

INTRODUCTION TO TRAGEDY

Tragedy was a phenomenon of Athens, Greece, in the fifth century B.C.

490 B.C. Persia was defeated at Marathon. This began golden era of democracy & building, as well as flowering of tragedy

404 B.C. Athens surrendered to Sparta, ending the era (McCall 12).

At Dionysian festival, Athens would have competition for best tragedies.. "In nearly every instance the centre of these festivals lay in extravagant sexual licentiousness, the waves of which overwhelmed all family life and its venerable traditions; the very wildest beasts of nature were let loose here, including that detestable mixture of lust and cruelty which has always seemed to me the genuine 'witches' draught'" (Nietzsche, Birth 30).

Tragedy grew out of songs sung @ Dionysian festival. Started having people act out the songs. Remained musical in form--Words sung rather than spoken.

The Dithyramb was the type of lyric used in Tragedy.

"Gr. Antiq. A Greek choric hymn, originally in honour of Dionysus or Bacchus, vehement and wild in character; a Bacchanalian song" (Oxford English Dictionary) .

Sung with flutes. Songs about Dionysus & other myths. Tragedy put characters in it.

Rules of tragedy. (McCall 14-15)

1. Length. 1,100-1,700 lines. Took less than 2 hours. Thus few characters, focus on one crisis.
2. Chorus present.
 - a. Sings about the action
 - b. Plays some part in the play--a suitable general role. Not an impersonal group.
 - c. Provides continuity. Present from beginning to end. Everything happens against the backdrop of the chorus.
3. Characters not as personal as in Shakespeare (Hamlet vs Orestes). Aristotle--tragedy is universal. They want to show what can happen to anybody. Focus on human destiny. Mask emphasized this. Focus is on what characters do, not who they are, on destinies, not personalities.

According to Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Apollo and Dionysus were the two deities of art in Greece. Apollo was the patron of plastic arts (sculpture, etc., and Dionysus of music. Apollo established the principium individuationis (the principle of individuation); Dionysus dissolved that principle in his ecstasies, resulting in a primordial unity. Apollo gave intuition (Anschauung) through dreams; Dionysus gave ecstasy (Entzückung) through drunkenness (Geburt 25-26, 28-29, 84, 103-104). Later tragedy, under the influence of Socrates and Euripides, replaced Apollonian intuition with thought and Dionysian ecstasy with passion (83-84).

Tragedy combines the Dionysian music with the Apollonian visual. The Dionysian group with the Apollonian individual.

The noble man does not sin, . . . through his action all law, all natural order, yes, the moral world may fall to the ground, but through this action a higher magic circle will be drawn from its effects, a new world founded from the Ruins of the overthrown old one (Nietzsche, Geburt 65).

APOLLO	DIONYSUS
Plastic arts (sculpture)	Music
Principium individuationis (principle of individuation).	Dissolves individual through ecstasy. Primordial unity.
Man is the artist.	Man is the work of art.
Intuition through dreams.	Ecstasy through drunkenness.
The music of Apollo was Doric architectonics in tones, but in merely suggested tones, such as those of the cithara. (Nietzsche, Birth 32)	The very element which forms the essence of Dionysian music . . . is . . . the thrilling power of the tone, the uniform stream of the melos, and the thoroughly incomparable world of harmony. Music that leads to ecstasy.
Norman Rockwell	Elvis for us, Richard Wagner for Nietzsche

AESCHYLUS

Dates Born 525/524 B.C. Died 456/455 B.C.

Aeschylus fought at the Battle of Marathon when he was 35 years old & at Salamis in the Persian War (Podlecki 4).

Aeschylus started writing circa 500 B.C. Won his first victory in 484 (Podlecki 5).

Aeschylus died when an eagle dropped a tortoise on his head. His epithet said he was a soldier at Marathon, with nothing about his writing.

INTRODUCTION TO PROMETHEUS BOUND

Date: 457/456 B.C. It was his last trilogy (Podlecki 110).

