity, reciprocity, and what she calls "strong-mindedness," or the

ability of the common Athenian citizen to judge important matters skillfully and prudently.[59]

Unity emerges from the admixtures of the processional *komos* and the visual "mapping" of

the polis in the theater of Dionysus. Yet, importantly, according to Monoson this mapping

of the unified polis did not erase social and factional differences but, rather, brought

attention to them. Prominent citizens were marked by where they were seated for the

performances, and wealthy elites at Athens were made visible through their liturgical duties

as chorus-sponsors. The festival emphasized commonality but not at the expense of

particularities and differences. Instead these differences were negotiated through reciprocal

acts of participation and service—different citizens partook in different roles but the entire

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59 Monoson, Plato's Democratic Entanglements, 88-90.

polis shared in the burdens and the rewards of the festival. Reciprocity was also exemplified through the public benefaction of citizens before in a ceremony at the beginning of the festival. The bestowing of honors for citizens whose service had benefitted the polis during the preceding year sent a message that such actions would not go unacknowledged. Lastly, there is the value of "strong-mindedness." The difficult and trying subject matter of the performances reflected the assumption that the ordinary Athenian citizen was capable of making careful and thoughtful judgments. For Monoson, even the physical rigors of spectatorship (the audience sat through a tragic trilogy, a satyr play, and a comedy performance each day of the festival), lent credence to the Athenian citizenry's claims of intellectual (and physiological) fortitude.

Monoson is clearly right to emphasize unity, reciprocity, and strong mindedness as substantive elements of the democratic self-image that appear in the Great Dionysia. Yet there are other qualities of citizenship that emerge from the experience of tragedy—such as open-mindedness, frank speech, imaginative role-playing that expanded the sympathetic imagination of the audience, and a willingness to explore challenges to the order of things through repeated acts of making the strange and dangerous familiar. Below I will briefly elucidate these qualities of Athenian citizenship as they emerged in the light of the tragic performances.

Athenian society was notoriously contentious and litigious—everyday citizens were called upon again and again to make judgments at the assembly or in the law courts—and the ability to adjudicate such disputes required an acuity in listening to and discerning strong arguments from competing or opposed viewpoints. Commitment to discovering the best argument requires a willingness to be persuaded even by arguments that might initially seem

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strange.[60] Athenian society displayed a remarkable open-mindedness both inside and outside

the Theater of Dionysos—as demonstrated by the fact that serious drama often considered

and represented the socially *unthinkable*, such as Antigone's defiance of Creon, Medea's

transgressions of the role of protective mother, or Neoptolemus' willingness to forsake the

mission at Troy and eternal military glory for his newly formed friendship with Philoctetes.

This open-mindedness in tragedy revealed a willingness to critically explore the cultural

norms and habits handed down through tradition. As Josiah Ober reads it, these challenges

to ideology or convention were based in the "recognition of the essential role that sharp and

profound internal criticism plays in the continued flourishing of a democratic political

order."[61] Tragedy both reflected and helped to nurture a comfort with competing (yet

perhaps equally persuasive) arguments over the appropriate course of action.

Secondly, the tragic performances (along with comedy) simultaneously reflected and

nurtured a culture of "frank speech" (*parrhesia*), by allowing the "outrageous" a place in

public discourse.[62] Frank speech marked the democratic commitment to open disagreement

and agon over the private whisperings of elite citizen with oligarchic leanings. Tragedy

presented figures who boldly (and even transgressively) exemplified the virtues of frank

speech, from Antigone to Teiresias (once goaded) to Medea and Clytaemnestra. The tragic

audience was itself a place *for* frank speech, as the members of the audience would often

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60 Socrates testifies to this Athenian willingness to be persuaded when, in Plato's Apology, he registers his surprise that so many people had voted for his acquittal, and opines that perhaps he would have persuaded even more citizens had the trial been allowed a second day. Of course, the document as a whole shows that not every persuasive argument could carry the day at Athens. Plato, Apology. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2001).

61 Ober, Athenian Legacies, 122.

62 Sewell, In the Theater of Dionysus. 171. For more on the practice of parrhesia, see Elizabeth Markovits, The Politics of Sincerity: Frank Speedh and the Threat to Democratic Judgment (University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 2008)

shout criticisms and rebukes at the performers on stage—collapsing, as it were, the distinction between witnessing and participating in the tragic performances.[63] Thirdly, the broader culture of participation (in which even a staged performance would elicit active engagement) promoted "an enlarged understanding of common predicaments"[64] that prepared the Athenian citizenry for what Aristotle would see as the essential democratic practice of ruling and being ruled in turn.[65] This "double-role playing" imposed by the polis was perhaps one of the clearest benefits of the theatrical/civic "training" undertaken at the Great Dionysia. As Bruce Heiden puts it, "tragedy…[gave] the Athenians the flexibility to play a variety of roles as situations might require, especially the role of friend to a former enemy."[66]

The tragic performances, then, were not simply idle entertainment or religious rituals designed to offer pleasure or reassurance, but part of the Athenian citizenry's training in democratic governance. Sitting in the Theater of Dionysos, the Athenians honed a willingness to hear competing sides of an issue, to listen to and to practice frank speech, and to appreciate the doubled nature of democratic citizenship (which involved being simultaneously powerful and powerless[67]). Beyond this, however, the tragic performances demonstrated a keen awareness of (if not obsession) the fraught tension between norm and transgression in a fluid society. Until the very close of the 5th century, the Athenians were highly conscious of the vertiginousness of democratic action. Unlike contemporary democracies, which are bounded by constitutional norms and codes that are to a greater or

63 Robert Wallace, "Poet, Public, and Theatocracy': Audience Performance in Classical Athens," in Poet, Public and Performance in Ancient Greece, ed. Robert Wallace and Lowell Edmunds (Baltimore, Hopkins, 1997).
64 Euben, Wallach, and Ober, "Introduction," 17.
65 The Basic Works of Aristotle, Edited by Richard McKeon (New York: Modern Library, 2001).
66 Bruce Heiden, "Emotion, Acting, and the Athenian Ethos"
67 Danielle Allen has a discussion of this democratic paradox in Talking to Strangers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

lesser extent buffered from the whims of everyday politics, the Athenians could rewrite the structure of the polis at every Assembly meeting. As such they were sensitive to the tension between continuity and change—a sensitivity that shows forth in tragedy. By witnessing/participating in an ambiguous and contradiction-rich discourse—where social roles were upended, and boundaries between man and woman, nature and society, pure and polluted were constantly troubled or blurred—Athenians learned both, in Ober's terms, to "think alike" (to share common values or norms) and to "think differently" (to question those very same norms when challenged by unexpected events or ideas).[68] In this way they were able to maintain a dialogue between the desire for constancy and the need for innovation and change.

If we can describe the coalescing picture of Athenian democracy as the particular civic "identity" of the Athenians then we would see it as a fluid and iterable process of identification with others, maintained and refurbished, in part, through an annually reaffirmed mutual identification with the ambiguous objects of tragic drama at the Great Dionysia. As I will argue now, such practices of identification did not only have cognitive merits for democratic life but psychological ones as well. The Great Dinoysia was not only a democratic space but an *analytic* space, and tragedy not only provided a space for intellectual reflection—it was also a scene of *mourning* that nurtured a resilient and integrated *psyche*.[69]

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68 Ober, Athenian Legacies, 129.

69 Aristotle described tragic plot not only in terms of recognition and reversal but included the so-called "scene of suffering"—a "painful or destructive action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds and the like." Poetics, Part XI.

5.2 The Internal Assembly and the Democratic Soul: Melanie Klein at the Great Dionysia

Josiah Ober has argued that participatory democracy not only requires active citizens but that it must "find ways to develop each citizen's 'democratic soul'…to teach the moral psychology, ethical judgment and conception of justice and law that is appropriate to the democratic citizen."[70] How should we think about this soul/*psyche*, and how did the Athenian democracy nurture it? Here the work of Melanie Klein will be helpful. The goal of Kleinian analysis was to affect an "integration" of the *psyche* through what I have chosen to call the work of mourning—a recognition of the significance of painful loss within our relationships with others, who, by necessity, both fail and fall away from us. "Integration" as Klein uses it is an ambiguous signifier, which stands in for a variety of subjective (and *socio-subjective*) tasks: the internalization of our objects of attachment (creating an internal "assembly" of whole, ambivalent objects); the mitigation of pathological states of mind such as idealization (and its obverse, demonization), splitting, and manic triumph; the maintenance of communication between internal and external realities (and the maintenance of possible lines of communication between the conscious and the unconscious—or "split-off"—parts of the self); and, finally—the struggle of which these others are a derivation—the integration of the life and death instincts manifest in the outsized passions of love and hate that pull against each other and threaten to overwhelm us. This contentious and precarious picture of subjective life—stretched across a field of polarities and beset by ambiguity, tension and struggle—means that "integration" for Klein names a perpetual aspiration more than an settled achievement. Our identity is never fully set into place but is

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70 Ober, Athenian Legacies, 129.

constantly in motion through an iterable process of identification with an ever-shifting

assembly of internal and external objects. Slowly, over time, our character may come to

have a *certain* stable structure, but not all stability is purchased at a fair price. Stronger and

more resilient selves will display a great capacity to bear suffering, and will, as a result, be

better able to mitigate persecutory anxiety through depressive awareness of object ambiguity.

Strong identity, in other words, keeps the fluid and iterable process of identification *in play*.

Comparatively weaker selves will be less able to tolerate traumatic experiences of loss and

the difficult demands of ambiguous object relations.

All this is not to say that "integration" via the work of mourning is always equally

available. As previous chapters have shown, external circumstances play a profound role in

determining the placement (and the *movement*) across this spectrum (a spectrum, as it were,

stretching between the depressive position and the paranoid-schizoid position). As

Frederick Douglass put it, "oppression makes a wise man mad."[71] Since we both take in and

project out pieces of the cultural/subjective world, there is a perpetually refreshed

conversation between individual and group, the social and the psychological. A clean and

final distinction between these realms is as impossible as a full coincidence between them.

The mourning subject is implicated in a mourning culture/polis, and vice versa. Athens—as

we have seen above—was not only a receptive and nurturing environment for the

democratic citizen, but, as I argue below it was also, thanks to the tragic performances, a

fitting space for the cultivation of the democratic soul.

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71 Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the 4th of July?" Selected Speeches and Writings (Chicago: Lawrence Hill, 1999).

Tragedy was the space in which the strange became familiar and the familiar was estranged. According to Charles Segal, for instance, tragedy represented "the problematization of myth."[72] Or, ass J.P. Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet have argued, myth was both *in* tragedy and also *rejected* by it, making tragedy an inherently ambiguous medium.[73] This ambiguity was not simply thematic but operated at the level of discourse, as the poets used "words that are themselves subject to several interpretations in the interplay explored by the poets between the heroes and the chorus, the actors and the spectators, the gods and human beings."[74] Creon and Antigone each claim the language of piety; Oedipus and Tiresias each claim knowledge. Clytaemnestra, Orestes, the Furies, and Athena all stake their claims to justice. What is the effect of all this confusion on the witnesses-participants in the Theater of Dionysos? Does this ambiguous discourse breed intemperance and inconstancy—as Plato might have it?[75] Or does it perhaps breed a "strong-minded" *acceptance* of ambiguity—an appreciation that both idealized heroes and stigmatized others might be more ambiguous characters than they first appeared?

Such *psychological* strong-mindedness consists of incredulity towards the seemingly straightforward and simple—of seeing depth where before all was surface. The heroic characters and those in positions of authority are often indecent and hubristic, and those who are of lower status often gain the sympathy of the chorus. Antigone is a case in point. Antigone shocks her sister Ismene and the Chorus of elders at Thebes by refusing to obey Creon's edicts surrounding the exposure of her brother's body. But this shock yields to a

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72 Derek Barker, Tragedy and Civilization (New York: SUNY Press, 2009), 4.

73 Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece. Janet Lloyd, translator. (New York: Zone Books, 1990).

74 Ibid., 18.

75 Plato, Republic, Book II. "When a story gives a bad image of what the gods and heroes are like…it doesn't make a fine story…even if it were true, it should be passed over in silence, not told to foolish young people… Yes, such stories are hard to deal with." 377e-378b.

growing acceptance of Antigone's choice, and then even to sympathy with the ill-fated

daughter of Oedipus (the Chorus joins the lament with Antigone as the latter is led away by

the henchmen of Creon). As Helene Foley has argued, "it appears that it is possible to be

both subversive and at least partially right on the tragic stage—that the notorious and

dangerous 'female intruders' who often stalk the tragic stage have a point."[76] Antigone is an

unacceptable danger, a threat to the social order, violently transgressive, *and* justified in her

actions. Accepting this mixed picture is part of the Chorus's (and ultimately Creon's)

growing awareness of the simultaneous fragility and ambiguity of the situation.

That the hero is often mistaken and the denigrated other often "at least partially

right" is what Simon Goldhill has described as the "unsettling force" of tragic drama.[77]

Perhaps it is impossible to recapture the difficulty of experiencing such cognitive and

emotional dissonance. But with Klein we can ask a slightly different question: what precisely

is "unsettled" by this incessant practice of unsettlement? It is not simply the idealized

picture of the hero (or the god, or the polis) that is disrupted or put askew—it is the

psychological mode of functioning in which such idealized images are necessary. The great

heroes are upended, and exposed as partial and failing beings. In the wake of the depressive

unsettling of this (fantastic, imaginary) world, the audience can achieve a clearer

understanding of the oftentimes-fraught relationship between self and other. This is a

recognition, at its root, of how our fantasies and fears can keep us from appreciating the full

range of the other's character—a recognition of our *mis*recognitions.[78]   Here is Klein: "it is

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76 Foley, "Tragedy and Democratic Ideology," 144.

77 Goldhill, "The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology," 74.

78 Misrecognition is of course one possible translation of Lacan's concept of méconnaissance. But Lacan's misrecognition is quite different from the psychological experience I am referencing here. Whereas Lacan's méconnaissance is the formation of the ego through a displacement or misrecognition of the symbolic determinants of subjectivity (including

an essential part of psychoanalytic therapy…that the patient should be enabled by the analyst's interpretations to integrate the split-off and contrasting aspects of his self; this implies also the synthesis of the split-off aspects of other people and of situations."[79] Greek tragedy was, then, an analytic practice whereby the Athenians could integrate the split-off and denigrated parts of their collective identity. By making the world difficult on stage, we might say, tragedy did not leave its audience-participants in mute *aporia* but returned them to *where they already were*—in ambiguous constellations of uncertain (and fallible, mortal) relationships. Tragedy is a fantasy or waking dream that mitigates the more destructive fantasies of escape and omnipotence (these amount to the same thing) to which we are prone.

Tragedy's power to shape the democratic soul comes not just from its thematic and discursive ambiguity (after all, comedy played on ambiguities in speech as surely as did tragedy). Tragedy's unique power also comes from its connection with terror and trauma, and to a work of mourning whereby these traumas are publicly spoken and shared.[80] The scenes of tragic drama are certainly not remarkable for the depiction of violence—Homeric epic poetry more clearly revels in the minutest details of destruction. In fact most of the violent acts in tragedy take place off stage (Antigone's and Jocasta's suicide, Oedipus' self-mutilation, Clytaemnestra's murder of Agamemnon and Cassandra and Orestes' murder of

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discourse), the misrecognition that gets exposed in tragedy (and Kleinian analysis) is how our fantasies and fears have been projected onto the other and kept us from knowing them better. For Lacan, the subject comes into being through méconnaissance; for Klein, the subject comes into (depressive) being through recognition of its misrecognitions—through avowal of its disavowals.

79 Klein, Narrative of a Child Analysis, 120.

80 Richard Seaford emphasizes the importance of the 'collective' or public nature of the outsized affects tied to grief, which are "potentially anti-social…when confined to the bereaved family." "The Social Function of Tragedy: A Response to Jasper Griffin." Nicole Loraux argues (from a very different political orientation) that tragedy was part of the polis' civic ideology that denied recognition to private and individual grief due to fears about stability and order. See her Mothers in Mourning and The Mourning Voice.

Clytaemnestra), and are later narrated or reported second-hand. What distinguishes Greek

tragedy from epic, then, is the peculiar nature of this reportage. Tragic grief is a shared

account between actor and chorus (and between both and the witnesses-participants in the

theater). Grief is not merely given an account (as it is when we learn about Achilles' and

Priam's moment of shared mourning in Homer's *Iliad*), but is made into a public object of

reflection. Tragedy not merely presents trauma, but actively confronts and works through it.

