"…the universe expands to fill the self": The Reception of Dionysian Madness by Donna Tartt

Fascination with the danger of losing oneself in ecstatic abandon has persisted throughout the evolution of literature. Defined by its capacity to terrify and enthral, Dionysian madness distorts the human ability to rationalise, instead allowing for the surrender to (and therefore exposure of) much deeper and darker impulses. Social laws collapse, and the limits of the human experience are probed. As a central theme in Donna Tartt's *The Secret History*, the concept is explored in great detail.

This essay aims to investigate the reception of Dionysian madness by Donna Tartt, considering both the allure and the experience itself, within the context of a postmodern world. Additionally, I will contrast Tartt's reception with that of Euripides in *The Bacchae*, exploring how its presentation has changed between the Classical and modern eras, and investigating the wider parallels between *The Bacchae* and Donna Tartt's debut novel.

The Allure of Dionysian Madness

In *The Secret History*, Richard joins five students of ancient Greek already consumed by a passion for Classics under the influence of their charming professor, Julian. It's Julian who first introduces the concept of Dionysian madness, and he does so in a way that casts an incredibly alluring light on the idea of embracing the "primitive, emotive, appetitive self."[1] Within Julian's speech, Tartt consistently returns to the conflict between the civilised and the primal ways of thinking, and suggests that repressing the irrational mind is both a strenuous process, and a futile one. She does so by contrasting the Roman need for order and consequent "tremendous, impossible strain"[2] with the Greek appreciation for chaos[3] found alongside a passion for symmetry. Tartt suggests that society in ancient Greece respected the balance between the rational and irrational, refusing neither one nor the other, and is therefore a model to be aspired to. The danger of embracing only one of these is made clear in Julian's description of Bacchanalian ritual, with his consistent use of gruesome imagery. However, the image of violence is interwoven with pure reverence of the idea - "bloody, terrible things are sometimes the most beautiful … And what could be more terrifying and beautiful, to souls like the Greeks or our own, than to lose control completely?"[4] The prospect of bloodshed is romanticised and robbed of any moral implications. While the idea is, of course, not excluded from description altogether, it seems trivial when interlaced with the promise of liberation from the unrelenting "order"[5] and repression of civilisation. And to Donna Tartt, that is the dominating allure of Dionysian

[1] Tartt, Donna, *The Secret History* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 43.
[2] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 43.
[3] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 42. In reference to rather chaotic religious rituals ("…dancing, frenzies, slaughter, visions")
[4] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 44.
[5] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 44.

madness: the freedom that comes with rejecting society altogether (along with its moral principles), and ecstatic surrender to the lawless and chaotic, in spite of its inherent dangers.

This romanticism of otherwise gruesome and harsh realities is a very prevalent theme throughout the book, and the desire to be surrounded by beauty is another reason for which the students are drawn to the concept of Dionysian madness. The protagonists distance themselves from modern society, which they frown upon as unappealing and even vulgar.[6] Instead, they immerse themselves obsessively in the Classical past: "...none of them were the least bit interested in anything that went on in the world, and their ignorance of current events and even recent history was rather astounding."[7] *The Secret History* embodies the majority of elements that constitute a work of postmodern literature.[8] However, while the depiction of late capitalism is a standard element of postmodernism,[9] Tartt makes consistent use of a romantic, charming ambiance. Harsh, industrial settings are reserved for moments of lucidity and revelation within the narrative, during which the carefully constructed mask of aesthetic perfection slips, and ugly truths are unveiled - the students actively reject the reality of the world they live in, not only because of its "repressive"[10] properties, but because of a perceived lack of aesthetic value. Conversely, a distinct link is created between the Classical world and the beauty over which they fixate. At the very beginning of the novel, the narrator Richard identifies his "fatal flaw" as "a morbid longing for the picturesque."[11] Charles D'Aniello identifies that the idea of a "fatal flaw"[12] (*hamartia*) is a trait "distinctly associated with Greek Tragedy"[13] and therefore directly relates the group's understanding of aesthetics to the Classical world from the outset of the story.[14] Furthermore, the concept of Dionysian madness is introduced within the context of a discussion on the nature of beauty, in which the two ideas are explicitly connected.[15] In the same discussion, Tartt defines Dionysian madness as a state distinctly antithetical to civilisation, instead stemming from the fundamentals of human nature. It is therefore able to transcend the divide between Classical and modern society, and act as a bridge between the two eras. Consequently, the attempts at a Bacchanal and the pursuit of Dionysian madness become synonymous with the pursuit of beauty - the Greek class seize an opportunity to not only imitate, but to experience and participate in antiquity, temporarily forsaking the ugliness of the modern world.