The Romantics felt drawn to the figures of Aeschylus' Prometheus and Milton's Satan, those defiers of divine will and purveyors of proscribed knowledge. By their willful exercise of power and distribution of knowledge, they establish their status as heroic criminals. Nor were they heroes in spite of their crimes; it was their crimes that made them heroes. The "innermost kernel of the Prometheus myth" (innersten Kern der Prometheussage) is "the necessity of crime impelling the titanically striving individual" (die dem titanisch strebenden Individuum gebotene Nothwendigkeit des Frevels) (Nietzsche, Geburt der Tragödie 70).

Prometheus is the mythic figure who best suits the uses of Romantic poetry, for no other traditional being has in him the full range of Romantic moral sensibility and the full Romantic capacity for creation and destruction. (Bloom 120)

Problem of play: Zeus has no redeeming traits (Podlecki 101).

The play is directed not against one tyrant but against tyranny (Podlecki 111).

510 B.C. Athens banished tyrant Hippias. Democracy started (Podlecki 116).

490 B.C. Persians invade to Greece. They are accompanied by Hippias. Aeschylus fought at Marathon (Podlecki 117).

Here Zeus is a tyrant. Might is a thug, a δορυφόρος (bodyguard to king).

Three aims of tyrant (Podlecki 121)

1. Keep subjects humble.
2. Make them distrust one another.
3. Keep them powerless so they won't try to rebel.

Zeus has the traits of human tyrants identified by Aristotle & others (Podlecki 105).

1. Unaccountable to others--no checks & balances.
2. Ignores traditional laws. Is above the law.
3. Mistrusts those closest to him.
4. Violence, esp. against women. βίαια. Io was exiled by Zeus' command in this version (lines 667-668) (Podlecki 106).
5. Zeus won't tolerate free speech, others fear to speak freely (line 180) (Podlecki 107).
6. Has spies, like Hermes. Big Brother is watching (Podlecki 109).
7. Lops off outstanding people who might cause opposition. Encourages mediocrity (Podlecki 110).
8. Surrounds self with flatterers & courtiers. Oceanus is one. both cunning & naive. Thinks he has influence (Podlecki 109).

Herodotus 3. 80-82 discusses three types of government: monarchy, oligarchy, democracy. Aeschylus influences Herodotus, Plato, & Aristotle. Aristotle Politics 5. 8. Tyrant seeks own good only. Tyrant's pride (ὑβρις) leads to subjects' wrath (οργή) (Podlecki 118).

INTRODUCTION TO THE ORESTEIA

The theme of the Oresteia is Δίκη (Dikê, justice)—cosmic principle of order
 "The scales of Justice weigh wisdom through suffering" (lines 260-261).
 No help for one who ignores justice (lines 381-384) (Podlecki 63).

ἄτη (Atê) means "distraction, folly, delusion, judicial blindness sent by the gods, ruin." It is disproportionate. ["A life for a tooth, a life for an eye"]. No balance is sought. Balance important to Greeks. Each act of vengeance is out of balance & leads to further revenge. The punishment of the Trojans is too much for Paris' crime (Lattimore 73).

Cycle of ἄτη (Atê) in the Oresteia

1. Thyestes has an affair with Atreus' wife.
2. Atreus feeds Thyestes' sons to him.
3. Paris takes Helen to Troy.
4. Agamemnon sacrifices his daughter to propitiate Artemis.
5. Clytemnestra has an affair with Aegisthus.
6. The Greeks destroy Troy. Is too much punishment on that city. Is also ruinous to the Greeks. Agamemnon leaves with 1,000 ships & returns with one (Lattimore 73).
7. Clytemnestra and Aegisthus assassinate Agamemnon.
8. Orestes kills Clytemnestra.
9. The Furies hound Orestes.
10. Orestes is freed in the first jury trial.
11. The Furies are pacified, ending the cycle of ἄτη by transforming their mode of action to the state & due process.

Each main character kicks down the altar of Δίκη.

Vendetta has blood-logic. Each death calls for another (Lattimore 74).

Problems of public good have been solved through private murder--not a real solution. They must channel these forces in positive ways so they won't be purely destructive (Lattimore 87).