Famously, Aristotle thought that this sharing of grief through the public reflection on

traumatic reversals and terrifying recognitions elicited pity and fear among the witness-

participants.[81] The elicitation of tragic pity and fear is an aesthetic achievement on the part

of the poet, but it is also ethically and politically relevant. Pity establishes a connection

between the suffering hero and the audience members, expanding and educating the latter's

sympathetic imagination.[82] However, pity does not obliterate the distance between the self

and the other. Identification does not imply *incorporation*, where the suffering is taken into

the witness-participant as *their* pain. We do not take the character's place on stage; instead,

Aristotle implies, we project ourselves into a similar situation as the protagonist, as if we

were suddenly greeted by death (or fate) at the door. We imagine the enacted suffering as

potentially our own, but we do not collapse the difference between self and other. Instead we

come to better *appreciate* that distance in the light of common bonds of sympathetic

identification. As Martha Nussbaum interprets Aristotle, the appropriate amount of pity and

fear nurtures the ethical/political virtue of *suggnome*—fellow feeling and/or "thinking-along-

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81 Aristotle, Poetics, VI.
82 Barker, Tragedy and Citzenship.

with."[83] This leads to a new understanding of shared vulnerability that allows us to see the

other outside the frozen dichotomy of friend/enemy.[84]

Yet why exactly, we might ask, does the experience of mimetic terror or trauma serve

to make us more sensitive to the plight of others—why not quietism or resignation, cold

indifference, or hostility toward others born of overwhelming fear? Again, Klein (more than

Aristotle, who is frustratingly vague) helps us to see the mechanism at work—primarily

because it is the same mechanism behind her notion of analytic interpretations:

> "Very painful interpretations—and I am particularly thinking of the
> interpretations referring to death and to dead internalized
> objects…have the effect of reviving hope and making the patient feel
> more alive. My explanation for this would be that bringing a very
> deep anxiety nearer to consciousness, in itself produces relief. But I
> also believe that the very fact that the analysis gets into contact with
> deep-lying unconscious anxieties gives the patient the feeling of being
> understood and therefore revives hope.[85]

Confronting and working through—"understanding"—deep-seated anxieties tied to

trauma, suffering and death potentially elicits a shared experience of pity and thinking-and-

feeling-along-with. Yet only, we might say—following Klein—if the act of working through

does not reinforce paranoid-schizoid fantasies. Enter Aristotle's famous emphasis on

reversal and recognition.[86]

Reversal—change "by which the action veers round to its opposite"—and

recognition—the "change from ignorance to knowledge"—are, according to Aristotle, the

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83 Martha Nussbaum, "Tragedy and Self-Sufficiency: Plato and Aristotle on Fear and Pity."

84 Ibid., 121. Nussbaum's example is Achilles' (momentary) reconciliation with Priam in Homer's Iliad. Elsewhere Nussbaum argues that it is appreciation of imperfection in the tragic hero that allows us to face and accept our own imperfections. Identification, on this understanding, is not taking the hero as an exemplary model for action but as the means of better acknowledging our own faults and lacks. Nussbaum, Fragility of Goodness (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 387.

85 Klein, Narrative of a Child Analysis, 120

86 Freud himself likened the analytic procedure to Sophocles' skillful telling of Oedipus' discovery of his origins.

"most powerful elements of emotional interest" in tragedy.[87] We can see obvious parallels between Aristotle's description of the emotional/cognitive transformations inherent to tragic pity and fear and Klein's view of a successful analysis. Take the example of her analysis of Richard (discussed in Chapter two).[88] Richard's analysis effected a transformation of the split picture of his internalized world—the idealized "light-blue" mother was implicated in the menacing persecutory figures (reversal) and the ambiguity of the situation was fully acknowledged (recognition). Overcoming the intense discomfort of the scene of suffering (Richard: "don't say this, it makes me unhappy") Richard was able to appreciate the inherent difficulty and ambiguity of object relations. By bringing together the isolated and split images of the internalized objects, Richard's persecutory fantasies decreased and his hopefulness surged. This did not signify a removal of psychological discomfort or difficulty as such. Instead Klein's "talking cure" had merely removed certain obstacles that blocked the *acknowledgement* of the manifold obstacles or difficulties inherent to inter-subjective existence. As Richard put it to Klein, "I have discovered that there is no happiness without tragedy."[89]

Again, we should be careful not to overstate the effect of such experiences or see them in terms of an apotheosis or ritual cleansing. Aristotelian pity corresponds to what Klein called "reparation," and reparation is the basis for healthier inter-subjective relationships. By analogy, we might say that the democratic work of mourning forms the basis of a (more) just collective life in the wake of shared trauma.[90] But collective life will

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87 Aristotle, Poetics, Book XI.

88 Klein, Narrative of a Child Analysis, especially page 108. See also pages 82-86 above.

89 Ibid., 99 and 84 above.

90 See Alford, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Greek Tragedy, 163.

still be plagued or polluted by tensions and conflicts that may often tilt into pathology—

which is why a training in pity, fear, and *suggnome* is an iterable and ever-refreshed task

dependent on a receptive environment. The work of public mourning creates the conditions

for reparation by effecting not only a cognitive appreciation of the difficulties and dilemmas

of collective life, but also by nurturing a socio-psychological transformation through

identification—the internalization of an "assembly" of objects through repeated introjections

of whole, ambiguous characters in the wake of their own revealed failures and imperfections.

By integrating the split-off features of our subjective and social inheritance; by confronting

the traumas that form the crucible of collective identity; by accepting the imperfections of

ourselves and others, we are better able to participate in political life without reducing or

collapsing it into a zero-sum struggle for power and resources.[91] In short the Athenians, by

projecting and re-enacting their nightmares—forcing and integrating them into a shared

public account—were better positioned, politically and psychologically, to live with them.

Oddone Longo has offered a deceptively similar interpretation of the mechanism of

identification at work in tragic drama. For her, there are "two levels" of identification in the

tragic theater. The spectator identifies simultaneously "with the dramatic characters *and* with

the theatrical space."[92] The experience of witnessing/participating in the downfall of the

tragic protagonist leads to an individual identification that offers "resignation" or

"consolation" regarding one's own fate. Our own failings receive compensation because

they are shared with the protagonists onstage—in feeling sorry for them, we are better able

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91 Yet what, some may ask, if politics have already been reduced to this zero-sum game? What about situations where oppression, violence, and inequality have reduced political life to its starkest elements? At such a point, it would seem that "mourning" loses its potency as a category for political action. The democratic work of mourning names a possibility and a horizonal striving—not a certainty or an actuality. But, in the shadow of Klein and object-relations psychoanalysis, we must also remain sensitive to the fact that our internal fantasies may create an image of political possibility as meager and bare in contradistinction to reality.

92 "The Theater of the Polis," Nothing to Do with Dionysos.

to feel sorry for ourselves. In addition, by identifying with the theatrical space the audience member also comes to a "heightened consciousness" of their "determinate membership in a group." The larger identification operates as a more compelling form of compensation for suffering, as we come to see ourselves in a larger organism that absorbs our idiosyncratic sufferings yet lives on. This latter identification, on Longo's reading, is an "imposition" of a fantastical communal intimacy and consensus that serves to obscure the "inevitable conflicts and cleavages" of the polis.[93] For Longo, identification is an act of displacement—the building of a false account to cover over the emptiness of the subject.

We have already seen above that this description of the effect of tragic spectatorship/participation is far too simple. Longo is right to focus on the process of identification but does not fully appreciate the depth and range of the psychological mechanisms at work. The picture is much messier than she lets on, as Melanie Klein's commentary on the *Oresteia* makes clear.

I argued above that "integration" marked Klein's understanding of the goals of analysis. However, we must understand "goal" here less as a telos towards which we are progressively moving than as a fraught achievement from which we are perpetually falling away. "Well-integrated" selves have nurtured *habits* of interaction and reflection[94] to mitigate pathological compromises that herald a false sense of stability through the repression of conflict and tension. By remaining committed to engaging or facing the small-scale traumas of inter-subjectivity (our disappointments and frustrations; our imperfect relations with

93 Ibid., 19.

94 Yet perhaps we should understand reflection itself as an inter-subjective practice. See Arendt, "Philosophy and Politics." Arendt's understanding of thinking as an internal dialogue (a Socratic "two-in-one") is a fitting description of a psychoanalytic view of cognition. Arendt, of course, denied the relevance of psychoanalysis tout court – for her, the internal figures with which we converse in thinking are strictly mental phenomena. See Bonnie Honig, "Arendt, Identity and Difference." Political Theory, 16(1), 1988.

others whom we both hate and love), healthy selves better appreciate the fullness and the ambiguity of life. I have taken to calling, following Klein, the mechanism by which this takes place the work of mourning. Mourning is iterable—we have to do it, in Klein's words, "again and again"—because we too easily slide towards denials of ambiguity and loss.

Mourning is not just the work of the subject, however. It is supported by a larger socio-cultural commitment to facing *public* traumas and terrors in a non-pathological way. If health is the payoff for the integrated subject, then justice is the target of this democratic work of mourning. And it is justice—or *dike*—that is the central concern in the *Oresteia*. Justice, like health, is an imperfect object—the subject is never perfectly healthy and society is never perfectly just. What matters most are the practices and habits of health/justice. Klein, with her reading of Aeschylus' trilogy, gives us insight into both.

Integration takes place through identification—the taking in of objects and the composition of an internal world that influences, guides, restrains and judges our actions and interactions with others. Freud's term for our internalized collocation of identifications, of course, was the "Uber-Ich"—or superego. Klein's view of the superego, as we have seen in chapter three, begins from Freud's but modifies the latter's account in two crucial ways. First, instead of a single voice of condemnation—for Freud, this was represented by the opposite-sex parent's refusal of the child's Oedipal advancements—Klein's superego contains a variety of objects. Our earliest objects of identification co-exist internally as an "assembly" of voices. Klein does not deny that the superego can become a malignant force—a cruel source of punishment and discipline—but this takes place within the melancholic paranoid-schizoid position when the internal "assembly" of the superego is flattened into a singular voice. The depressively integrated *psyche* has mitigated the

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persecutions of the melancholic superego through plural identifications with whole, ambivalent objects. Second, since Klein believes that interactions between self/other takes place in infancy—Klein rejects the Freudian narcissistic phase as an unconscious phantasy—her superego begins earlier than Freud's and is in a constant state of flux and change throughout our lives.

Klein's deviation from Freud's view of the superego is a fascinating subtext to her choice of the *Oresteia* as an object of interpretation. In her only exegesis of tragedy throughout the course of her published writings, Klein chooses to focus on Orestes, rather than Oedipus, and this choice is consequential. As Hanna Segal understood it, one of the aims of analysis for Klein was to diminish the severity of the superego.[95] The transition from the persecuted Oedipus to the "depressive" Orestes marks the difference between the melancholic "no-saying" voice Freud discerned in the Oedipal drama to the guidance of the superego *qua* "assembly" and "conscience."[96] In Orestes Klein discovers a character who models the difficulties of life in the depressive position—cognizant of the ambiguity of his objects of affection, sympathetic to even those he must defeat, and able to face down his mortality, impartiality, and guilt through reparative acts of love. Unlike Oedipus, who flees from his fate (and, one might say, his superego) only to fall into it, Orestes is able to act in full awareness of the terrifying consequences, and, with a little help from Athena/Athens, he is able to bear the suffering and guilt that follows from his actions. Unlike Oedipus, who is

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95 Segal, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, 179.
96 Klein, "Some Reflections on the Oresteia." Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963 (New York: The Free Press, 1975).

an object of sheer horror and pity,[97] Orestes is an ambiguous but "good-enough" object of

identification because he himself maintains plural identifications in a populated superego.[98]

For Klein, the most important aspect of the trilogy is the "variety of symbolic roles"

embodied by the characters surrounding the eponymous hero.[99] Essentially, for her the

drama is about the unstable nature of identity given the plural and fluid process of

identification to which we are subject. Just as Sophocles' story of Oedipus crystallized

Freud's theories about internal life, Klein sees the culmination or realization of her ideas on

inter-subjective life in Aeschylus' account of Orestes. Orestes models the difficulties

inherent to achieving integration between internal phantasy and external reality—or between

unconscious needs and desires and conscious aptitudes and actions. For Klein, our early and

unavoidable experiences of deprivation and impotency condemn us to a (temporary)

pathological state of mind whereby our hatred and aggression is projected out into the world

and then reabsorbed through identification.[100] Projective identification forms the kernel of

the first superego, which rages against the subject with all the frustration, anxiety and hate

that the subject himself could not bear. The result is an internal world split between

persecutory and idealized figures—each requiring the other in order to persist. Gradually (if

precariously) the ego is able to overcome this melancholic state: the split-off forces are re-

integrated and acknowledged, and the persecutory superego loses in power. This is the work

of the "depressive position" and within the depressive position a different superego makes

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97 The chorus, upon seeing the blinded Oedipus, say "Indeed I pity you, but I cannot look at you…I shudder at the sight of you." Sophocles, Oedipus the King Translated by David Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). Lines 1302-1305.

98 The language of "good-enough" is D.W. Winnicott's. Winnicott was influenced by Klein's account of the "good" object, but felt that Klein's language did not clearly distinguish the "good" object from the idealized object. I prefer "good-enough" to Klein's "good" for this same reason. See Winnicott, Playing and Reality. (London: Routledge, 2005).

99 "Some Reflections on the Oresteia," 275. Hereafter cited in-text as (1963, X)

100 For more on Klein and projective identification, see Klein "Some Theoretical Conclusions Regarding the Emotional Life of the Infant," Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963. Pgs. 61-93.

its appearance, one that is ambiguous and plural but also less demanding and cruel. As Klein

puts it, "the superego is mainly felt to be guiding and restraining the destructive

impulses…some of its severity will have been mitigated" (1963, 279). The depressively

integrated ego has a "greater capacity to bear suffering" (1963, 279), and even though the

"split-off and persecutory figures reappear temporarily" throughout life, the well-integrated

self is more capable of acknowledging and even welcoming these figures as *part of itself*. Here

is Klein:

> "the ego at its best is capable of acknowledging these different
> aspects [the life and death drives, and their plural manifestations] and
> bringing them closer together, whereas they had been strongly split-
> off in infancy…integration and balance are the basis of a fuller and
> richer life" (1963, 299)

Klein's drama of the subject maps tightly onto Aeschylus' drama of Orestes.[101]

Orestes first appears to the audience in the grips of an idealized fantasy of his father,

Agamemnon. Due to his absence from Argos, Orestes had failed to prevent his father's

murder; as a result Orestes is persecuted by feelings of guilt—guilt that could not be publicly

expressed ("I was not by, my father, to mourn for your death" (8)) and which has turned

round into a desire for vengeance ("Zeus, grant me vengeance for my father's murder").[102]

Grief unexpressed and unworked is projected out only to be reabsorbed as persecution,

which feeds a murderous passion. The idealized Agamemnon exists alongside the

persecutory Clytaemnestra, the "cruel, cruel all daring mother" (429-30). But there are costs

to Orestes' blocked grief over Agamemnon. The idealization of his father leads him to

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101 Even as her reading of the play leaves out certain crucial features of the drama (and its performance). For instance, the curse on the house of Atreus is never mentioned by Klein, nor is the significance of the context of this play in the festival of the Great Dionysia.

102 All lines are from the Lattimore translation of The Libation Bearers.

dismiss Agamemnon's ambiguity. For instance, the memory of Orestes' sister Iphigenia, sacrificed at Aulis by her father, is seemingly repressed. As a corollary, Clytaemnestra is dehumanized and demonized; she becomes a "deadly viper" who is "all unworthy" of her deceased husband.

Orestes, according to Klein, is suffering from a delusional state of mind characteristic of the paranoid-schizoid position. He is unable to tolerate his grief and his guilt, and he is haunted by persecutory fantasies of heralded punishment should he fail to avenge his father's death:

> "Apollo's oracle…told me to cut them down in their own fashion,
> turn to the bull's fury…He said that else I must myself pay
> penalty…and suffer much sad punishment; spoke of the angers that
> come out of the ground…The wrath of the father comes unseen on
> them to drive them back from altars. None can take them in nor
> shelter them. Dishonored and unloved by all the man must die at
> last, shrunken and wasted away in painful death" (270-296)

The weight of these persecutions leads Orestes to put faith in a *passage a l'acte* that will absolve him of his guilt.[103] It is only after he has murdered Aegisthus and has turned to confront Clytaemnestra that the watertight distinctions he has drawn between purity and corruption, between justice and evil, begin to be troubled. Clytaemnestra begs for her life— "Hold, my son. Oh take pity, child, before this breast where many a time…you would feed" (897)—and suddenly Orestes is at a loss: "What shall I do, Pylades? Be shamed to kill my mother?" (898).   This moment of doubt and deliberation may seem incidental, since it only takes a brief reminder ("of the oracles…and sworn oaths") by Pylades to convince Orestes

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103 The phrase is Lacan's. See Zizek, "The Act and its Vicissitudes." Zizek notes the connection between the passage a l'acte and suicide, since the aggressive action towards the others is actually intended against the self. Orestes fits this pattern: "Let me but take her life and die for it." Paraphrasing Brecht, Orestes wants to be the last piece of dirt with whose removal the room will be clean.

to proceed: "I judge that you win. Your advice is good" (903).   But the meaning of the

pause becomes clear through its distinction from what has come before and what will

follow.   Until this point in the trilogy, all violent acts have been justified by an appeal to the

gods, and the agents behind the violence use such a pretext to claim blamelessness and

innocence. Agamemnon, fresh from genocide at Troy, avoids guilt through his faith that the

gods "in one firm cast" had given to him ("the beast of Argos," a "wild and bloody lion")

the joy of conquest.   Clytaemnestra, astride her husband's corpse, was "made glad" by the

"sacrament" of Agamemnon's blood that "spattered" her as she, "in thanks and reverence to

Zeus" struck him "with this right hand that struck in the strength of righteousness."[104] In

Klein's terms, Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra each suffer from a persecutory superego,

which has grown malignant through repeated acts of denial.[105] Moreover, once their deeds

are committed, they succumb to manic triumph that serves to seal off the possibilities of

culpability and guilt. As Clytaemnestra says, "You can praise or blame me as you wish; it is

all one to me" (1404).   Neither praise nor blame affects the manic self who refuses to

acknowledge their implication in impurity or to show grief for their actions.