---

[6] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 224.
[7] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 93.
[8] Stacy Litzler, *Interpretations of Fear and Anxiety in Gothic-Postmodern Fiction: An Analysis of the Secret History by Donna Tartt*, (ETD Archive, 2013).
[9] Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism*, (Routledge: 2016), pp. 62-92.
[10] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 43.
[11] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 5.
[12] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 5.
[13] Charles Perseus D'Aniello. *"A Morbid Longing for the Picturesque": The Pursuit of Beauty in Donna Tartt's The Secret History."* (Södertörn Högskola, 2021).
[14] Charles Perseus D'Aniello. *"A Morbid Longing"*.
[15] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 44. "…what could be more beautiful… than to lose control completely?"

The Experience

The students spend several months pursuing a state of Dionysian madness by fasting, drinking and imitating various ancient Greek rituals in the dead of winter. After many failed attempts, four of the five students partaking are successful, and they are driven to kill a man in their ecstasy. Richard, the only student who knew nothing of the Bacchanals, is told by Henry about the experience: "It was heart-shaking. Glorious… Duality ceases to exist; there is no ego, no 'I'... as if the universe expands to fill the boundaries of the self."[16] Tartt therefore identifies unity, and the ecstasy of that unity, as a significant part of the experience - individual identity is stripped, and the self is surrendered to the collective in an instance of total liberation. This unity doesn't only extend to other individuals, but to nature and to the universe as a whole. By contrast, she attributes a restricting element to the "boundaries"[17] of identity, and consequently, to the civilisation upon which identity is founded - society's commitment to the civilised, rational mind limits the human experience. Embracing the irrational, and thereby surrendering to animal impulse, is the source of profound ecstasy. However, regard for ethics relies upon the ability to rationalise, and so to surrender to carnal impulse also means forsaking moral principles. For example, when Henry tells Richard of the man they killed on the night of the Bacchanal, he talks of it as though it were a simple inconvenience, and seems unconcerned by the moral implications of murder. Even many months later, he is more inclined to complain of the subsequent "dreadful mess"[18] of brains and blood, than to make any proclamations of a guilty conscience.

This does suggest, however, that the group's fixation on beauty persisted even in a state of irrationality, as Henry expresses annoyance at his own victim's corpse for tainting the aesthetics of the evening. Tartt lends heavy focus to the beauty of Dionysian madness in action, and much of Henry's explanation consists of vivid natural imagery: "Wolves howling around us and a bull bellowing in the dark…Vines grew from the ground so fast they twined up the trees like snakes…"[19] The consistency of natural imagery suggests a detachment from not only civilisation, but from the ugliness of postmodern society - with its emphasis on individualism and embrace of the industrial, it exists as wholly separate from nature. Dionysian madness is therefore successful in providing the sought-after escape from an ugly reality, and this escape is established as closely associated with nature. Consequently, natural imagery following the event can be assumed as symbolic: when the other student who was absent from the successful Bacchanal, Bunny, finds out about the murder, he begins to extort those involved, and plunges into a frantic state of his own. Already rather repulsed by

[16] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 186.
[17] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 186.
[18] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 189.
[19] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 186.