Ultimately in the play, justice only works in rule of law. Glorifies civil order.

For Clytemnestra, Δίκη = Vengeance. Aegisthus is the same way. Revenge for crime of Atreus against his father (lines 1605-1616). She thinks she has ended cycle of retribution, as will Orestes. Both are wrong. (Lattimore 71).

Civic virtue ultimately channels the force of Dikê. City (πόλις, polis) replaces household (οἶκος, oikos) (Lattimore 78).

The conflicts are conflicts of right vs right. Each character is operating from several motives (Lattimore 74).

Agamemnon's motives

1. He is simple. Driven by pride. Each act leads to the next. From sacrifice of Iphigenia to persistence at Troy to affair with Cassandra. No single act where a proud king would do otherwise. Ruins the Greeks as well as the Trojans. Both he & wife unfaithful in the long absence (Lattimore 73-74).

Clytemnestra's motives (Lattimore 74-75)

1. Mother-resentment over Iphigenia's death (Lattimore 74). A minor motive--she doesn't seem too upset over her death (Hammond 92). She sacrifices another child--Orestes (Libation Bearers 13, right column).
2. Jealous of Cassandra
3. Adultery with Aegisthus
4. Desire for power herself. Her own pride--Clytemnestra unlike Cassandra & Briseis, who cling to their conquerors. She smashes codes she doesn't like, like the one where hero has a captive mistress. She protests the double standard (Libation Bearers 13, right column). Clytemnestra has a grand manner. She's an aristocrat. Overwhelms chorus (Lattimore 75).

LIBATION BEARERS

Zeus is with Might AND Justice here (lines 244-245)--not in Prometheus.

Orestes' motives (Lattimore 85)

1. Outrage over loss of inheritance.
2. Jealous because mom chose Aegisthus over Agamemnon and HIM. She disowned him & sent him away (lines 132-134).
3. Vengeance for Agamemnon's death.

In Agamemnon, vice was alluring. In Libation Bearers, duty is repulsive (Lattimore 86).

EUMENIDES

The sight of the Furies overwhelmed early audiences. Sent pregnant women into labor. The Chorus is the chief character of the drama. Furies clash with Apollo--conflicting divine judgments (Lattimore 87).

Apollo purifies Orestes. The Furies will have none of it. They accuse Apollo of injustice (162-163), as he does them (217-222).

Agonistic form of justice. New venue for the contest. Trial by persuading jury rather than by combat. How can both sides agree? Must compete before impartial jury. Δίκη expressed in a court of law (δικαι, dikai). Legal justice.

Levels of struggle in Eumenides

1. Struggle between offices. Furies have an office (λάχος) to perform. Apollo interferes.
2. Old order vs new order. New gods (150, 162, 731, 778f) Athena respects their age (848, 882ff).
3. Τιμή vs ἀτιμία. Apollo dishonors them (227, 324, 721f). Athena sees it as a new kind of honor (795-796, 824, 833, 854-5, 890-5, 916-7, 992-3).
4. Mutterrecht vs Vaterrecht. Female vs male. (Bachofen)
5. Greek vs barbarian (Lattimore 87).

Furies are older, therefore more childish & barbarian than Apollo and Athena. Furies stand for woman's right to act. They represent the Greeks' pre-Hellenic barbarism, archaic strictness & cruelty. The blood on Orestes' hands matters; his reasons don't. Motive irrelevant. (Cf. Oedipus' "crimes") (Lattimore 87-88). They are primeval goddesses, daughters of Night, mercilessly & automatically punish. (Hammond 94).

Apollo stands for Hellenism, civilization, intellect, enlightenment. Is male and young. He's as ruthless as the furies, but despises cruelty for its own sake. Olympians are fighting their own past (Lattimore 88). Furies criticize the way Zeus took over (Eumenides p. 10 col. 1). Apollo more aesthetically pleasing. Beautiful rather than monstrous in appearance. Concerned with form.

Zeus is not omnipotent. Must rely on more than force to rule. Persuasion & legitimacy (Hammond 94).

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