Orestes breaks this cycle of denial, even if he carries forward the cycle of violence. Orestes'

moment of doubt—"Hold, my son"—is where unthinking repetition yields to re-

membrance. It marks the re-population of Orestes' superego, which had been flattened

under persecutory pressures and unbearable guilt.[106] The fantasized "viper" of

Clytaemnestra is re-joined with the imagos of the nurturing mother, which had been

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104 Sophocles, Agamemnon. Translated by Richmond Lattimore. Lines 1394-1406.

105 "Denial…is a potent defense against the persecutory anxiety and guilt which result from destructive impulses never being completely controlled…denial…may stifle feelings of love and guilt, undermine sympathy and consideration both with the internal and external objects, and disturb the capacity for judgment and the sense of reality." Klein, "Some Reflections on the Oresteia," 293. This description fits Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra to a T.

106 Whether or not the imputation of guilt to Orestes is an anachronism depends on how much we share the thesis that Greek culture was a "shame" culture that only later developed a category of emotion consonant with "guilt." Bernard Williams, Shame and Necessity (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

repressed in the interests of feeding a murderous passion. We can think here of Klein's

analysis of Richard, and the latter's admission that it is "difficult" with "so many parents

kinds of parents" in his mind.[107] Orestes, unlike both Clytaemnestra and Agamemnon, was

able to acknowledge the competing pressures of his plural (and ambiguous) identifications.

He acts, but it is a self-conscious act in that he understands its costs and consequences. Far

from absolving him from punishment and blame, Orestes acknowledges that this "victory is

soiled, and has no pride" (1017).[108] Orestes does not succumb to manic triumph, *à la*

Agamemnon and Clytaemnestra; instead he "grieve(s) for the thing done, the death, and all

our race" (1017). Even justified or prophesized judgments and acts are not without cost or

blame. As the chorus laments (sounding much like Klein's Richard): "there is no mortal

man who shall turn unhurt his life's course to an end not marred. There is trouble here.

There is more to come" (1018-1020).

The heralded trouble, of course, is represented by the Furies—"the mind of the

past"—who shortly appear and become, in *The Eumenides*, the main protagonists.   Their

presence reminds us that the *Oresteia* is not *only* the story of Orestes. In fact, most

interpretations of the trilogy neglect the narrative arc of Orestes' struggle with guilt and

reparation and instead focus on the final scene between the Furies and Athena, which takes

place only after Orestes has left the stage. As Klein would have it, the final agon between

the Furies and Athena is a codification of Orestes' struggle—an indication that the challenge

of integrating the split-off parts of his personality is one that is perpetually refreshed.

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107 Narrative of a Child Analysis, 28

108 It is true that Orestes still clings to Apollo ("he declared I could do this and not be charged with wrong") and imagines that the god will provide sanctuary and absolution through which Orestes might "escape this blood that is my own" (1032). Yet this comes after Orestes has acknowledged the impurity of his action. Even the language used "the blood that is my own" implies that Orestes' hoped-for absolution will not be redemptive.

Athena/Athens joined by the Furies represents the mature superego that Orestes has already obtained by acknowledging his guilt and publicly mourning (in concert with the Chorus) his loss and the *facta bruta* of loss as such. However, I would read the ending somewhat differently. To me, the negotiation between the Furies and Athena—on the behalf of Athens—shows that Orestes' individual work of mourning is implicated in Athens' democratic work of mourning, and vice versa. The larger social challenge of recognizing and understanding the presence of terror and trauma is both reflective and partially constitutive of the inter-subjective task of integrating the self. The success of the conclusion to the trilogy is not that the Furies/Eumenides have been transformed—after all, they are still terrifying, even if they have a less terrifying title—but that Athena/Athens has, following the example of Orestes, committed itself to seeing the "great good" in the practice of facing and working through terror and trauma. Scholars of ancient Greece have often seen the ending of the *Oresteia* as an etiological myth about the *Aeropagus*—the high court of appeal at Athens. Yet perhaps the integration of the Furies represents instead the origins of the tragic festival itself. Not only, then, is the drama about the achievement of an integrated personality, it is also about the necessity of the "democratic" super-ego on which the former is ultimately dependent. This plural, fluid (yet hardly anarchic) force in the life of the polis is the basis of iterable identifications through which the democratic identity of the Athenian citizens is nurtured, cultivated, and improved.

How does Klein's interpretation of the *Oresteia* (and my modifications to it) compare with other readings of the trilogy? Richard Seaford is a strong representative for one prominent line of interpretation, as he reads the conclusion of *The Eumenides* as an origin myth of the *Aeropagus* court. The dangerous disorder represented by the Furies has been

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restrained, and their "eye for an eye" brand of *dike* has been subordinated to an open process of public adjudication. Athena's tie-breaking vote and her mollification of the Furies are, for Seaford, reminiscent of the "controlled ambiguity" inherent to ritual, a process whereby "ambiguous power is canalized…the negative elements separated from the positive."[109] Emphasizing the transformation of the Furies into "the kindly ones," Seaford sees the ritualistic procession at the close of the play as signifying that the trilogy's troubling dilemmas have been successfully remedied: "the questions are indeed answered and the conflicts resolved."[110] The audience would leave the Theater reassured that the polis could incorporate older practices (and gods) into its new rituals and institutions.

However, it seems that Seaford has overstated both the transformation of the Furies and its implications. The Furies have been integrated into the polis, but this is less *their* transformation than *Athens'*—the "terror" remains in their faces, but Athens has accepted this terror and committed to honoring it. This is demonstrated in the fact that it is only after Athena has shifted her tactics from those of force to those of persuasion that her dispute with the Furies begins to soften. Instead of asking the Furies to "put away" their hatred and anger, she says, "I will bear your angers" (847). Instead of asking the Furies to give up their claims, Athena offers to incorporate or integrate them into the structure of the polis: "do good, receive good, and be honored as the good are honored. Share our country…" (165). The Furies do not seem reconciled with Athens so much as Athens has reconciled with the Furies. Even in the guise of the "Kindly Ones," the Furies retain, as it were, a right of disturbance, if the polis should neglect to honor them properly or return them to a condition

109 Richard Seaford, "Historicizing Tragic Ambivalence: The Vote of Athena," History, Tragedy, Theory edited by Barbara Goff (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995). Pg. 208.
110 Ibid., 208.

of wandering and exile. Lastly, the ritualistic resolution at the end of *The Eumenides* does not appear to subsume or cancel out the tragic denouement that closes the *Libation Bearers*— where the chorus and Orestes share a scene of public mourning and acknowledge that "there is trouble here…there is more to come." In light of Orestes' (and Athens') attainment of the depressive position, the Eumenides' claim that "life will give you no regrets" seems infelicitous and disingenuous—and for that reason, the processional that follows is all the more unsettling.

If Seaford overstates the case for a ritualistic resolution of the dilemmas and conflicts of the drama, then Christopher Rocco makes the opposite mistake by overstating the case for *irresolvability*.[111] Rocco rightly rejects a "rationalist" reading of the trilogy, one that would see in the conclusion a salutary progression "from chaos to order, darkness to light, perversion to normalcy, miscommunication to mutual understanding and reconciliation."[112] For Rocco, the ambiguities in the *Oresteia* reassert themselves throughout and upset or overturn this progressive narrative. Instead of ritualistic closure, the trilogy models a "democratic politics of disturbance" that "problematizes the sedimentations and accretions of cultural practices and norms that constitute the self and other."[113] Aeschylus becomes the first genealogist, and his trilogy "elaborates the contours of a…politics of disturbance that resists the sedimented norms of a consensually achieved self and order even as it provides democratic norms against which to struggle."[114]

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111 Rocco, Tragedy and Enlightenment.
112 Ibid., 25. Whether or not Rocco has constructed a "rationalist" straw man is another story. Certainly his identification of this narrative with Habermas is a problematic leveling of the latter's understanding of enlightenment.
113 Ibid., 25
114 Ibid., 26.

Rocco's account of the *Oresteia* is persuasive in its details, but it is compromised by a larger perceptual frame that sees norm and disturbance as necessarily and mutually opposed forces. Norms for Rocco are always there "to struggle against," and disturbance is seemingly always a salutary process that undoes the oppressive sedimentations of identity. However, a Kleinian view of precarious identity through plural/fluid identification could not accept such a simple and rigid dichotomy between norm and disturbance. Disturbance is not something that we take *to* norms in a heroic act of theorizing; disturbance is *in* the split-off part of the self/polis, and the work of integrating these split-off and dangerous elements through a public work of mourning *requires* norms of speech and action in order to exist and persist.[115] Instead of focusing on a struggle between norm and disruption, we might instead be pursuing and practicing norms whereby we recognize and honor the disruptions *that are already there*. Tragedy, like Kleinian analysis, partially fulfills this function;[116] it is the annually refreshed commitment to breaking through denial and triumph and reestablishing communication with the dangerous, the terrifying, and the unbearable.[117]

Perhaps Simon Goldhill is correct in that any interpretation of the *Oresteia* that reduces its meaning to a simple message distorts the trilogy's "democratic *paideusis*" that emerges from the presentation of contradictions and tensions without an (unproblematic)

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115 Rocco is carrying forward William Connolly's emphasis on disruption and disturbance. For a critique of Connolly which develops the argument above, see my "The Politics of Speed: Connolly, Wolin, and the Prospects for Democratic Citizenship in an Accelerated Polity." Polity (forthcoming).

116 As Helene Foley puts it, tragedy "holds up to view contradictions in polis ideology." "Tragedy and Democratic Ideology," 144.

117 There are, of course, countless other interpretations of the Oresteia that could be discussed. Seaford's and Rocco's map the central tension between ritual closure and anomic disturbance (forgetting/fixation), but onto this schema other powerful readings could be mapped. For instance, there is similar tension between Christian Meier's view that the Oresteia is paradigmatic for education into democratic citizenship and Nicole Loraux's view that the trilogy is more representative of the (patriarchal) containment of excess through the incorporation of female mourning affect into a civic ritual that "forgets" the conflicts at the root of the polis. Meier, The Political Art of Greek Tragedy. Loraux, The Voice of Mourning and Mothers in Mourning. Yet neither Meier nor Loraux acknowledge the ambiguity of collective suffering (Meier sees it as costless; Loraux sees it as pure ideology). Peter Euben is an exemplary figure in a (much-maligned) middle position. For Euben, the image of justice that emerges from the Oresteia has four crucial components: reconciliation of diversities, reciprocity, recognition, and judgment. These elements exist in tense balance with one another. As Euben puts it, "by making the tensions and sheer formlessness of human life lucid and thus intelligible without slighting the contingency of politics, the permeability of human constructs, the irony of action, or the duality of passion, Aeschylus seconds the prodigious integration of life his trilogy commends." The Tragedy of Political Theory (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 91.

image of redemption.[118] In such a non-reductionist interpretation, Orestes' public work of

mourning would gain in importance relative to the ritualistic resolution that closes *The*

Eumenides, and the Eumenides' claim that "life will give you no regrets" would be leavened

by a depressive awareness of impurity and a commitment to mourning. Klein's reading

agrees with Goldhill's insofar as she emphasizes the precariousness of depressive integration

heralded by Orestes' (and Athens') recognition of the Furies. The appearance of

Athena/Athens, joined by the heretofore split-off Furies, as the "mature superego" is a

momentary pause—"Hold, my polis"—but the opposing votes of the Aeropagus "show that

the self is not easily united, that destructive impulses drive one way, love and the capacity for

reparation and compassion in other ways. Internal peace is not easily established."[119] At its

best, Athens (through identifying with the imperfect but "good enough" Orestes) commits

to an iterable work of mourning whereby the act of confronting and working through

trauma mitigates pathological states of being. But here—as the play reminds us—there are

manifold obstacles, both social and psychological, blocking this practice, and there are no

guarantees of success. Nevertheless this project—the cultivation and iterable re-creation of

democratic citizens/souls—is both the presupposition and the ever-distant horizon of

democratic desire.

What specifically does this look like, outside the realm of drama? For Fred Alford,

Klein's emphasis on depressive integration and whole-object relations implies—above all

else—the political and subjective acceptance of pollution: "whole object relations refer to

the self's ability to avoid splitting its objects into all good and all bad part-objects. Such

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118 Simon Goldhill, "Civic Ideology and the Problem of Difference," 49.
119 Klein, "Some Reflections on the Oresteia," 298.

relations require the toleration of ambivalent feelings toward others."[120] Klein's work of

mourning is the means by which we can come to terms with the experience of feeling

"contaminated by the badness" or "pollution" in ourselves and others.[121] Above all, then,

Klein's depressive position is a rejection of the conception of the self as a free, autonomous

agent, insofar as this conception is based upon a denial of the interpenetration of identity

with the iterable process of identification (in other words, a denial of the others and other*ness*

that is part of the self). Such denials are, we might say, based on a misperception of freedom

as such, which leads to what Klein—in the context of her analysis of Richard—called

"disaster:"

> "In *Narrative of a Child Analysis*, I describe how every session for some
> time ended with what the boy called a 'disaster' and which consisted
> in all the toys being knocked over. Symbolically this meant to the
> child that he had been powerful enough to destroy his world. For a
> number of sessions there was usually one survivor—himself—and
> the sequel to the 'disaster' was a feeling of loneliness, anxiety, and a
> longing for the return of his good object."

The Greeks had a word for Richard's behavior: *pleonexia*. Pleonexia, as Plato (among

others) understood it, was the desire to "have all things happen according to the commands

of one's own soul."[122] Pleonexia springs from a desire for absolute and unfettered freedom

of action. In the *Republic*, the Ring of Gyges is the manifestation of this desire, as it grants us

the power to become invisible to others and to act as if we were unimpinged by their desires

and expectations, or our responsibilities to them. Tragedy is rife with characters in the grip

of this misconception of freedom, and the poets upend such pleonexic figures through a

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120 Fred Alford, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Greek Tragedy, 18.
121 Ibid., 8.
122 Plato, Laws, (686e-687c).

seemingly endless variety of inventive and cruel means. A central component, then, of

tragedy's democratic *paideusis* is an education in freedom.[123] By re-integrating the repressed

and split-off parts of the self/polis, tragedy becomes a recognition-scene where our

impingements and impurities are revealed and acknowledged, and the pathologies of

pleonexia are mitigated.

However, the recognition of punctured autonomy—where subjects are implicated in

forces, repressed or otherwise, that exceed their conscious control—can too easily slide into

a valorization or romanticization of the "outside" or "excess" that troubles the subject. At

the bottom of this slippery slope, subjective incompletion and loss becomes ontological

lack.[124] This move is not, however, so much a replacement of pleonexia as its *dis*placement.

Suddenly the outside/repressed becomes the site of frictionless freedom or unbounded joy.

In this light the subject becomes an empty husk—alienated in discourse, in the language of

the father that is imposed on anomic desire. But this lack only makes sense if it is

accompanied (and haunted) by a fatefully and tragically disbarred abundance—the pure

jouissance that mocks the subject throughout its futile circuits of desire. This view of the

subject, however, still operates under a pleonexic conception of freedom; it merely changes

the sign from positive possession to negative lack. The sovereign subject and the empty

subject are not mutually opposed figures so much as they are two sides to the same fantasy.

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123 Plato, of course, thinks that tragic poetry fails in this educative mission, and that it only increases the desire for pleonexic behavior in the witnessing audience. Republic, Book VIII. As Steven Salkever points out, this is the crucial point of difference between Plato's and Aristotle's view of tragedy. For Arisotle, tragedy functions as "a prescription for the treatment of the dream of pleonexia that continually threatens to erode the core of otherwise healthy democracies." Salkever, "Tragedy and the Education of the Demos," in Greek Tragedy and Political Theory, edited by Peter Euben. Pgs. 287-289.

124 Paul Verhaeghe, "Causation and Destitution of Pre-Ontological Non-entity: On the Lacanian Subject," Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis, edited by Dany Nobus (New York: Other Press, 1999). Romand Coles, "The Wild Patience of Radical Democracy: beyond Zizek's lack." Radical Democracy: Politics Between Abundance and Lack edited by Lars Tonder and Lasse Thomassen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

The discourse of lack perpetuates its own "disaster" as surely as does the pleonexic discourse of the (fully) autonomous subject.