Bunny's character, and now concerned over being exposed to the police, the other students (including Richard) plan and follow through with killing him. Just moments after his death in April, a heavy, unrelenting snow begins out of turn, smothering all the nature blooming as spring reaches its peak - the escape offered by Dionysian madness was temporary, and the divine presence experienced on the night of the Bacchanal played no part in the cruel and ugly reality of Bunny's murder, which was instead an instance of profoundly mortal hubris. The absence of a natural (and therefore divine) presence is further emphasised upon the event of the murder itself: "'Tell me,' Bunny said, and I thought I detected for the first time a note of suspicion. 'Just what the Sam Hill *are* you guys doing out here anyway?' The woods were silent, not a sound. Henry smiled. 'Why, looking for new ferns,' he said, and took a step towards him."[20] Within the silence of the forest, the students' murder of Bunny is a distinctly human affair. However, they are still seeking the same natural presence of the Bacchanal, as they "[look] for new ferns."[21] Ferns, specifically, are symbolic of losing oneself in a reverie or a dream,[22] which suggests the group is actively attempting to preserve their fabricated world of aesthetic perfection, and that Bunny's vulgar presence threatens their ability to do so. Alternatively, ferns symbolise immortality and ancient knowledge.[23] Henry proceeds in his explanation to Richard: "...in losing [oneself] to be born into the principle of a continuous life, outside the prison of mortality and time."[24] The students continue pursuing the transcending experiences allowed by the Bacchanal, believing to have been genuinely altered by the event, and therefore thinking they now exist "outside" [25] of the fundamental laws applied to others. However, in stressing the absence of a natural presence upon Bunny's death, Tartt firmly establishes Dionysian madness as a strictly temporary experience. Although the group may have illusions of being permanently altered by some mysterious force, the act of Bunny's murder was allowed by a rational, human state of mind, and driven by self-indulgent motives.

The presence of divinity on the night of the Bacchanal is not only metaphorical - "'You saw Dionysus, I suppose?' I had not meant this at all seriously, and I was startled when he nodded as casually as if I'd asked him if he'd done his homework."[26] Tahlia Antrobus calls Dionysus a god of "contradictory extremes and unpredictability"[27], and Dionysian madness is an experience of complete chaos in which this "unpredictability"[28] becomes manifest. Reality itself is changed, and these

[20] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 302-303.
[21] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 303.
[22] Steven Olderr, *Symbolism: A Comprehensive Dictionary, 2d Ed,* (McFarland, 2012), 85.
[23] Olderr, *Symbolism: A Comprehensive Dictionary*, 85.
[24] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 182.
[25] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 182.
[26] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 187.
[27] Tahlia Antrobus, *Unmasking the Many-Faced God: Dionysus as a Figure of Fluidity in Archaic and Classical Greece,* (Chariot Journal, 2023), https://chariotjournal.wordpress.com/2023/05/31/unmasking-the-many-faced-god-dionysus-as-a-figure-of-fluidity-in-archaic-and-classical-greece/, accessed 25/07/24.
[28] Tahlia Antrobus, *Unmasking the Many-Faced God*, accessed 25/07/24.

"contradictory extremes"[29] are united, dispelling every kind of boundary or limitation, including the boundaries that separate the world of gods from men, as Dionysus himself remains present – "[Defying] spring and winter, birth and decay, the good and the bad… Duality ceases to exist."[30] The union of antithetical concepts is an ability common among both Tartt's and Euripides' Dionysus. Heather Sebo identifies that, in *The Bacchae*, costumes chosen by Dionysus for other characters often conflict with their natures: "the Theban women and Semele's sisters are dressed in animal skins, the old men Cadmus and Tiresias in the clothes of young female maenads."[31] Similarly, in *The Secret History*, twentieth-century college students participate in a Bacchanal barefoot and wearing identical chitons - divisions of class, gender and circumstance become irrelevant, and the students present as identical in nature. Civilisation, and therefore divisions dictated by society, cease to exist.

Donna Tartt and Euripides

Donna Tartt, herself, has admitted the profound influence of Euripides' *The Bacchae* on *The Secret History*[32], and even makes a direct (if brief) reference to the tragedy in her novel - "I thought of *The Bacchae…* a triumph of barbarism over reason: dark, chaotic, inexplicable."[33] Both centred around Dionysian madness, and therefore the tension between the civilised and animal selves, there are significant parallels between the events and characters of the two stories. However, with the religious significance of ancient Greek theatre,[34] *The Bacchae* lends a heavier focus to the relationship between mortals and the divine. Meanwhile, *The Secret History* is concerned primarily with exploring the fundamentals of human nature, and concepts more specific to the postmodern era, such as intellectual elitism. Therefore, I will use the parallels in narrative to investigate the influence of *The Bacchae* on *The Secret History*, as well as exploring Tartt's divergence in meaning.