Kleinian psychoanalysis, on the other hand, presupposes the possibility (but never the *certainty*) of communication with the split-off and repressed elements of the self. The repressed marks the inescapable condition of pollution and contamination, and a totality whereby these divisions are surmounted or transcended remains, at best, "virtual."[125] Working through and mourning are the means of "integrating" the terrifying, split-off parts of the self/polis—forces that have been "excommunicated" through fantasies of purity and innocence and by practices of denial. The work of mourning animates a repopulation of the superego by re-opening these blocked lines of communication and emphasizing the fluidity and precariousness of identifications through which we locate ourselves. Tragedy supports this process by honoring a commitment to speaking the unspeakable, to fronting a public process of working through trauma and terror. According to Goldhill, this commitment was itself reflective of a democratic norm of openness borne from identifications with imperfect and failing models:

> "Tragedy again and again [Kleinianism!] takes the ideology of the city
> and exposes its flaws and contradictions…tragedy depicts the hero
> not as a shining example for men to follow, but as a difficult, self-
> obsessed and dangerous figure for whom transcendence is bought
> only at the cost of transgression. The Greeks, as ever, had a word for
> it: *es meson*, which means put 'into the public domain to be contested'.
> Democracy prides itself on its openness to questioning. Tragedy is

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125 Jürgen Habermas' gloss/appropriation of Freud names this "virtual totality" as "the model of pure communicative action." Habermas' subsumption of psychoanalysis to the project of communicative action, however, potentially neglects the tragic side of Freud's (and Klein's) insights. At the very least it fails to take into account pre-linguistic reality, which was central to Klein (at least according to Fred Alford, who might overstate the case. After all (contra Alford), the pre-linguistic is not necessarily the pre-communicative). It seems that Habermas' "virtual" qualification is crucial (and often ignored by critics of Habermas); successful communicative action is implied (if its achievement is only ever "virtually" guaranteed) by what Klein interpreted as the "desire" for a cure—the desire to integrate the split-off parts of the self that menace us behind our backs. She called this desire "epistemophilia"—an in-born desire to know oneself that provides motive force to psychoanalytic therapy. But the model of this "cure" remains virtual given the split nature of human subjectivity and the unstable identifications on which our identity is built. See Habermas, "Self-Reflection as Science: Freud's Psychoanalytic Critique of Meaning," Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971). Also see Fred Alford, "Habermas, Post-Freudian Psychoanalysis, and the End of the Individual," Theory, Culture, and Society 4(1), 1987.

the institution which stages this openness in its most startling fashion."[126]

Jonathan Lear has spoken of the goals of analysis in similar terms to Goldhill's reading of tragedy—as putting the ambiguous hero and the dilemmas his plight manifests *es meson*, into the public for contestation. The institution of tragedy is necessary because its work of *es meson* is mocked and threatened by the psychological tendency towards *es anonymia*—towards namelessness. For Lear, this is due to transference, which bespeaks the "psyche's characteristic activity of creating a meaningful world in which to live…a world endowed with its own peculiar meanings and structures."[127] This private world is what Lear calls the "idiopolis." Following Freud, Lear sees transference as a "battlefield" where the analyst confronts and undoes the concentrated and isolated world of the analysand by bringing them out of transferential repetition. Psychoanalytic therapy is a scene of recognition that lends reality to our idiopolis by "allowing us to migrate and share the larger polis."[128] Integration by means of a shared process of working through becomes the precarious and time-consuming collision and re-adjustment of idiopoleis until a broader public world is created.[129]

However, isn't integration here another word for *incorporation*—for the process of "adjusting" to the outside world regardless of its demands? This possibility carves a stitch of anxiety across Lear's glossing of Freud. It moreover explains a lingering (and perhaps justified) discomfort with the reading of tragedy that emphasizes closure and resolution at

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126 Goldhill, Love, Sex, Tragedy, 231.

127 Lear, "An Interpretation of Transference," Open Minded: Working out the Logic of the Soul (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

128 Ibid., 72.

129 This seems to be the Habermasian trajectory. See his "Self-reflection as Science," specifically page 239: "The function of language, on which Freud focuses here, is a stabilization of processes of consciousness in such a way that the 'internal' is fastened to symbols and obtains 'external' existence…that is why language is the basis of ego functions, on which the capacity for reality-testing depends."

the expense of disorder and confusion. But this choice—disorder or closure, confusion or

certainty—is a false one, akin to the false choice between forgetting and fixation from earlier

chapters. Socio-subjective integration via a democratic work of mourning does not get us

past or beyond trauma or terror (or confusion or pollution). At its best it helps us to

cohabitate with these experiences of disaster. In this way (and perhaps *only* in this way) may

we avoid the greater 'disasters' to which we are subject—and this is just as surely a task for

the community as it is for the individual.

In summation, we can now return to Longo's reading of dual-level identification at

the tragic festival, and better see her missteps. First, the identification with the tragic hero—

in this case, Orestes—does not serve to console the audience members about their own

particular sufferings. Rather, the identification with Orestes puts us into touch with that

suffering, insofar as we, like him, overcome the pathologies of denial and triumph and

achieve an integration of the split-off and terrifying parts of our selves. Secondly, on this

reading the more crucial identification is not with the idea of the unified polis in which our

idiosyncratic sufferings are absorbed. Instead we identify with the reflecting object of the

tragic drama *itself.* The festival becomes an object of identification that re-enfranchises the

"excommunicated" or split-off parts of the self/polis. In Klein's terms, the festival becomes

the "good" object that keeps our identity mobile by guiding the iterable process of

identification and mitigating the pathological defenses of denial and triumph. For Klein, the

analyst's role is to become this object of identification that makes possible depressive

integration through a work of mourning. This is similar to Heinz Kohut's idea of

"transmuting internalization," a process whereby the analyst's presence and empathic

responses are internalized by the analysand.[130] By means of this transmuting internalization, the tragic festival at Athens cultivated the psychological infrastructure necessary for democratic citizenship. Without this, the socio-subjective work of mourning collapses. As Klein puts it,

> "It is particularly in grief and in the process of mourning that the individual struggles to preserve the good relation which previously existed [with his or her internalized objects] and to feel strength and comfort through this internal companionship. When mourning fails—and there may be many reasons for this—it is because this internalization cannot succeed and helpful identifications are interfered with."[131]

In short, mourning fails because the helpful internalized objects that mitigate pathological compromises go silent, and the fluid process of identification turns static. Identity ossifies—and dies, even if a bare life seems to persist. Tragedy acts as an object of transmuting internalization by overcoming denial and mitigating triumph, and by presenting a procession of imperfect and ambiguous characters that circulate in and out of our identity.

However, Klein does miss a crucial scene of level of identification in her reading of the *Oresteia*—namely, the tragic audience itself. Surrounding the performance—and held together *by* that performance—is the democratic polis in its fractious and multiplicitous array. What keeps identification fluid is not simply the dramatic portrayal of heroic but flawed characters, but actual engagements with real others in networks of association and participation. The Athenian willingness to "collectivize suffering" and share each other's pain was part of a larger project of collectively sharing the burdens and responsibilities of

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130 Heinz Kohut, How Does Analysis Cure? (Chicago: University of Chicago Pres, 1984). See also Alford, "Habermas, Post-Freudian Psychoanalysis, and the End of the Individual."
131 Klein, "Some Reflections on the Oresteia," 288-89.

self-governance.[132] In the *psyche*, communication is blocked by repression and pathology. In

the polis, communication is blocked by disparities of power, wealth, and even

communicative efficacy itself (the field of communication, as it were, is not itself neutral to

all forms of speech). In Athens, moreover, there were bald practices of repression that kept

a majority of the population in mute silence as a small slice of citizens participated fully in

public life. Klein reduces the drama of the *Oresteia* to a subjective struggle for the depressive

position, but if we are going to discuss a *socio*-subjective depressive position or work of

mourning we will need to take this larger scene into account. I am attempting to widen

Klein's analysis so that it can shed light onto collective practices of confronting and working

through trauma. The *Oresteia*, again, is not just a story about Orestes' internal struggle—it is

a story about Athens' integration of the "mind of the past." In Athens the work of

mourning was a democratic project, and democracy required a public work of mourning.

5.3 Transference and Catharsis

There are at least two potent objections that could be raised against the arguments

developed above about tragedy's role as an object of transmuting internalization that made

possible a democratic work of mourning whereby the Athenian citizens were able to

confront and work through terror and violence by integrating the experience of trauma into

their civic identities. The first is that the traumas presented on stage were never directly

Athenian traumas: Sophocles never brought forward a "Plague in Athens," nor did Euripides

ever stage a "Sicily Expedition" or "Alcibiades." Rather, the characters were drawn from the

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132 The quote is from Peter Euben, Tragedy of Political Theory, 90. Fred Alford ties the Athenians' willingnes to share each others pain to Pericles' paean to the Athenian public spiritedness towards self-government in Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War: "since a state can support individuals in their suffering, but no one person by himself can bear the load that rests upon the state, is it not right for us all to rally to her defense?" (History, 2.60) Alford, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Greek Tragedy, 150.

great store of Greek legends and myth—Heracles, Philoctetes, Oedipus and Pentheus, and

the dramas were set in places that were distant from Athens—geographically and

culturally—such as Persia, Argos, or (most commonly) Thebes. On the face of it this looks

more like the *avoidance* of trauma (or its displacement into a safely distant other) than it is a

wrestling with or working through of trauma. It is important to address this apparent

limitation of the tragic genre—especially given my critique, in the previous chapter, of

Rawlsian ideal theory as an amnesic avoidance of racial injustice and trauma.

The second objection that could be raised at this point is that the effect of tragic

drama on its audience was not a depressive acknowledgement and acceptance of loss but the

"purgation" of pity and fear (i.e. "catharsis"). The audience participated in this festival not

in order to integrate these experiences of trauma into their subjective and political identities,

but to ritualistically remove from their minds the polluting forces of fear and pity. Athenians

went to the Theater of Dionysos for the same reason that (some) people today go to horror

movies: for a giddy peek at acts of transgression that provide a fleeting thrill. This objection

is even more important to address than the first, because "catharsis" is a term that haunts

psychoanalysis as surely as it does tragedy. A clearer understanding of its meaning for the

Athenians will help us to give it a richer meaning in our own time.[133]

There *is* a recorded memory of a tragic performance at Athens that dealt with a

trauma in the polis' immediate history. In 494 the poet Phrynichos' presented a drama

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133 I am leaving to the side at this point a third objection to seeing tragedy as a democratic institution that provides the proper psychological infrastructure for healthy inter-subjectivity—namely, Plato's complex and comprehensive critique of tragedy in the Republic, the Laws, and the Gorgias. Plato's critique of tragedy is tied to a critique of mourning (and vice versa) as an activity unsuitable for philosophers. As such taking on this challenge would require a more detailed setting up of Plato's arguments than I can provide in this space. My argument in brief? Plato is wrong.

entitled 'The Capture of Miletos' at the annual Dionysia. Miletos was a polis on the coast of Asia Minor that had been encouraged by Athens to rebel against creeping Persian influence. This encouragement had emboldened the citizens of Miletos, who had assumed that Athens might provide support should the Persians retaliate. When the retaliation came, however, Athens stood by as Miletos was razed to the ground and its population enslaved or killed. As Herodotus records it, when Phrynichos' staged his dramatic recreation of the events, the "whole theater burst into tears."[134] The poet was in turn fined 1,000 drachmas for "recalling to them [the Athenians] their misfortune" (*oikia kaka*).[135] As P.J. Wilson reads it, this story "illustrates the sensitivity of the Athenians to the boundary between tragedy and the immediate affairs of the city."[136] The genre had been chastened and disciplined: from this time forward, tragic drama avoided direct contact with the immediate traumas of the polis.

As I read it, the Phrynichos incident testifies both to the incredibly powerful affect tied to grief and the inescapable relevance of transference for the work of mourning. As Freud reminds us, mourning can involve a "grave departure from the normal attitude towards life"—a "loss of interest in the outside world," the "inhibition of all activity," and a "loss of capacity to love."[137] For Freud, the *work* of mourning (*Trauerarbeit*) gradually overcomes this painful state of mind, by weaning the subject from its unrequited libidinal attachments. For Klein, the pain of grief is doubled by the fact that the loss of a loved object touches off the original traumas of painful recognition whereby our first objects came to be established in the psyche. Analysis—for both Freud and Klein—helps to reestablish

134 Herodotus, Histories, 6.21
135 Ibid.
136 P.J. Wilson, "Tragic Rhetoric: The Use of Tragedy and the Tragic in the Fourth Century," in Tragedy and the Tragic, edited by Silk.
137 Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," 244.

the broken circuits of identification that can be shattered by grief. Yet both Freud and Klein

appreciate that the success of the analytic relationship is dependent on working with/against

the myriad of defenses that potentially poison this relationship and forestall the work of

mourning. Above all, the analyst and analysand have to respect the "battlefield" of

transference on which our psyches are perpetually encamped. Interpretations that are *too*

direct—that do not respect or work within and against this battlefield—will provoke a

"transference storm" that short-circuits the precarious tendrils of communicative action

between analyst and analysand.[138]

Phrynichos—like another famous Athenian[139]—perhaps took the felicitousness of

frank speech too much for granted. He did not respect the peculiar mix of immediacy and

distance that makes for a successful work of mourning—the necessary slack between self

and other that allows for identification rather than incorporation. As both Freud and Klein

would remind us, interpretations without affect are meaningless, but overwhelming affect

can keep the interpretation from reaching across the gap that separates us on the battlefield

of transference (and counter-transference). Klein maintained the value of "very painful

interpretations," but the impact of these interpretations is dependent on the relationship that

precedes them—on the establishment of a space where the analyst can "appear alternately in

the role of good and bad objects, is alternately loved and hated, admired and dreaded."[140]

Such oscillations engage the transference and enable the analysand to "work through, and

therefore to modify, early anxiety situations; the splitting between the good and bad figures

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138 Lear, "An Interpretation of Transference," 57.

139 Jonathan Lear thinks that Socrates great mistake was to ignore transference; he "acted as though the meaning of his activity would be transparent to others, and eh thus provoked a transference storm." "An Interpretation of Transference," 57. This argument does seem to comport with the evidence that Socrates was influential mainly among the Athenian youth, since those who are coming-of-age often have a more fluid psychic structure and, as a result, fewer resistances tied to transference.

140 Klein, "The Emotional Life of the Infant," Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1956-1963, 91

decreases; they become more synthesized, that is to say, aggression becomes mitigated by libido."[141] Painful interpretations can become too much to bear—especially if the analyst does not offer to bear these sufferings *with* the analysand. In these cases, mourning will slide back into grief, and the world will lose all interest for us. Only in "good-enough" circumstances will the experiences of fear and trauma become an occasion for identification and growth.[142] I argue that the tragic festival evolved into this good-enough space, which supported the civic and psychological infrastructure for democratic life at Athens. But Phrynichos did not respect the precariousness of this communicative field.

Yet what about "catharsis"—that most enigmatic and infamous of Aristotelian ideas? Catharsis is a term that haunts interpretations of both tragedy and psychoanalysis. For centuries, it was understood to mean purgation or ritual cleansing (Aristotle's most frequent usage of the term is in reference to bodily discharge).[143] Freud himself seems to have understood catharsis in this light when he used the term to describe his early assumptions about psychological pathologies.[144] And yet the purgation interpretation has come under increased scrutiny, and is now rejected by almost all interpreters of Aristotle and Greek tragedy.[145] In its place are a variety of competing (and often overlapping) theses. Catharsis is an "intellectual clarification"[146] of fear and pity, an emotional "refinement" of dangerous affect,[147] an education in civic relations,[148] or a cognitive pleasure drawn from an aesthetic

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141 Klein, Ibid., 91

142 Jonathan Lear, Freud (New York: Routledge, 2005), 36.

143 See Jonathan Lear, "Catharsis," Open Minded.

144 See Chapter Two above, pages 57-58 and 64. See also Jonathan Lear, "An Interpretation of Transference," where he compares the early Freud with Socrates: "Socrates, like Freud, began with an essentially cathartic method…overcoming conflict could, for him, only be a matter of eliciting and expelling false belief."

145 For a review of this literature, see Martha Nussbaum, "Tragedy and Self-Sufficiency: Plato and Aristotle on Fear and Pity," in Essays on Aristotle's Poetics, edited by Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1992).

146 Leon Golden, "Catharsis," Transactions of the American Philological Association, 93 (1962), "The Purgation Theory of Catharsis," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Summer, 1973), "Epic, Tragedy, and Catharsis," Classical Philology, Vol. 71, No. 1 (Jan., 1976).

147 Nussbaum, "Tragedy and Self-Sufficiency."

appreciation of a well-crafted plot structure.[149] Yet all of these interpretations agree that the image of catharsis as purgation is ill fitting to the Athenian experience of tragedy. As Amelie Rorty memorably put it, "Aristotle does not have a hydraulic or drainage ditch model of catharsis…a room that has been cleaned has not been emptied…"[150]

Catharsis in its purgative usage is also too crude for psychoanalysis as well. Freud dropped the term as he moved to the topographical and ultimately to the structural view of the psyche. Klein never used it. Yet this does not mean that a more generative understanding of catharsis cannot shed light on psychoanalytic categories (or vice versa). In fact, if, as Steven Salkever has argued, catharsis can be seen as part of tragedy's larger purpose as a treatment for "the dream of pleonexia," then we can appreciate catharsis in terms of Kleinian mourning—marked, as the latter is, by a transition from persecutory fear to depressive anxiety, which allows for sympathetic engagement and identification with a plurality of others.[151] Salkever even interprets Aristotelian catharsis in terms similar to what I have been calling the democratic work of mourning: "tragic catharsis…is part of the process of transforming a potentially good democracy…into one that is actually such, in the sense in which soul is said to be the first actuality…in relation to potentiality inherent in a particular kind of body or matter."[152] Catharsis is an integral part of the education or cultivation of the democratic polis/soul.

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148 Salkever, "Tragedy and the Education of the Demos: Aristotle's Response to Plato."

149 See Lear, "Catharsis," 202. Lear does not entirely reject this account, but sees cognitive pleasure as a "step which occurs en route to the production of the proper pleasure of tragedy," which Lear associates with the recognition of "certain emotional possibilities which we ignore in ordinary life."

150 Amelie Rorty, "The Psychology of Aristotelian Tragedy," Essays on Aristotle's Poetics.

151 Salkever, "Tragedy and the Education of the Demos: Aristotle's Response to Plato."

152 Ibid., 300.

Perhaps the best definition of catharsis has been provided—in an almost offhand manner—by Simon Goldhill:

> "In 1990 a production of Sophocles' *Electra*, starring Fiona Shaw, opened in Derry, Northern Ireland, during a week when eight people had been killed in sectarian violence. The production was brilliantly acted and directed, but when the performance finished something wholly out of the ordinary happened. The audience refused to leave the theatre without a discussion of what they had watched. The play is a brutal exposure of the distorting psychological traumas which a passion for revenge creates, and drama's shocking dissection of self-inflicted anguish spoke so powerfully to an Irish audience that to leave without the *catharsis of debate* proved too disturbing."[153]

Catharsis as *debate*. Catharsis *not* as the elimination or purgation of dangerous affect, but as the bringing of split-off and dangerous forces *es meson*—into the public realm as objects for contestation, deliberation, and identification. Such acts of "public making" bespeak a commitment to communicative fluidity where split-off and terrifying aspects of the self/polis are not denied, repressed, or pushed out of consciousness, but actively engaged and worked through. Tragedy was, for the Athenians, a "potential space" where this democratic mourning could take place.[154] The festival "held" conflicts for the polis and in turn became a reflective object of transmuting internalization.

Perhaps Athenian democracy can stand towards us as the Great Dionysia stood toward the Athenians—as a "good enough" object of democratic identification that made possible a socio-subjective work of mourning. Yet this would—at best—be one part of a complex and fluid series of practices, ideas and objects that help us to better confront and work through the myriad traumas and terrors of our own time. In the next and final chapter, I turn away

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153 Simon Goldhill, Love, Sex, and Tragedy, 222. Emphasis added.
154 Luepnitz, "Thinking in the Space between Winnicott and Lacan."

from Athens to sound out contemporary practices and spaces of mourning that might

nurture our own democratic souls.

Chapter 6: From Morning in America to Mourning in America: Barack Obama's "A More Perfect Union."

Well so now the Court has found in our favor and recognized our human psychological complexity and citizenship and another battle of the Civil War has been won…For me there is still the problem of making meaning out of the past…Anyway, here's to integration, the only integration that counts: that of the personality.

—Ralph Ellison, following *Brown v. Board of Education*[1]

People are always trying to fool themselves, for one reason or another. The trick is to know it. Everybody has a tendency to hold onto what you think you know…you don't like to have your certainties disturbed…but life is always smashing you into pieces…you pick it up and start again. And in all that I think something else begins to happen, which is…a kind of good-natured reconciliation…an awareness that everything is much vaster than you can imagine—much worse and much better.

—James Baldwin[2]

Is it possible to remain liable for the context in which such crimes had their origins and with which one's own existence is interwoven, in any way other than through the solidarity of the memory of that which cannot be made good, in any way other than through a reflective and keenly scrutinizing attitude towards one's own identity-creating traditions? Is it not possible to say in general terms: the less communality such a collective life-context allowed internally and the more it maintained itself by usurping and destroying the lives of others, the greater then is the burden of reconciliation, task of mourning, and the self-critical scrutiny of subsequent generations?

—Jürgen Habermas, "On the Public Use of History"

Where now do we stand? In this project I have argued that "mourning" should be understood explicitly as a democratic practice of coming to terms with the living historical legacies of racial trauma in the American polity, and that democratic practices and democratic theory can be evaluated, in part, by how they effectuate or disavow a work of mourning over the constitutive traumas that we have inherited and to which we are still

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[1] "'American Culture is of a Whole': From the Letters of Ralph Ellison," *The New Republic.* March 1, 1999.
[2] Quoted from 1980 television interview, available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xb_NbdeE2zU

liable. All along I have argued that psychoanalysis—and in particular the work of Melanie

Klein—is a crucial interlocutor in this conversation. Klein understood mourning in terms of

inter-subjective ego integration—an iterable process of coming to terms with and working

through the implications of traumatic loss, which helps to mitigate pathological states of

mind such as denial, splitting, and manic triumph through the acceptance of ambiguity,

admixture, and pollution in our internal and external relationships. But the value of Klein's

work far exceeds the analytic situation; it can help us to think more clearly about what Josiah

Ober has called the "democratic soul"—the psychological infrastructure necessary for life in

pluralistic democratic societies marked by violent legacies of terror and trauma.

Klein is only one interlocutor in this conversation, of course; her ideas, by themselves,

are not enough to illuminate our particular predicaments or the best way forward. For

instance, while this project was predicated on an 'inverse Socratic' method—understanding

mourning at the level of city (*polis*) by thinking about it on the level of the soul (*psuchē*)—a

central insight of Plato's *Republic* is that the just soul and the just city are mutually implicated

with and ultimately dependent on each other. The same holds true for mourning (as ego

integration), which is not, as the previous chapters have demonstrated, merely a subjective

task but a socio-political process. Orestes' public work of mourning occurs in front of the

elders of Argos, but it is codified through Athena's public negotiations with the Furies in

Athens. Orestes is able to enter into the depressive position and accept his guilt and the split

picture of realty that had pushed him to murder, but this has political resonances because

Orestes is not simply an individual but a character in a dramatic festival that served as an

occasion for a collective work of mourning. By serving as a public space of reflection on

trauma the tragedies performed at the Great Dionysia nurtured a civic identity through an

iterable process of identification with others, which facilitated the growth of what I have called, inspired by Klein, the democratic superego.

In this chapter I turn back directly to the American polis, and to the challenges of confronting and working through the living legacies of racial trauma. In particular I want to examine in detail the speech on race given by Barack Obama while he was campaigning for the presidency in the spring of 2008. Obama's "A More Perfect Union" speech was hailed as an instant classic; one critic described it as the "most significant public discussion of race in decades."[3] In this chapter I want to explore how the vocabulary developed over the preceding chapters—the democratic work of mourning, the democratic superego and "soul"—can help us to approach and understand this speech. How would we look at it if we came to see it within the conceptual terrain mapped above? I argue that Obama's speech makes possible a democratic work of mourning understood as an iterable process of identification with others beyond the veils of race draped across the polity. The speech operates as an object of identification that does not impose an unambiguous image of emulation but, instead, puts identity itself "into play." It does not demand acceptance but invites acknowledgment and ongoing reflection about how we might better understand the meaning of our past—a responsibility of "meaning-making" that, as Ralph Ellison would have it, is not lifted from our shoulders in the wake of progress but is a burden that becomes all that much heavier at these moments, in order that our triumphs do not turn into a manic forgetting, and so that our enthusiasms about winning "another battle of the Civil War" do not blind us to ongoing battles and struggles.

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[3] Janny Scott, "A Candidate Chooses Reconciliation over Rancor," *The New York Times*. March 19th, 2008.

Obama himself, like Orestes, seems to offer a democratic superego—*qua*
"assembly"—although not through the force of his personality but through the modeling of
a depressive awareness of historical and personal imperfection and moral and political
"stain." Yet, as we said about Orestes, the more important scene of identification is not
where the actor is standing, but where we—the audience—are positioned. The "More
Perfect Union" speech is attempting to initiate a wider conversation/work of mourning, but
the felicitousness of this approach depends on more than Obama's personal rhetorical skill.
It depends on a wider and deeper public commitment to addressing and working through
the living legacies of racial trauma, an invitation that is thoughtfully offered in this speech
but which is all too often refused in this country. The speech replicates the features of
classic tragedy through recognition and reversal, and models a democratic work of
mourning, but it can only have a tragic effect if the audience participates in its invocation to
an ongoing work of identification and action.

Lastly, the speech can be read as attempting to mitigate the American political
pathologies inherent to what Michael Rogin called "countersubversive demonology."[4] It
refuses the countersubversive tendency to scapegoat and demonize political foes and to
simplify the political landscape. In the terminology of the previous chapters, it is attempting
to bring us from the paranoid-schizoid position to the depressive position. The difference
between a politics of demonology and the socio-political depressive position is the distance,
we might say, between "morning in America" and *mourning* in America. Mourning in
America is the means by which we can cultivate what Habermas referred to as "a reflective

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[4] Michael Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

and keenly scrutinizing attitude" towards our "own identity-creating traditions"—and, following from this, a keenly scrutinizing attitude towards our (in)ability to face the incoherence of identity without rancor and resentment ("wounded attachment"). The larger issue is not to seek out perfect acts of remembrance or mourning but to put into circulation a *process* of mourning/integration that can bring about what James Baldwin called a "good-natured reconciliation" and an "awareness" that our histories and our identities are "much vaster" than we imagined—much worse and much better. This is the iterable work of mourning that we must do "again and again," and which is our best means of pursuing a democratic life together in the wake of a violent past that continues, doggedly, to surround us.

6.1 Reckoning, Implicature, and Mutual Understanding

First, however, we should briefly revisit the conceptual terrain as it has been mapped out in the preceding chapters, in order to apply these terms to the larger issue of racial trauma. In the first chapter, for instance, I described three interwoven and mutually implicated "psycho-political claims" issuing from the literature on Truth Commissions and most importantly the Greensboro TRC. How do these terms apply to the larger traumas surrounding race and disavowal to which Obama's speech is a partial response? How also does the language developed in subsequent chapters—of the democratic work of mourning, the democratic superego, and the democratic "soul" apply to and illuminate the challenges of facing and reflecting on these particular traumas?

6.1.1 Reckoning

Reckoning goes beyond what I referred to in the first chapter as the "civic pleasure principle"—the reluctance to examine the darker aspects of collective history due to its painful or uncomfortable nature. In the context of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we saw how cities such as Greensboro—both for financial and psychological reasons—strive to promote a positive self-conception by emphasizing unambiguously pleasant events rather than ambivalent or traumatic moments in its history. In Greensboro, for instance, the 1960 Woolworth's sit-in is lionized and seen as exemplary of the city's moderate and progressive nature, while the conditions that led to the shootout on November 3, 1979 are summarily dismissed as having little or "nothing to do with Greensboro."[5] As Allen Johnson put it, "Greensboro has trouble talking about things; Greensboro likes to talk about good stuff…Greensboro does not like to talk about bad stuff."[6] Yet this reluctance to acknowledge and work through the ugly moments in a collectivity's history amounts to what Martha Minow calls a "failure to remember" that amounts to an "ethical breach."[7]

However, this breach is not simply ethical: the failure to fully reckon with the violent episodes in a collectivity's past poisons democratic politics by structuring it on denial and disavowal, which cause misrecognitions not only about the past but about the present as well. In order to reckon with the past, and in order to better understand the present, we need to overcome habits of denial that serve to marginalize violent episodes, or that see

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[5] Of course, even the celebration of the Woolworth's sit-in requires an element of denial, given how that event only took place against great civic resistance.
[6] Quoted in "Greensboro: Closer to the Truth" (documentary). See http://www.greensborothemovie.com/
[7] Martha Minow, "Breaking the Cycles of Hatred," in *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair,* edited by Martha Minow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002)

them only as exceptions or anomalies (or messy propaedeutics to a now-just society). Reckoning, then, is the means by which supposedly peripheral events in history can be included in the organized recollections of a political community. This widens the understanding of that public history, which is no longer seen in isolation from its heretofore 'split-off' and dangerous elements. Some may respond that this work is already well underway, and the violent legacy of the color line is, of course, not an entirely repressed part of American history. Yet the *afterlife* of official discrimination continues to be split-off and denied, whether through racial resentment about amelioratory policies or through an emphasis on nonclassification or nondiscrimination in the interests of "color blind" justice. Each attitude neglects the truth that, as James Baldwin put it, "the story of the Negro in America is the story of America—or, more precisely, it is the story of Americans. It is not a very pretty story."[8]

The challenge is to sketch out the "unpretty" moments of our history and their manifold lingering effects in the present, while mitigating the mundane yet pathological tendencies to deny or to slight this history. In the analytic situation this is what Melanie Klein called the work of "forcing suffering into consciousness" in order to avoid "permanent and more fatal suffering later."[9] Analogously, we would describe this work in political terms as overcoming a civic pleasure principle that elides past traumas and blinds the public to the multiform ways in which these wounds continue to fester in the body politic. Reckoning requires public objects of reflection that bring the split-off events *es meson*—into the center of public discourse where they can be recognized and acknowledged.

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[8] James Baldwin, "Many Thousands Gone," *Notes of a Native Son* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984). Pg. 24.
[9] Melanie Klein, "Symposium on Child Analysis," *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works 1921-1945* (New York: Free Press, 1975). Pg. 144.

How does the work of reckoning apply to the issue of confronting racial trauma outside the life of a small southern city? Lawrie Balfour has argued that the movement to provide reparations for slavery is a concrete instance of "resistance to forgetting"—one element "of a larger effort to acknowledge the afterlife of past racial injustices and to eliminate racial disparities in the distribution of power and powerlessness."[10] Although the overwhelming focus of the reparations movement has been on the financial aspects of these claims, Balfour demonstrates that their normative and political appeal exceeds the frame of economic contract and brings into relief the "public forgetfulness about slavery" that has "assured liberal-minded citizens that enough [has] been done" to upend the awful legacy of enslavement and legal discrimination.[11] Such assurances promote a blithe denial that the ending of official discrimination has absolved the nation of the heaviest burdens of its past. Therefore the challenge is not to pursue reparations in order to achieve redemption (at last!) but to, as Balfour puts it, "confront the residual assumptions that sustain public silences and feed the resistance to action in matters of racial injustice."[12] For critical race scholars such as Charles Lawrence, this involves overcoming the pursuit of colorblindness that, given our contemporary racialized landscape, amounts to a more destructive form of *moral and political blindness*, and which feeds the growing phenomenon of aversive racism that keeps us from acknowledging the deep fractures that persist along the color line.[13] By focusing on

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[10] Lawrie Balfour, "Unreconstructed Democracy: W.E.B. Dubois and the Case for Reparations," *American Political Science Review*, Vol 97, No. 1 (2003).
[11] Ibid., 33.
[12] Ibid., 42. In this respect actual financial reparations for slavery might be a double-edged sword. If achieved, it would not only fuel the politics of white resentment but also enhance a structure of denial that would see the occasion as an opportunity for manic triumph (now it's finally over!).
[13] Charles R. Lawrence III, "Two View of the River: A Critique of the Liberal Defense of Affirmative Action," *Columbia Law Review* Vol. 101, No. 4 (2001). Note that Lawrence admits that the liberal defense of affirmative action (that diversity is a social good even if discrimination on the basis of race is unjustifiable) can be employed strategically by more radical critics

nondiscrimination and searching for fair and neutral principles of adjudication—and

remaining agnostic toward continuing conditions of subordination—the "conscious erasure

of race" amounts to a denial of history.[14] The work of reckoning is the work of speaking

and giving an account of this violent history. This not only can have political effects of

achieving a more just accounting of the past but *psycho-political* effects of mitigating cognitive

and emotional dogmatism that further poisons attempts to address the complicated

interweaving of tragedy and progress, denial and acknowledgment, regression and

achievement that make up the American racial narrative.

     The "Historian's Quarrel" or *Historikerstreit* in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s can

prove instructive to the American situation. A generation after the full revelation of the

horrific depths of the Nazi genocide, several German scholars and public intellectuals argued

that it was time, in effect, to "move on" from this painful legacy, to cease dwelling on a past

that was only tangentially related to the present and which served to block the normal

pathways of identification and social integration that would make Germany a powerful and

vibrant society.[15] By arguing for a broader understanding of the Nazi genocide that would

reduce the singularity of the event—by comparing, for instance, the Final Solution to other

mass atrocities in the twentieth century and by understanding Nazi policy as, in part, a

response to the threats of Bolshevism—these academics and cultural critics sought to

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as long as they insist on a long-term project of overcoming the blinders (and, necessarily, the psycho-political resistances
behind them) that plague colorblindness.

[14] Edmund Fong, "Reconstructing the 'Problem' of Race," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 61 (2008). For more on the
transition towards nonclassification and its link to the core constitutional principle of equality, see Julie Novkov,
"Rethinking Race in American Politics," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 4 (2008).

[15] See, generally, James Knowlton, *Forever in the Shadow of Hitler? Original Documents of the Historikerstreit, the Controversy
Surrounding the Singularity of the Holocaust*. Translated by Truett Cates (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International,
1993).

reestablish a circulation of identification with the larger German past in the interests of

overcoming what they perceived as a self-flagellating culture of guilt and regret. Neo-

conservative historians such as Ernst Nolte argued that a fear of being accused of a

"settlement of accounts" had paralyzed the Federal Republic, which was fixated to crimes

from the past that had little relevance for the new and unique challenges facing the polity.[16]

What followed was a succession of public and academic debates over not only the content of

the past but its weight and meaning in the present.