Parallels with Euripides: Corrupting Authorities

In both *The Bacchae* and *The Secret History*, Dionysian madness is only ever pursued under the guidance of a charismatic leader, whose influence has already altered the seekers' world-perceptions. The Chorus in *The Bacchae* consists of a cult-following accumulated by Dionysus in Asia. Under the god's influence, they follow Dionysus to Thebes, and exist as foreigners within Hellenic civilisation. Similarly, Julian, the charming classics professor, handpicks his students and actively isolates them

[29] Tahlia Antrobus, *Unmasking the Many-Faced God*, accessed 25/07/24.
[30] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 186.
[31] Heather Sebo, "The God in the Play: Euripides' Bacchae," 2014, https://classicsvic.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/sebo.pdf, accessed 25/07/24.
[32] Emily Temple, *Donna Tartt on the Books That Were Important to Her While Writing the Secret History*, (Literary Hub, 2022), https://lithub.com/donna-tartt-on-the-books-that-were-important-to-her-while-writing-the-secret-history/, accessed 25/07/24
[33] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 42-43.
[34] Walter Englert, *Greek Theater*, (Reed), https://www.reed.edu/humanities/110Tech/Theater.html#:~:text=Greek%20plays%20were%20performed%20as, accessed 25/07/24.

from the wider world, enough so that modern society becomes "alien"[35] to them, "as if it were not their home."[36] Although Julian is, unlike Dionysus, not a god, he still holds a formidable level of influence over the Greek class - he limits their exposure to the wider world by insisting that they drop their other classes, therefore ensuring he is the only authority figure to whom they have access: "I believe that having a great diversity of teachers is harmful and confusing for a young mind."[37] Physically, the Greek class is enveloped in a charming (yet surface level) world of beauty inside Julian's carefully ornamented classroom, which is isolated from the rest of the college. During the lecture in which he glorifies Dionysian madness and praises the Greeks' appreciation for it, he also consistently creates a divide between the students and the modern world by including them in discussions on the Classical mind - "Are we, in this room, really very different from the Greeks or the Romans? Obsessed with duty, piety, loyalty, sacrifice? All those things which are to modern tastes so chilling?"[38] By isolating the group from the rest of society and suggesting to them that their understanding of classics makes them other, even superior, Julian fosters a sphere of moral relativism in which the students consider themselves exempt from standard ethical consideration. It is for this reason that Julian is able to convince the Greek class that the allure of Dionysian madness definitively outweighs the risks, since the threat of harm to others pales in comparison to the importance of their intellectual pursuits. While the descent into Dionysian madness in *The Bacchae* is a direct result of divine influence, in *The Secret History* it stems from hubris and intellectual elitism, fostered by a morally corrupt authority.

Either way, the level of control exerted by Julian and Dionysus over the narratives of their respective stories is extreme. Heather Sebo likens Dionysus to a playwright within his own Greek Tragedy - he determines the costumes and roles for Pentheus and the women of Thebes, manipulates their psyches, and ultimately "stage-manages every detail of the performance."[39] The same can be said for Julian, who manipulates his students into a dramatic storyline to satiate his own desire for aesthetics. Actively encouraging the imitation of "chilling"[40] ancient ideals, he closely monitors the way in which the plot unfurls: "I'm afraid my students are never very interesting to me because I always know exactly what they're going to do."[41] He romanticises the aesthetic qualities of literature, and views the world around him through the same lens, as violence, tragedy and betrayal become dramatic events in a story as opposed to moral transgressions committed by and against real-life people. For example, his mask of the caring, serene professor slips as he observes the search party for his

[35] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 224.
[36] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 224.
[37] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 32.
[38] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 43.
[39] Heather Sebo, "The God in the Play: Euripides' Bacchae," 2014, https://classicsvic.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/sebo.pdf, accessed 25/07/24.
[40] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 43.
[41] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 30.

murdered student, Bunny: "... he was pleased, however obscurely, with the aesthetics of the thing. Henry saw it too. 'Like something from Tolstoy, isn't it?' he remarked. Julian looked over his shoulder, and I was startled to see that there was real delight on his face. '*Yes,*' he said. 'Isn't it though?'"[42] However, if Julian and Dionysus are parallel in their influence, their similarities end upon Julian's loss of control over the story's narrative. The moment the students' actions begin to threaten his own peace, he is no longer able to appreciate the drama and aesthetics as a detached observer; he then abandons them entirely, and the truth of Julian's character is realised: "One would hope that this matter would've seemed something more to him than just a question of his own comfort. Even to have turned us in would have shown some strength of character…it's nothing but cowardice. Running away like this."[43] Divine power becomes the defining difference between the two characters. Dionysus maintains absolute control throughout the text and concludes the story on his own terms with punishments for those who wronged him. Meanwhile, Julian is unable to sustain his influence over the students, and so leaves them to deal with the aftermath of a story he started for his own satisfaction.