Leftist critics such as Jürgen Habermas argued that the historical revisionism

undertaken by neo-conservatives in the interests of national pride amounted to a willful

denial of the lingering effects of the past, and a "narcissistic" view of collective history. The

pressing question that Habermas sought to insert into this debate was whether the current

generation, raised in the wake of World War II and not directly related to its events, still bore

a responsibility—a "problem of shared liability"—to that history. Even if collective

responsibility could be laid at the feet of those lived under the Nazi regime,[17] then did

"something of this co-responsibility" transfer "to the next and the next-but-one

generation?"[18] Habermas' answer (like Ellison's with regard to slavery) is that the need to

remember the "unspeakable" events of the Holocaust actually "grows stronger with the

growing interval of time."[19] The reason is that the distance from the events serves to

obscure the common "context of life in which Auschwitz was possible" and which

continues to surround contemporary Germans—the "mesh of family, local, political and

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[16] For an updated version of this argument outside the immediate context of the Holocaust, see Pascal Bruckner, *The Tyranny of Guilt: An Essay on Western Masochism*. Translated by Steven Rendall. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
[17] Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*. Translated by E.B. Ashton. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001).
[18] Habermas, "On the Public Use of History," 44.
[19] Ibid., 43.

intellectual traditions," which comprises a "historical milieu" that has made "us what we are and who we are today."[20] As Habermas puts it, "no one among us can escape unnoticed from this milieu"—we are all touched in a myriad of unseen ways by the habitus undergirding our intellectual, cultural, and discursive lives. By reckoning with all the "subtle capillary ramifications" of this milieu we mitigate the pathologies of denial and disavowal: we "have to stand by our traditions"—their mixture of both the easily memorable and the nearly unspeakable—"if we do not want to disavow ourselves."[21] This is in direct resistance to a "narcissistic" relationship to history that serves to split-off the dark legacies of the past in the interests of a sanitized version to which we can identify without guilt or cognitive dissonance. For Habermas such approaches to the "identity-creating traditions" (and to the creation of identity through identification to a *certain* tradition) elide the importance of a "suspicious gaze made wise by…moral catastrophe." This suspicious gaze depends on a work of reckoning; it is a normative, political, and psychological burden, according to Habermas, that must be born if Germans "are able to respect [themselves] or expect respect from others."[22]

In the context of the United States, and the generations following the victories of the Civil Rights movement, Thomas McCarthy has argued for a similar work of reckoning with the legacy of slavery and segregation, which must confront and work to overcome the "politics of racial resentment" that are fed by a narcissistic insistence on a sanitized (or

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[20] Ibid., 44.
[21] Ibid., 44.
[22] Ibid., 45.

highly redacted) version of American history.[23] What neither Habermas nor McCarthy mentions directly, however, is how the work of reckoning can cultivate a civic and political identity able to better respond to the imperfections and admixtures of this history without overwhelming resentment and narcissism. Here is where the work of Melanie Klein is of explicit value; with her we might say that our attention to the split-off features of a collective history mirrors the inter-subjective task of coming to terms with loss and trauma in the depressive position. The formation of an identity/integration of an ego in the wake of this re-membered collective suffering not only serves to sensitize individuals to the particular crimes of history, but to the tendencies of denial that plague our interpersonal and political lives at almost every moment. This is the benefit of collective reckoning with a violent past that resounds beyond the particular instances of crimes, and impacts the ways we relate not only to that past but to each other in the present.

6.1.2 Implicature

Spatial and temporal "implicature" is interwoven with the work of reckoning. Implicature is the detection and acknowledgment of the "subtle capillary ramifications" that connect us to the past. Just as reckoning attempts to address and avow habits of denial, implicature mitigates the tendency to "split-off" the dangerous and the damaged into an "outside" or "other" that can be safely ignored. As we saw above, in Greensboro this involved the demonization of both the CWP and the Klan—seen as "outsiders" with no indigenous connection to the city, or as "relics" of an earlier time that held no threat for the

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[23] Thomas McCarthy, "Vergangenheitsbewaeltigung in the USA: On the Politics of the Memory of Slavery," *Political Theory*, Vol. 30, No. 5 (2002).

progressive-minded citizens of Greensboro. Yet, to cite Baldwin once again, this splitting of the event into insider/outsider, relic/vanguard rests on a "sentimental error" underlying the naïve belief "that the past is dead."[24] Splitting off the unappetizing features of our past from the positive moments is another means by which we disavow our "nonsovereignty" and refuse to "wrestle with" the ways we are embodied or implicated in a cultural, political and psychological milieu that we did not choose and is "not very pretty."[25]

Implicature reveals the powerful and yet partly unconscious interpretative framework beneath our social interactions—the circulation of fantasy, fear, and anxiety that mixes with our relationships and shades them in a variety of ways. As Joel Kovel puts it, "no one behaves simply; he is the amalgamated product of a host of historical, cultural and personal influences."[26] Racism is decidedly not an individual-level phenomenon; it persists at the fluid interstice between internal anxieties and historical and institutional patterns of abuse and discrimination. The external influences of culture and history are reworked and re-projected through the meaning-making structure of the human psyche, creating a feedback mechanism between institutional "oppression" and psychological "aversion."[27] According to Kovel, for those who are not directly targeted by oppression, the circulation between institutional and aversive racism passes the social consequences of racial trauma into invisibility and silence, bolstered by an "underground stream of race hatred" that cannot be directly articulated. Unable to tolerate the biases and hatreds inherited from the milieu of racial America, aversive racists split-off the "shadow" sides of their personalities and project them into

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[24] Baldwin, "Many Thousands Gone," 24.
[25] For more on nonsovereignty and on Baldwin "wrestling" with history see George Shulman, "James Baldwin and the Racial State of Exception," *American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).   See also Patchen Markell, *Bound by Recognition.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).
[26] Kovel, *White Racism*, 54.
[27] Ibid., 35.

socially sanctioned scapegoats and others.[28] This is part of what Michael Rogin identified as

the "countersubversive" tradition of American politics, where the dangerous and traumatic

side of the cultural and social milieu is "driven outside" as an alien force that "serves as

repository for the disowned, negative American self."[29] Countersubversive politics rest on

paranoid-schizoid splitting that serves as "psychological protection" but which offers only a

"disturbed ideology" that keeps us from confronting the malignant realities in the polity.[30]

Implicature seeks to re-connect or re-member the split-off features of history and

identity, overcoming a politics of disavowal that is sustained by the resonating forces of

oppression and aversion. For George Shulman, the disavowals stemming from this circuit

can only be arrested by, as Baldwin once put it, accepting an ambivalent inheritance that

"bears 'love and murder'."[31] This is what Eddie Glaude Jr. has called the "haunting duality"

of the American polity—the "simultaneous commitment to democratic ideals and

undemocratic practices."[32] Accepting our implication in both "love and murder" heralds an

overcoming of habits of splitting and disavowal where we forsake the ambiguity of the world

in the name of narcissistic illusions of purity. Klein's picture of inter-subjective life

effectively illuminates the many ways in which this habit of acceptance and

acknowledgement is short-circuited, but it also shows the facilitation of modes of acting and

thinking that mitigate disavowal and denial through an inter-subjective sharing of suffering,

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[28] Ibid., 12. Unlike aversive racists, "dominative" racists are in the *conscious* grip of this hatred, and see no problem with its expression. As the broader culture has shifted away from the expression of outright racial animosities and anxieties, this stream has, in Kovel's eyes, gone "underground." This explains perhaps the almost manic embrace of colorblindness and the mantra of "post-racialism" by some who oppose ameliorative efforts such as affirmative action. The conscious embrace of post-racialism may betray an unconscious anxiety about deep-seated racial biases and animosities that cannot be spoken but which finds substitute relief by the effective curtailment of efforts to address racial inequalities.

[29] Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology*, 284.

[30] Ibid., 284.

[31] Shulman, "James Baldwin and the Racial State of Exception," 158.

[32] Eddie Glaude Jr., *In a Shade of Blue* (Chicago: Univesity of Chicago Press, 2008).

pain, and loss. Learning from Klein, cultural-political efforts at addressing and working

through traumatic legacies can better attend to the overlap between the subjective and the

social—the *psyche* and the polis—in order to promote new, less pathological forms of

collective action and imagination.

6.1.3 Mutual Understanding (weak reconciliation)

Mutual understanding is the creation and legitimization of public objects and

practices of reflection and remembrance that do not "settle" the claims of history but instead

serve to, in Michael Ignaetieff's phrasing, "reduce the number of lies."[33] These practices

make available larger and more ambivalent collective history, a past "to look forward to."[34]

Mutual understanding mitigates a "triumphalist identification with history's winners" that

closes down the political center to the marginalized (or now *missing*) voices of history's

victims.[35] Correcting this imbalance through efforts at mutual understanding widens the

discursive and imaginative terrain and legitimizes voices and experiences that had been

heretofore veiled or disavowed. Mutual understanding fulfills what Habermas, following

Walter Benjamin, called "anamnestic solidarity" with those who have suffered violence and

trauma and who can no longer speak or represent themselves.[36]

The challenge for mutual understanding in the American context is, in part, the

lingering effects of "segregated memory" that resulted from *de jure* (and are now reinforced

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[33] Michael Ignatieff, "Articles of Faith," *Index on Censorship* Vol. 25, No. 5 (1996). Pg. 169.
[34] Bert Van Roermund, "Never Again: Time Frames in Anamnesis and Reconciliation," Paper presented at the fourth colloquium on Time, Law and Reconciliation, University of Johannesburg, December 2004.
[35] McCarthy, "Vergangenheitsbewaeltigung in the USA: On the Politics of the Memory of Slavery," 627.
[36] Habermas, "On the Public Use of History," 44.

by *de facto*) segregation.[37] The existence of a black counter-public had—beginning under

slavery—served as a venue for identification and connection outside the dominant white

culture. So-called "hush houses" allowed for the circulation of shared suffering and made

possible struggles of resistance that, over time, reconfigured the coordinates of the American

reality principle.[38] But old fantasies are die-hard and are often merely reborn in new forms.

For instance, the memory of mid-twentieth Civil Rights struggles is itself decidedly splintered

and segregated by race—signaling that, despite the gains made, we are far from

understanding each other and the larger milieu that gives shape to our imaginations, desires,

anxieties, and hopes.[39]

Reckoning, implicature, and mutual understanding coalesce into what, in the first

chapter, I referred to as a theory of 'weak reconciliation'. The desire for a stronger

redemptive cure for historical traumas only feeds psycho-political defense mechanisms such

as denial, splitting, and manic triumph, which spoil a more depressive work of

acknowledging ambivalence and admixture. Weak reconciliation, by contrast, heralds not

the redemption of past suffering but the (more) open acceptance of the lingering impact of

past traumas and the chronic nature of social conflict. As Cynthia Brown, one of the

commissioners of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, put it,

"reconciliation is a process…that involves putting ourselves in places with people that we

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[37] Balfour, "Unreconstructed Democracy," 33. McCarthy, "Vergangenheitsbewaeltigung in the USA: On the Politics of the Memory of Slavery," 634.
[38] Richard Peterson, "Race and Recognition," *Race, Class, and Community Identity*. Edited by Andrew Light and Mechthild Nagel. (New York: Humanity Books, 2000).
[39] Larry Griffin, "'Generations and Collective Memory' Revisited: Race, Region, and Memory of Civil Rights," *American Sociological Review*, No. 69 (2004). Citing Howard Schuman and Jacqueline Scott, "Generations and Collective Memories," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 54 (1989).

have disagreements with."[40] Doing so often pulls apart or shatters our certainties and self-perceptions, but this marks what Hanna Segal called (glossing Melanie Klein) the "evolution from an insane world determined by misperceptions into a saner world…in which conflict and ambivalence can be faced."[41] By seeing conflict as chronic we can discover better ways of living with it—ways that mitigate the denial and splitting essential to a politics of "demonology."[42] This socio-political depressive position imitates Baldwin's "good natured reconciliation" that unfreezes our awareness and presents the full vastness of our history *and* our present which is both "more worse and much better" than we had appreciated.

Baldwin spoke about the uncomfortable presence of race in the United States in terms of a "disagreeable mirror" that most Americans will spend "a great deal of energy" to avoid confronting.[43] Baldwin's essays themselves operate as a kind of disagreeable mirror, holding up the disavowed and denied—the silenced or oppressed—in order to expose *habits* of disavowal and denial in the American public. By incessantly fronting the dispossessed, Baldwin reveals their 'indigenous' nature—their relationship to larger patterns of seeing/not seeing and acting/not acting in which we are all implicated. The clearest mechanism of denial about this larger milieu in which we subsist is what Baldwin called "innocence," the fact that white Americans "do not know…and do not want to know" how they are implicated within the violence perpetuated in the black underclass.[44] As Shulman puts it, the disagreeable mirror of Baldwin's prose indicates that it is only by "coming to terms with what is tragic, not progressive, in their history [that] white citizen-subjects can move beyond

[40] Quoted in "Greensboro: Closer to the Truth" (documentary). See http://www.greensborothemovie.com/
[41] Segal, *Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 49.
[42] Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie*, xiii-xiv.
[43] James Baldwin, "White Man's Guilt," *The Price of the Ticket: Collective Nonfiction 1948-1985*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985). Pg. 408.
[44] Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, 8.

repetition and open spaces to act otherwise."[45] It involves living with identity as a

"problem" rather than seeking an authentic identity as a solution to confusion.[46]

Glenn Loury's repurposing of the Rawlsian original position seems to embody

Baldwin's concept of the disagreeable mirror:

> Put yourself in Rawls's original position and imagine that *you* occupy
> any rank in the social hierarchy…imagine that *you* could be born a
> black American male outcast shuffling between prison and the labor
> market on his way to an early death to the chorus of *nigger* or *criminal*
> or *dummy*. Suppose we had to stop thinking of *us* and *them*. What
> social rules would we pick if we actually thought that *they* could be
> *us*?[47]

Loury is asking his readers to accept the possibility of broader social responsibility

without eliminating completely the socially necessary belief in individual responsibility. As

Loury puts it, "the individual always has choices," but these choices are themselves

circumscribed by a cultural/social milieu in which all Americans are implicated and which is

held in place, we might say, by a nexus of projected anxieties and fears (about disorder and

security) and institutional interests (in a permanent underclass that provides a growing

amount of inexpensive and captive labor).[48] But this system of punishment and exploitation

depends on social decisions and desires—conscious and unconscious—to support a police

and penal apparatus that are seen "as the primary path to social hygiene."[49] Loury's response

is to offer not simply a disagreeable mirror that reminds us of the stark realities of the

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[45] Shulman, "James Baldwin and the Racial State of Exception," 140.
[46] Here Baldwin's analysis of the Nation of Islam movement is especially pertinent. See Baldwin, "Down at the Cross: Letter from a Region in My Mind," *The Fire Next Time*. (New York: Vintage, 1991). Also see Glaude, *In a Shade of Blue*, 11-19 and especially pg 16 where he discusses the "blocked grief" behind the persistent black quests for certainty that lead to a limited and limiting style of politics.
[47] Glenn Loury, "Why are so many Americans in Prison?" *Boston Review*. Vol. 32, No. 4 (2007)
[48] Keally McBride, *Punishment and Political Order: Law, Meaning, and Violence*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).
[49] Loury, "Why are so many Americans in Prison?" 9.

situation—such as the fact that "a black male resident of the state of California is more likely to go to a state prison than a state college"—or that implicates us in this system. Loury also seems to offer a 'mirror stage' of democratic development. As he puts it, "who can honestly say—who can look in the mirror and say with a straight face—that we now have laws and policies that we would endorse if we did not know our own situation and genuinely considered the possibility that we might be the least advantaged?"[50] The disagreeable mirror becomes an occasion and a space for self/social examination—an occasion for reckoning, implicature, and mutual understanding, for reflecting on and "keenly scrutinizing" our identity-forming traditions and habits as a means of addressing the gap between the promise of democracy and the (almost unmitigated) history of broken promises.

6.2 The Democratic Work of Mourning, the Democratic Superego, and the Democratic Soul.

Reckoning, implicature, mutual understanding, weak reconciliation—the "mirror stage" of democratic development in the face of deep-seated inequalities and traumas—together these comprise what I have been calling the "democratic work of mourning." Through the preceding engagements with Freud, Klein, Butler, Rawls, and the Athenian polis I have argued for a conception of mourning as an iterable process of identifying with others through a socio-political version of the depressive position, whereby collective traumas and sacrifices can be worked through in a (more) open and less pathological manner. The democratic work of mourning involves spaces and practices of reflecting on loss and trauma in order to cultivate and nurture a democratic/civic identity that mitigates

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[50] *Ibid.*, 10.

both what Baldwin calls racial "innocence" and what Michael Rogin calls "countersubversive demonology." Both innocence and demonology refuse awareness of—and a "good natured reconciliation" to—the cultural/discursive/political milieu or terrain in which we interact and come to consciousness within. The democratic work of mourning, then, involves detecting the resonances between the "subtle capillary ramifications" along this milieu as they inter-penetrate, push, and are pushed *by* the rich meaning-making structure of the psyche. It is, moreover, the location and generation of institutions and habits of interaction that can mitigate the tendencies to ignore or repress the capillary ramifications and resonances between our internal lives and external circumstances. As Fred Alford puts it, such institutions and practices would "encourage individuals to refrain from alienating the most troublesome and scary parts of themselves in others."[51] They are also institutions that can encourage a "re-integration" of the split-off features of our self and of the polity, through the development of an identity in a modified version of Klein's depressive position.

Identity in this light is considered less a timeless possession than a precarious achievement dependent on iterable identifications with plural others that mitigate paranoid-schizoid compromises and defense mechanisms such as splitting, idealization, and manic triumph. As was said in chapter two, in the wake of Klein new, more democratic possibilities for subjectivity seem opened up—identity capable of escaping Nietzsche's "secret melancholy" of the "it was" through an iterable process of identification *with* the "it was." Instead of suffering from a twisted will that "gnashes its teeth" at the unwilled and immovable stone of the past, we could come to a more conscious acceptance and awareness

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[51] Alford, *Group Psychology and Political Theory*, 139.

of this past—seeing the "it was" (*Es war)* as part of Freud's "so I will become" (*soll Ich werden*). Better able to bear suffering, the mourning subject is more capable of accepting ambiguous identity—and an iterable process of identification that keeps such identities alive—without resentment or rancor. Klein's work gives us the vocabulary for thinking about the subject (or, better, the citizen) beyond the melancholic compromises of wounded attachment (fixation) or amnesia (forgetting).

As I described in the previous chapter, ego integration through the iterable work of mourning involves a variety of subjective and socio-subjective tasks: the internalization of our objects of attachment (creating an internal "assembly" of whole, ambivalent objects); the mitigation of pathological states of mind such as idealization (and its obverse, demonization), splitting, and manic triumph; the maintenance of communication between internal and external realities (and the maintenance of possible lines of communication between the conscious and the unconscious—or "split-off"—parts of the self); and, finally—the struggle of which these others are a derivation—the integration of the life and death instincts manifest in the outsized passions of love and hate that pull against each other and threaten to overwhelm us. This contentious and precarious picture of subjective life— stretched across a field of polarities and beset by ambiguity, tension and struggle—means that "integration" names a perpetual aspiration more than an settled achievement. But this is an aspiration worth having and pursuing, and it requires the mutually supportive appearances of the democratic superego and the democratic soul.

6.2.1 Democratic Superego

The democratic superego includes the norms and practices that honor trauma and provide scenes of reckoning and acknowledgement. More importantly, however, is that these norms and practices—in becoming objects of identification—put identity as such into play and "populate" the superego with a plural assembly of objects that keep the internal chorus from flattening out into a melancholic voice of cruel declaration and discipline. The "no-saying" of the democratic superego is directed not so much against the unruly or discontented desire of the narcissistic libido (this itself is understood as a fantasy subsisting on paranoid-schizoid splitting) but against the pathological compromises of *frozen* identification and identity, and the structure of denial and disavowal on which these compromises are built. The democratic superego, in Klein's language, operates not as a cruel voice of admonishment but as a helpful guide; it does not resolve the dilemmas of inter-subjective life but gives the subject the "breathing space" necessary to work through these conflicts and—what is even more important, perhaps—to avoid repressing these conflicts or denying their existence in the first place.[52]

In the previous chapter I argued that Orestes achieved the democratic superego at the close of the *Libation Bearers* and that Athens/Athena achieved it at the close of the *Eumenides*. Orestes' moment of sympathetic identification with the heretofore-demonized Clytaemnestra—"Hold, my son"—marked the repopulation (re-assembly or re-membrance) or his superego, which allowed him to overcome the melancholic cycle of denial and disavowal that had cursed the House of Atreus. It did not, of course, absolve him of the burden of judgment nor the necessity of action, nor did it resolve or redeem the cycle of

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[52] On breathing space see Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology," 45.

violence in the polis ("there is trouble here; there is more to come"). Instead Orestes overcame his progenitors' manic triumph ("this victory is soiled") and commenced a work of mourning that, I would argue, began the process of re-integrating the split-off Furies (Orestes is the first person to see the Furies; the chorus remains oblivious). This work of mourning continued at Athens, where Orestes' democratic superego was given a larger, collective instantiation as Athena/Athens committed itself to holding and bearing the split-off "terror" of the Furies. The end of the trilogy marks less a triumph of light over darkness and the new gods over the old but a moment or pause—"hold, my polis"—that undoes fantasies of pleonexia through the acceptance of pollution and ambivalence. The polis—both on stage and surrounding the stage—becomes a reflecting object of identification that puts identity into circulation (which is where it always already is); an object, that through depressive acknowledgment of its own imperfections and ambiguities, keeps identity alive and in play.

6.2.2 The Democratic Soul

The democratic work of mourning also nurtures what Josiah Ober calls the "democratic soul"—the "moral psychology, ethical judgment, conceptions of justice and law that is appropriate to the democratic citizen."[53] Greek tragedy, through a process of making the strange familiar and the familiar strange, nurtured a "strong-minded" acceptance and acknowledgment of ambiguity in inter-subjective and social life—a 'counter-countersubversive' welcoming of the idea that "subversive" characters might actually be

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[53] Ober, *Athenian Legacies*, 129.

right (or at least that there is no way to know if this is the case without allowing the subversive voice *es meson*, without allowing it a space for articulation). Democratic souls, then, share a commitment to being "unsettled" because they share the "good-natured reconciliation" that life is much vaster than they had imagined—a practice or habit (paradoxical, perhaps) of being *surprised*. This involves the capacity to accept the fact that, as Baldwin puts it, "life is always smashing us to pieces," which disturbs and mitigates the psychological mode of functioning in which unblemished and unbroken ideals are required. When the split-off and dangerous parts of the self are integrated and accepted, the idealized heroes who are needed to fend off such monsters will themselves wither away.

Would the appearance—perhaps fantastical—of the democratic soul eliminate political and inter-subjective conflict? Is this simply a new version of Rawls' "realistic utopia"—or of an inverse Callipolis where philosopher kings are supplanted by analyst Queens? Hardly. At its best the democratic work of mourning heralds an iterable process of coming to terms with the traumatic milieu of our inter-subjective and political lives—the endless task of getting clear about our social conflicts and mitigating (as best we are able) both the pathological politics of demonology and the social conditions that make demonological claims felicitous.[54] The democratic work of mourning does not reduce the political to the therapeutic, nor it does not eliminate the need to understand the role that interest politics, class struggle, discrimination, and oppression play in our social world. Rather it focuses our attention on the oft-neglected intertwinement between the *psyche* and

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[54] The existence of a (permanent) underclass is obviously one such condition. Here is how Malolm X put it: "I think that an objective reader may see how in the society to which I was exposed as a black youth here in America…the life of the ghetto-created Negro…that when I heard 'the white man is the devil,' when I played back what had been my experiences, it was inevitable that I would respond positively." *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, 265.

the polis, and the experiences of trauma, fear, anxiety and hope that dance across this interstitial space at every moment of our lives.

6.3 'A More Perfect Union' and the Democratic Work of Mourning

On March 18, 2008, owing to the controversy surrounding his pastor, Jeremiah Wright of the Trinity United Church of Christ on the south side of Chicago, Barack Obama delivered a speech at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. The address, which has come to be known as the "A More Perfect Union" speech, caused an immediate stir, being hailed as the "most significant public discussion of race in decades."[55] A plethora of interpretations were immediately offered, comparing Obama's rhetoric to that Lincoln[56] and King, Jr.,[57] and interpreting Obama himself in light of Dubois' "double consciousness," Machiavelli's prince, Weber's genuine political man, and even Levinas's "face of the Other."[58] The speech itself flits into and out of a variety of traditions, but it is Obama's passing invocation of psychoanalysis and Freud's *Durcharbeiten* ("the complexities of race that we've never really worked through") that interests me here. How does this speech act as a democratic work of mourning, in the terms developed above? How does it invite its audience to a work of reckoning with, and reconciling themselves to, a violent traumatic legacy of race that continues to manifest itself in the present? How does it initiate a process

[55] Janny Scott, "A Candidate Chooses Reconciliation over Rancor."
[56] Garry Wills, "Two Speeches on Race," *The New York Review of Books*. May 1, 2008.
[57] T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, "Chloroform Morning Joe!" *The Speech: Race and Barack Obama's 'A More Perfect Union'*. Edited by T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting. (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009).
[58] Robert E. Terril, "Unity and Duality in Barack Obama's 'A More Perfect Union'. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Vol 95, No. 4 (2000). George Shulman, "Civil Religion, Prophecy, and Obama," *The Immananet Frame: Secularism, Religion, and the Public Sphere* (internet site). http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/2009/06/11/civil-religion-prophecy-and-obama/. David Frank, "The Prophetic Voice and the Face of the Other in Barack Obama's 'A More Perfect Union' Address, March 18, 2008." *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. Vol. 12, No. 2. (2009).s

of identification in the wake of this trauma that cultivates a democratic superego *qua*

assembly? How does it counter the pathological politics of demonology and disavowal? In

the next section, I fill in the answers to these questions.[59]

The occasion for the speech was the incessant and incendiary *parrhesia* of Reverend

Wright, which was in perpetual loop on a number of television stations and other media

outlets. Parts of Wright's sermons had been excised and were circulating in the popular

media, and many inside and outside the Obama campaign felt that the candidate had to

repudiate and condemn the oftentimes-heated rhetoric of his preacher.[60] In this speech

Obama did distance himself from elements of Wright's rhetoric, which "expressed a

profoundly distorted view of this country," but "A More Perfect Union" is perhaps more

remarkable for the extent to which Obama goes to *explain* Wright's comments to a broader

audience.[61] Obama returns to Wright's prophetic speech not only to disparage its

"divisiveness," but also to contextualize it within a tradition of the black church. Moving

beyond the "caricature" of Wright, Obama declares that the counter-public of the black

church has allowed and continues to allow its congregants to "reclaim memories that we

didn't need to feel shame about…memories that all people might study and cherish—and

with which we could start to rebuild."[62] The breathing space provided in these counter-

[59] In what follows I resist the temptation to bring in other speeches or writings of Obama, focusing instead on the "A More Perfect Union" speech rather than the speaker himself. I am less interested in seeing Obama himself as a model for the democratic work of mourning than in interpreting this one speech in that light. As such I won't have much to say here about Obama's previous or subsequent mentions of race, or moments where the issue was pressed upon him (such as the so-called "beer summit").

[60] For Wright's inclusion within a tradition of American prophecy, see Shulman, "Civil Religion, Prophecy, and Obama," and *American Prophecy*. For an account of the internal debates about Wright in the Obama campaign, see Niall Strange, *Redemption Song: Barack Obama, from Hope to Reality*. (Dublin: Liberties Press, 2009).

[61] See Cornel West on American pragmatism's role of "explaining America to itself." *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

[62] Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union." Reprinted in *The Speech: Race and Obama's 'A More Perfect Union'*. Edited by T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009).

publics represents a necessary reprieve from the stigma attached to race by the larger cultural

and political realities of American society. As the outspoken pastor of Trinity United,

Jeremiah Wright embodied the inherent ambivalence of this counter-public, the "kindness

and cruelty…the struggles and successes…the love and yes, the bitterness and bias that

make up the black experience in America."[63] Wright "contains within him the

contradictions…of the community that he has served…"[64] Yet this experience and these

contradictions are 'split-off' from the broader public—"jarring" to the "untrained ear" of

mainstream American society—reflecting a broad social ignorance and innocence about the

black experience that, despite denials and disavowals, is deeply "a part of America." Yet this

is "a part" that Obama (and, it is implied, his audience as well) "cannot disown." By refusing

to carry forward the social disavowal of Wright and the contradictory and bitter experience

of the African American community, Obama offers instead an interweaving narrative that

integrates the heretofore excluded into the larger conversation. In fact Obama offers himself

as a sign of the need to publicly engage the split-off and marginalized tradition of which

Wright is a part: Obama, like Wright, contains multitudes or contradictions within his "own

American story"—he is "the son of a white woman from Kansas and a black man from

Kenya," and is married to a woman "who carries within her the blood of slaves and

slaveowners—an inheritance we pass on to our two precious daughters."[65] The mixed

inheritances of America, differently embodied by Obama and Wright but disavowed by the

"untrained" ears in the American public must be acknowledged as part of the common

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[63] *Ibid.*, 242.
[64] *Ibid.*, 242.
[65] *Ibid.*, 238.

project of moving "towards a better future."[66] Obama juxtaposes Wright's jeremiads to his maternal grandmother's casual racism, gradually filling in the picture beyond caricature and stereotype. This is a work of reckoning, of unveiling divisions and disparities and weaving together the various strands into a story of the American people, which, as Baldwin was wont to remind us, is "not a pretty story."

For Obama the story—"the improbable experiment in democracy"—begins (as does the speech) with the Constitution, which "made real" the colonists' declaration of independence but was "stained" by the "nation's original sin of slavery."[67] The fact that Obama begins with the Constitution is noteworthy when juxtaposed with Lincoln's Gettysburg address, which marked the Declaration of 1776—and its "proposition that all men are created equal"—and *not* the Constitution of 1787 as the founding moment of the republic. Lincoln's deft redirection established a principle of equality at the root of the American democracy, and by elevating the Declaration of Independence over the Constitution he emphasized (or, rather, *performed*) unity over the discord and division of the Civil War. Obama—while speaking the language of unity—instead directs his audience's gaze *not* towards the unanimously shared proposition that "all men are created equal" but towards the ambivalent and "stained" legacy of the Constitution. This ambivalence is marked, moreover, not only by the traumatic history of enslavement, but also by the essential futurity of a document that, according to its preamble, is dedicated to establishing "a more perfect union." Each moment—the original sin and the futurity of a republic in perpetual becoming—does not eliminate or read out the other, but establishes a "gap" that

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[66] *Ibid.*, 238.
[67] *Ibid.*, 237.

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must be continually addressed. Obama introduces this gap and simultaneously invokes the centuries of "protest and struggle, on the streets and in the courts…and always at great risk" that has avowed, revealed, and attempted to "narrow" the gap between "the promise of our ideals and the reality of their time."[68] By avowing the centuries of disruption and protest, Obama does not limit American democracy-in-becoming to the "Fathers'" original vision, but rather emphasizes that the "experiment" carries within itself the possibility of its own overcoming—that the terms of the past can be reconfigured in the name of a "more perfect" future, through a work that is carried on by each passing generation but which is not carried lightly or without sacrifice but, again, "always at great risk."

The possibility of what Lincoln called "a new birth of freedom" and what Obama refers to as the "perfection" of America is rooted in "A More Perfect Union" to the task of understanding the ways in which we are implicated in a past that—as Obama reminds us, quoting Faulkner—"isn't dead and buried…[that] isn't even past."[69] The "stain" of slavery continues to have poisonous effects in the present. Obama, shifting from the active voice of his first-person narrative into a passive voice of dispassionate analysis, traces a genealogy of the "complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through."[70] Moving into a descriptive mode, Obama embodies both a Freudian reality principle ("understanding this reality requires a reminder of how we arrived as this point") and a disagreeable mirror, both of which serve to counter fantastical denials and implicate the contemporary polity in the disparities subsisting along the color line—disparities that "can be directly traced to inequalities passed on from an earlier generation that suffered under the brutal legacy of

[68] *Ibid.*, 238.
[69] *Ibid.*, 243.
[70] *Ibid.*, 243.

slavery and Jim Crow."[71] Obama connects a variety of contemporary maladies to their roots

in the past: a "pervasive achievement gap" tied to the legacy of segregated schools; a "wealth

and income gap" tied to histories of official and unofficial discrimination; a lack of basic

services tied to a cycle of "blight and neglect."[72] Obama does not, moreover, mitigate the

unsettling facts of these matters through the invocation of redemptive promise; rather he

acknowledges that "there were many who didn't make it" or who were "defeated" by this

history. Those who were not defeated were still justifiably embittered by the experiences of

humiliation and suffering, and this bitterness and anger persist just below the surface in the

counter-public spaces of the black community: the anger "may not get expressed in

public…but it does find voice in the barbershop or around the kitchen table."[73] Obama is

asking his audience to recognize and acknowledge this bitter legacy that manifests itself

along the 'subtle capillary ramifications' of American society, and, by arguing that the living

traumatic legacies surrounding race are "a part of America," Obama is challenging the

innocence of those who would slight the issue.   Such innocence not only "distorts reality"

by simplifying and stereotyping the issues surrounding race, but it is complicit in a morally

culpable system of disavowal and "neglect," which has fed a cycle of violence and cruelty

and helped to create the current injustices that we face.