Parallels with Euripides: The Outsider

The Secret History and *The Bacchae* also share parallel characters who reject Dionysian madness, and are faced with violent consequences. Pentheus, reluctant to embrace the prospect of social chaos, refuses to honour Dionysus as a god. Within the conflict between the rational and irrational, Pentheus completely refuses to acknowledge the irrational, and in doing so incurs Dionysus' wrath. Among his peers, Pentheus becomes solitary in his rejection of Dionysus, as Cadmus and Tiresias condemn his refusal as ignorant and "headstrong."[44] Ultimately, however, Dionysus himself drives Pentheus mad as punishment for his hubris, and guides him to a savage dismemberment at the hands of the Bacchae. Similarly, while Bunny had originally participated in the Bacchanals, he was unable to grasp the seriousness with which the others approached the rites, and refused to see Dionysian madness as a concept deserving of respect - his overall lack of interest in aesthetics and intellectual elitism rendered him an outlier within the group. As the only student to maintain relationships with people outside of the Greek class, Bunny's contact with wider society kept him grounded to the reality rejected by the others. He was able to see the humour and absurdity in spending nights at college "drunk and in chitons and singing Greek hymns"[45] in an attempt to "transcend the accident of one's moment of being."[46] The others were not, and swiftly began alienating him from their attempts at imitating Bacchic mystery rites. His subsequent exclusion from the successful, unifying experience of

[42] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 382-383.
[43] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 585.
[44] Euripides and Philip Vellacott, *The Bacchae and Other Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 200.
[45] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 183.
[46] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 182.

Dionysian madness only furthered his alienation from the group - he was unable to exist within the sphere of moral relativism that excused murder, and he was instead alone in feeling guilt: "We had killed that fellow, he said, killed him in cold blood."[47] Pentheus and Bunny are common in their respect for conventional ethical codes - Pentheus condemns the Bacchae for their "pernicious practices"[48] of savagery, and Bunny is alone acknowledging the immorality of murder. Both, however, are killed for this commitment to convention: while Pentheus' murder is an act of divine retribution, in which reverence of order offends the god of chaos, Bunny is killed in an act of mortal self-indulgence. Since Bunny's disapproval of the others' act of murder threatened to expose them, they killed him for convenience.

As an act of divinity, Euripides neither condemns nor excuses Pentheus' murder, and Dionysus never approaches any semblance of guilt, or even pity, for the dead king. Meanwhile, at Bunny's funeral, the characters in *The Secret History* are finally confronted with the reality of having murdered their friend in cold blood. Richard (the narrator) is unable to find beauty in the scene, and recalls, for the first time, the horror of Bunny's death: "I was starting to see everything, all at once, with a blistering clarity… *Bun,* I thought, *oh, Bun, I'm sorry…* [Henry's] hands that had dug in Bunny's neck for a pulse and rolled his head back and forth on its poor broken stem… Even from a distance we could see the terrible angle of his neck, the shoe turned the wrong way, the trickle of blood from nose and mouth."[49] Bunny's funeral serves as a sobering event. His peers had thought themselves distinctly separate from those outside of the Greek class, having become superior in their experience of Dionysian madness, and therefore closer to divinity. It's for this reason that they were able to rationalise Bunny's murder so easily, but exposure to other people, to Bunny's family, to their grief, and to their inelegant reality grounds them to the truth of themselves - they were among people who were their equals, and who they had wronged. It's at this point that the narrator's romanticism falters, and the immaculate image they had of themselves is tainted - "...with a drugged, fathomless calm, Henry bent and picked up a handful of dirt. He held it over the grave and let it trickle from his fingers. Then, with terrible composure, he stepped back and absently dragged the hand across his chest, smearing mud upon his lapel, his tie, the starched immaculate white of his shirt."[50] In Catholicism, ashes are placed on the forehead as an outward acknowledgment of both sin and mortality,[51] and Henry's act here serves the same purpose. In addition to tarnishing the aesthetic perfection he