The genealogy of racial injustice and violence in "A More Perfect Union" models the

possibility of a greater mutual understanding between the disparate parts of the larger

American public. Obama avows not only the social disparities between black and white, but

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[71] *Ibid.*, 243.
[72] Each "gap" in this series is also an invocation of the original "gap" that was opened by the split founding with which
Obama started—the irresolvable ambivalence of a Constitution that promised a "more perfect society" and perpetuated a
"stained" social order.
[73] *Ibid.*, 244.

he also avows the segregated memories and life experiences that have served to keep these

disparities *es anonymia*—excluded from public discourse. In effect Obama acknowledges not

only social 'gaps' but also a *discursive* gap—the lack of a language for discussing race given the

"untrained" ears on all sides. Here Obama goes beyond the disagreeable mirror stage and

models a way of speaking about the contentious issues surrounding race: an approach that

oscillates between the personal and the social and that interweaves the segregated past with

the present in a way that complicates rather than simplifies the narrative. In fact, the *national*

story is complicated by the speech's insistence on remembering both the irreducible "stain"

of slavery and the iterated ambivalence of promise/broken promise that destabilizes and

disrupts any unambiguous scripting of American identity. The speech, by putting "the

complexities of race" into the circulation of public discourse, is essentially cathartic, not

because it offers a ritualistic cleansing or redemption of a stained polity but because it

exposes the unsettling traumas of the polis. Doing so makes possible a wider self-

understanding within the American public through a process of working through that might

undo the repetition compulsion of "unproductive" anger and resentment.[74]

Catharsis is not the only tragic element in "A More Perfect Union." Obama offers

the haunting specter of those "defeated" and embittered by discrimination as a scene of

suffering, and he also employs the tropes of recognition and reversal. Obama's detailed

tracing of the manifold ways in which the "past is not past" and his filling-in of the

"caricature" of Wright and the black church gradually bring the segregated experiences of

different communities to light, reminding us of Sophocles' protracted unveiling of Oedipus'

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[74] As Bakari Kitwana reads it, Obama's speech (and the "Obama generation") embodies the possibility that we "aren't psychologically bound by the racial caste system of the past." "Between Expediency and Conviction," *The Speech: Race and Obama's 'A More Perfect Union'.* Edited by T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting. (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009). Pg. 95.

traumatic past.[75] The speech brings the anger and bitterness of the black community *es meson* and insists on its brute facticity: the "anger is real…it is powerful" and we cannot "wish it away" without widening the discursive "chasm" that exists between the races. As Aristotle understood it, recognition was the means by which the tragic poet brought about "a change from ignorance to knowledge."[76] Obama attempts to transcend the ignorance about the black counter-public that was demonstrated by the fact "that so many people are surprised to hear" the anger exemplified by Wright's jeremiads.

Yet Obama does not his restrict the effects of the disagreeable mirror to a forced acknowledgement and recognition by the white members of his audience. After enfranchising and publicizing the anger and *parrhesia* of Reverend Wright, and re-membering the traumatic legacy to which it is connected, Obama enacts a certain reversal where bitterness in the black community is juxtaposed to the private utterances of "segments of the white community" whose "anger" and "resentment" have "shaped the political landscape for at least a generation."[77] This resentment also cannot be dismissed or wished away, but must be contextualized within "legitimate concerns" about social mobility and economic displacement and uncertainty. This reversal does not draw a line of equivalence between black and white anger, but widens, we might say, the scope of American innocence, which is a (colorblind) malady of simplifying and stereotyping that entraps us within "a racial stalemate [in which] we've been stuck…for years."[78]

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[75] An unveiling which Freud himself likened to the process of analytic working through: "the Athenian dramatist exhibits the way in which the long-past deed of Oedipus is gradually brought to light by an investigation…fanned into life by ever fresh relays of evidence. To this extent it has a certain resemblance to the progress of a psycho-analysis" *Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis*, 410.

[76] Aristotle, *Poetics*, Book XI.

[77] Obama, "A More Perfect Union," 245.

[78] *Ibid.*, 245.

Obama goes further in the final section of his speech, when he rejects the "cynicism that tells us" that "those kids who don't look like us are somebody's else's problem." Here Obama—in a move that would have pleased Aristotle—*combines* recognition with reversal, when, in an almost Oedipal moment, he claims that "the children of America are not *those* kids…they are *our* kids."[79] The speech invokes a broader American public that would be responsible for—and responsive to—the disparate life experiences of "our kids." The combination of recognition and reversal gives the speech a deep resonance across the transferential "battlefield" of American politics—it counters regnant fantasies of disavowal and denial, but it does not do so at the expense of idealization or demonization; Obama acknowledges a great American "hunger" for the "message of unity" but he does not allow such unity to be purchased at the price of a simple present or a non-tragic past. Obama challenges not only his audience's ignorance but also their morally culpable innocence by, in the words of Robert Terril, "raising the image of the damned while lowering the conceit of the self-righteous."[80] Through a complex pattern of interwoven moments, the speech avows the disparate parts of the American polity while articulating an aspirational "experiment" in democracy where these differences can be discursively worked through—even if the constitutive gap opened by the ambivalent founding can never be redeemed or eliminated but only "narrowed" through the iterable process of perfection. The foundation of this perfection (understood as a verb and a vocation rather than a reachable destination) is something akin to Baldwin's "good-natured reconciliation;" it is an awareness that our

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[79] Obama, "A More Perfect Union," 248.
[80] Robert E. Terril, "Unity and Duality in Barack Obama's 'A More Perfect Union'." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Vol 95, No. 4 (2009).

notions of history and identity are too small and narrow, and that they too often persist

through a denial of contradiction and complexity that cut across the American body.

"A More Perfect Union" does not only invite a tragic reckoning through implicature,

which in turn forms the basis of mutual understanding and a good-natured reconciliation to

the traumatic core of the American polity. It also models the possibility of a democratic

work of mourning—understood as an iterable process of identification in a socio-political

depressive position that cultivates the democratic superego and the democratic 'soul'. The

speech begins by asserting an irreducible ambivalence to the polity's founding—an origin

that, in Baldwin's terms, bears "love and murder." The awareness of this fact is akin to the

dawning of Klein's depressive position, in which our inter-subjective life takes on an added

poignancy and complexity through the acceptance of admixture and "pollution" in our

internal and external relationships. In facing and working through the "stain" of a traumatic

history that continues to exert pressure on the present we can, argues Obama, nurture habits

of speaking and acting with others that can undo the racial repetition compulsion and move

us "beyond some of our old racial wounds."[81] Obama models the vulnerability inherent to

such habits—the willingness to expose our weakness to the other by engaging with them in

actions that bear "great risk"—by accepting his own ambivalence and imperfection, and by

tempering "naïve" enthusiasms that we can "get beyond our racial divisions in a single

election cycle."[82] Obama evokes the Chorus of Argive elders at the close of the *The Libation

Bearers* with his acceptance that the "stained" past is not past and that it will continue to have

effects into the foreseeable future ("there is trouble here; there is more to come"). He also

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[81] Obama, "A More Perfect Union," 246.
[82] *Ibid.*, 246.

evokes Orestes by accepting his ambivalent (personal and political) inheritance and bearing the consequences of his actions even as he acknowledges the broader history of struggle and trauma that has made his actions ("my story") possible. Like the divine curse of the House of Atreus, this historical inheritance of "love and murder" cannot be disavowed but must be "reclaimed" and "embraced." The larger American public must imitate the black counter-public by taking up—"studying and cherishing"—its traumatic and ambivalent past; this past becomes in such light a tragic legacy on which "we could start to rebuild" if we can accept and bear its pain and terror.

"A More Perfect Union"—and the ambivalent past it invokes and performs—becomes an object of identification within a depressive awareness of a vast inheritance bearing both "love and murder." But the speech denies a fantasy of incorporation that would read out either the love *or* the murder; it is a reflecting object that, through transmuting internalization, re-populates the democratic superego—with objects of shame *and* esteem, legacies of defeat *and* progress, an ineliminable futurity that calls us to a vocation of perfection *and* a stained history that tethers this futurity to a living legacy of broken promises and shattered lives. The speech, like the democratic superego, does not impose an identity so much as it puts identity *into play*, and it does this in four particular ways. First, it widens the range of identifications within the American story—an "assembly" that includes not only Jeremiah Wright but also Rush Limbaugh, which includes blacks "defeated" and embittered by discrimination and whites resentful and angry about the course of their own lives. This expansion of the American narrative does not, again, draw a line of equivalence between black suffering and white resentment, but it avows the discomforting and unsettling forces in the polity that cannot be "wished away" or dismissed without understanding the

context and the disparate stories from which they have emerged. Obama's speech sets the terms of a more capacious and ongoing practice of democratic identification through its invocation of this unruly and agonistic assembly of voices.

Secondly, by reminding the audience of his own mixed heritage—the story "that hasn't made me the most conventional of candidates"—Obama signals the possibility of moving beyond wounded identities that can only locate themselves in the "conventional" understandings of the past.[83] The message of the speech is literally embodied in its bi-racial speaker. Yet, thirdly, this speech does not demand an *imitatio Obama*; instead Obama defers and displaces a disciplinary emulation through admission of "imperfection" and ambivalence. Despite the central presence of his bi-racial body and unique American story, the speech consistently distances the audience from the speaker—through the dispassionate genealogy, the insistence that the individual stories are connected to larger historical forces, and the closing story where his candidacy becomes an occasion for a scene of recognition and identification that exceeds the candidate himself, who is merely background:

> There is a young, 23-year-old white woman named Ashley Baia who organized for our campaign in Florence, South Carolina. She had been working to organize a mostly African-American community since the beginning of this campaign, and one day she was at a roundtable discussion where everyone went around telling their story and why they were there…finally they come to this elderly black man who's been sitting quietly the entire time. And Ashley asks him why he's there. And he does not bring up a specific issue…he does not say that he was there because of Barack Obama. He simply says to everyone in the room, 'I am here because of Ashley.'[84]

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[83] In Dream From My Father, Obama recalls his dissatisfaction and discomfort with the discursive tools of wounded identity: "Sometimes I would find myself talking to Ray about 'white folks' this or 'white folks' that, and I would suddenly remember my mother's smile, and the words that I spoke would seem awkward and false.
[84] *Ibid.*, 250.

By ending the speech with this story, Obama signals beyond his imperfect, ambivalent self in order to refuse an idealized incorporation by an American public "hungry" for a "message of unity." The message (or messenger) improperly received would flatten out the democratic superego *qua* assembly and would sound the death knell for democratic identity.[85]

Lastly, Obama expands and re-populates the democratic superego by recognizing its origins in a mixed legacy of trauma and terror—a stain that rebukes the pathological compromises of idealization and the structure of disavowal on which these compromises are founded. Moreover, by emphasizing the essential futurity of the republic-in-becoming alongside (and tethered to) this stained inheritance, Obama avows and incites a perpetual project of perfection set off by an ineliminable gap between the promises of the Constitution and the constitutive history of broken promises. The ambivalence of the promise/broken promise creates a dissonant vibration that keeps identity in play, as long as we acknowledge and work through and within (but never fully "beyond") this dissonance.[86]

6.4 Countersubversive Demonology and the Democratic Soul

The importance of Obama's speech comes to light in juxtaposition to what Michael Rogin called the "countersubversive" tradition of American politics that reached its apex,

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[85] During the early months of his campaign Obama gave a speech to 13,000 people at an arena in Baltimore. After his speech the crowd began to chant, "it's your time…it's your time." As Niall Stanage records it, Obama seemed taken aback. He hesitated, and smiled a bit uncertainly. Then he recovered. 'It's *your* time.' He told the crowd, stressing the middle word like a teacher delivering a gentle correction." *Redemption Song*, 9.

[86] Like Klein, Hans Loewald held that the superego was less a fixed institution in the psyche than a "structure" that endures through a never-ending process of internalization/identification—a "functional pattern of introjection" (quoting Samuel Novey). Loewald, "Internalization, Separation, Mourning and the Superego," *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*. Vol. 31 (1962)

perhaps, with the presidency of Ronald Reagan.[87] According to Rogin, countersubversives

disavow the traumatic and troubling parts of the self and the nation; they deny "the identity

between themselves and their shadow sides."[88] Stuck in the paranoid-schizoid position and

unable to bear their implication in inter-subjective (and historical) "love and murder,"

countersubversives split the world into the forces of good and evil and "trace all troubles at

home and abroad to a conspiratorial center."[89] Paranoid-schizoid splitting creates an

idealized source of unambiguous identification (the "homeland" or other spots "we dream

of and want to go home to"[90]), but does so only by excluding and disavowing the

nightmarish features of these places. These nightmares cannot be borne, and so they are

projected out into an alien or scapegoat, who "serves as repository for the disowned,

negative American self" and "preserves American identity against fears of boundary

collapse."[91] Unable to face and acknowledge what it fears, the countersubversive

nevertheless remains tethered to the fantastical objects of its projective identification. What

is disavowed or denied persists as the repressed:

> Countersubversive politics—in its Manichean division of the world;
> its war on local and partial loyalties…its invasiveness and fear of
> boundary invasion; its fascination with violence; and its desire to
> subordinate political variety to a dominant authority—imitates the
> subversion it attacks.

For Rogin, countersubversives are not individually or personally disturbed, but are

rather the victims of a "disturbed ideology" that turns political contestation into a

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[87] Michael Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie.*
[88] *Ibid.*, 10.
[89] *Ibid.*, 8.
[90] The quote is from Reagan, discussing "a little place on the Duck River, Dixon, Illinois." *Ibid.*, 19.
[91] *Ibid.*, 284.

Manichean struggle of the virtuous against the benighted. Demonological politics breed a

hunger for a strong leader who can "stand against the hidden power and chaotic violence."[92]

Unable to tolerate an unsettled reality and the precariousness of an identity that is

perpetually in play, countersubversives allay the fear of boundary collapse by accepting a

merger of identities with the "political hero."[93] The countersubversive leader, in turn,

attracts allegiance by claiming that the "real" nation "speaks through him." Excising or

justifying the traumatic legacies of the past, the political hero insists on an idealized and false

history that, it is said, heralds an even brighter future. Unmoored from the tragic past, the

futurity of the nation is an unblemished force-in-becoming. Famously, in the

countersubversive imaginary, it is always "morning in America."[94]

The disparate life experiences of manifold counter-publics across the American body

politic, and the "stained" history in which we are perpetually swimming, are purged through

a countersubversive demonological politics that cannot tolerate admixture or ambivalence.

As Garry Wills said of the Reagan era: "Americans…had an extraordinary tacit bargain with

each other not to challenge Reagan's version of the past…the power of his appeal is a great

joint confession that we cannot live with our real past, that we not only prefer but need a

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[92] *Ibid.*, 293.
[93] *Ibid.*, 293.
[94] In the 1984 presidential campaign the slogan "Morning in America" was prominently featured in Reagan's re-election bid. One commercial had the following script: "It's morning again in American, and under the leadership of President Reagan our country is prouder, and stronger, and better. Why would we ever want to return to where we were…?" Accompanying the voiceover are images of people looking up in open-mouthed awe at the American flag. Even more demonstrative of the countersubversive spirit is the commercial entitled, "The Bear," in which ominous music (and a drumbeat mimicking an increasingly accelerating heart-rate) accompanies the following script: "There is a bear in the woods…for some people, the bear is easy to see; others don't see it at all. Some say the bear is tame; others say it is vicious, and dangerous. Since no one can really be sure who is right, isn't it smart to be as strong as the bear—*if there is a bear*?" It's hard to understanding the final clause ("if there is a bear") except perhaps as a slip that reveals the paranoia at the root of the ad. The bear stood as an obvious metaphor for the Soviet Union ("the evil empire"), but it is puzzling to end with the possibility that the bear does not exist. Perhaps it betrays a certain uncertainty or anxiety that cannot fully be spoken, lest the supposed strength of the figure that stands opposite the bear (featured in the last frame of the ad) lose its mythic heroic status.

substitute."[95] For Rogin, the countersubversive hero, in making their claim for "spiritual embodiment" of the people, "is not simply subordinating differences but obliterating them."[96] As a result the leader "disempowers the community in whose name he speaks."[97] The body politic is constituted through subjection to the idealized leader/hero, and political participation is merely virtual or vicarious.

In "A More Perfect Union," Obama refuses the terms of the countersubversive tradition that, as Rogin sees it, are "at the core of American politics, not its periphery."[98] By integrating the parts of the body politic that are 'split-off' under the paranoid-schizoid duress of demonological politics, Obama reconfigures the discursive landscape and widens the range of possible identifications that compose the fractious and ambivalent collective narrative. By pointing both to his "imperfect" self (and beyond it), Obama signals the possibility of a capacious national subject that would not obliterate differences or the "stain" of a traumatic history but accept and continuously work through and within this polluted legacy. Finally, by modeling a sympathetic doubling of perspective—both as a personal habit and a political style—Obama bends his audience away from incorporative "hunger" for ideal models and towards a depressive acceptance of ambivalence. The speech is a work of mourning that puts into a circulation a process of iterable identification that mitigates a politics of disavowal, denial, and melancholic attachment. Its success or felicity, of course,

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[95] Garry Wills, *Reagan's America: Innocents at Home*. (New York: Doubleday, 1986). For more on the connection between Reagan's futurity and his idealized version of American history, see Sheldon Wolin, "Collective Identity and Constitutional Power," *The Presence of the Past*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).
[96] Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie.*, 295.
[97] *Ibid.*, 295. Yet because the terms of this disempowerment are vicarious participation in the leader's power, there are psychological reasons for *preferring* disempowerment to the risks of collective empowerment, which requires engagements with actual, ambivalent others. Disempowerment serves to shore up the protected boundaries of the paranoid-schizoid 'soul'.
[98] *Ibid.*, 274.

depends upon the audience's ability to take up ("again and again") this invitation/interpretation and to make it real—moving, as it were, from the "morning" subject to the "mourning" subject.

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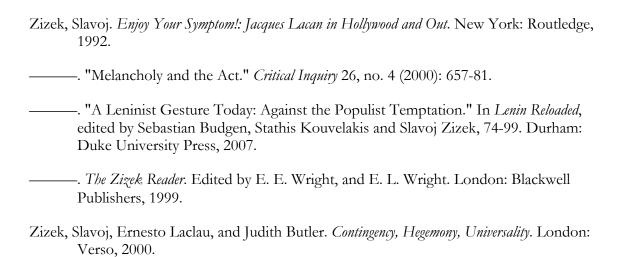Radden, J. *The Nature of Melancholy*: Oxford University Press.

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