[47] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 213.
[48] Euripides, *The Bacchae*, 200.
[49] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 472.
[50] Tartt, *The Secret History*, 474.
[51] D. D. Emmons, *Ash Wednesday's Significanc*e, (Simply Catholic, 2021), https://www.simplycatholic.com/from-ashes-to-ashes-what-is-the-importance-of-ash-wednesday/, accessed 25/07/24.

cherishes, he finally admits his own mortality. Dionysus, however, remains firm in his justification of Pentheus' violent death:

> Cadmus: We acknowledge this; but your revenge is merciless
> Dionysus: And rightly; I am a god, and you insulted me. [52]

The god showcases his absolute authority over the lives and deaths of mortals, and is under no obligation to grieve for his inferior. Meanwhile, as the students find themselves among the grief of their peers, false notions of grandeur allowed by isolation are forgotten, and they lose their composure.

Conclusion

To conclude, Dionysian madness is an experience of complete ecstasy in which limitations cease to exist in the mind. Liberation from the boundaries of rational thought results in submission to carnal, violent impulses, as the self is unified with nature. In *The Secret History*, this experience is actively pursued to serve as an escape from the realities of contemporary society, while in *The Bacchae* it is often inflicted on the unwilling - within Euripides' play, Dionysian madness is capable of serving as a punishment due its inherent destructive properties. Meanwhile, characters in *The Secret History* are able to dismiss the dangers of embracing Dionysian madness and prioritise their own intellectual pursuits. In this way, Tartt uses Dionysian madness as a tool in depicting the dangers of intellectual elitism - the Greek class use their understanding of Classical culture to alienate themselves from contemporary society. In doing so, they create an elite in which aesthetics take precedence over ethics, and the moral implications of violence are trivialised. The narrative parallels between *The Secret History* and *The Bacchae* emphasise the pride allowed by intellectual elitism, as mortal characters attempt to assume Dionysus' role in *The Bacchae*; Julian manipulates the events and characters of the story, and each of the students judge and punish Bunny for his offences against them. However, when confronted with the reality of themselves and their actions, their notions of superiority collapse, and the transcending experiences allowed by Dionysian madness leave no lasting impacts bar destruction.

[52] Euripides, *The Bacchae*, 243.

Bibliography

1. Antrobus, Tahlia, *Unmasking the Many-Faced God: Dionysus as a Figure of Fluidity in Archaic and Classical Greece,* (Chariot Journal, 2023), https://chariotjournal.wordpress.com/2023/05/31/unmasking-the-many-faced-god-dionysus-as-a-figure-of-fluidity-in-archaic-and-classical-greece/, accessed 25/07/24.
2. D'Aniello, Charles Perseus *"A Morbid Longing for the Picturesque": The Pursuit of Beauty in Donna Tartt's The Secret History."* (Södertörn Högskola, 2021).
3. Emmons, D. D, *Ash Wednesday's Significanc*e, (Simply Catholic, 2021), https://www.simplycatholic.com/from-ashes-to-ashes-what-is-the-importance-of-ash-wednesday/, accessed 25/07/24.
4. Englert, Walter, *Greek Theater*, (Reed), https://www.reed.edu/humanities/110Tech/Theater.html#:~:text=Greek%20plays%20were%20performed%20as, accessed 25/07/24.
5. Euripides and Philip Vellacott, *The Bacchae and Other Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981).
6. Jameson, Frederic, *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism*, (Routledge: 2016).
7. Stacy Litzler, *Interpretations of Fear and Anxiety in Gothic-Postmodern Fiction: An Analysis of the Secret History by Donna Tartt*, (ETD Archive, 2013).
8. Olderr, Steven, *Symbolism: A Comprehensive Dictionary, 2d Ed,* (McFarland, 2012).
9. Sebo, Heather, "The God in the Play: Euripides' Bacchae," 2014, https://classicsvic.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/sebo.pdf, accessed 25/07/24.
10. Tartt, Donna, *The Secret History* (London: Penguin Books, 1992)
11. Emily Temple, *Donna Tartt on the Books That Were Important to Her While Writing the Secret History*, (Literary Hub, 2022), https://lithub.com/donna-tartt-on-the-books-that-were-important-to-her-while-writing-the-secret-history/.