THE INFLUENCE OF GREEK AND LATIN TRAGEDIES ON ENGLISH DRAMA

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Sushanta Kumar Chakrabarty, M.A.

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P R E F A C E

The subject of the proposed study is the impact of classical tragedies on English drama. It is important to note that there is no agreed opinion about the result of the said impact. Scholars, however, have agreed in stating that tragedy cannot be written in imitation of certain accepted rules.

In this work an attempt has been made to ascertain the exact nature and significance of the impact of Greek and Latin tragedies on their English counterparts. To that end a few English plays have been duly selected for study. By way of examining the nature of the said impact on these plays, the work seeks to establish the fact that the impact of the classical tragedies was mostly effective in the matters of construction and style of the English plays. Tragic conception of life has changed since the days of the Greeks. And so attempts to write tragedy in English on the Attic model have met failure.

The difficult task, for a researcher, is to acknowledge his indebtedness to all of them who took part in one way or the other, in shaping his thought-process and ideas, rather difficult to mention all of them by name. However, it is imperative to express my gratitude to them who were directly associated with this study. I must express a deep sense of gratitude to Dr. S.P. Sengupta, my supervisor for his eminently, scholarly, meticulous

and inspiring guidance — a constant source of inspiration and encouragement.

I am also grateful to my teachers in the department of English, University of North Bengal, for several fruitful discussions. To them I owe my initiation into this particular area of study.

Thanks are due to my colleagues of Dinhata College for their constant help, inspiration and mental support in this academic venture.

Books have not always been easy to find, but my labours have been eased by the courtesy of the staff of the following libraries : National Library, Calcutta, British Council Library, Calcutta and N.B.U. Library.

Needless to mention, no words will be adequate to express my gratitude to the members of my family who have stood by me over these long testing times in the accomplishment of my research work.

Sushanta Kumar Chakraborty

A Note on the Re-submission of the Thesis

The thesis is being re-submitted after proper revision as per the examiner's report and the letters of the Registrar, N.B.U. (Vide letter No. 168/Ph.D/Eng/3310/R-93 dt. 29.6.93 and letter No. 168/Ph.D/Eng./3099/R-94 dt. 30.8.94). The outlines of the changes and modifications done are as follow:

1. Necessary pruning and abridgement of the sections have been made.
2. Repetitions occurring in the chapters which deal with Shelley, Arnold and Swinburne have been omitted.
3. The concluding sections of the thesis have been enriched.
4. The section that deals with the influence of Seneca upon Elizabethan and Jacobean drama has been revised as per the examiner's suggestions.
5. The critical range behind the thesis has been widened. The opinions of the critics who do not appear to hold identical views as regards the merits of the texts have been given more recognition.
6. Critics and philosophers like George Santayana, Walter Benjamin and Miguel de Unamuno have been consulted in broader perspective in connection with the discussion of tragedy and their viewpoints duly acknowledged in the thesis.
7. The opinions of the Historicists like Stephen Orgel and Stephen Greenblatt and of the Cultural Materialists like Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield have been consulted in connection with the discussion of Elizabethan and Jacobean Tragedy.

8. The chapters have been re-arranged to bring all the sections in equal focus.

9. Misquotations, misrepresentations of proper names, the inaccurate nomenclature of characters occurring in the plays, misprints and defective references to critical texts, mostly due to poor proof-reading, have been checked, revised and corrected as and when necessary.

The researcher must express a deep sense of gratitude to the examiner who has offered his valuable suggestions as regards the improvement of the thesis. He is highly indebted to the examiner for providing him perspective and direction which helps him to complete his work.

countersigned by
Supervisor

Sushanta Kumar Chakraborty
Signature of the Researcher

Place :

Date : 5.12.96

C H A P T E R I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

CHAPTER I

Introduction

It is almost difficult to register one's claim to an original contribution to the vast repositories of studies on the influence of Greek and Seneca's tragedies on English drama. Yet there is always a room for a serious student of literature to look at the subject from his own angle of vision. The proposed study is of a similar nature. The present chapter may be treated as an introduction to the proposed study. An attempt is made here to give an idea of the nature, objective and scope of the said study on the impact of classical tragedy on English drama.

Title of the Thesis: The title of the thesis is The Influence of Greek and Latin Tragedies on English Drama. By 'Greek Tragedies' is meant the Attic tragedies, — those extant, — of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, and by 'Latin Tragedies', the nine rhetorical tragedies of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, the Roman philosopher (4 B.C. - A.D. 65). When used in the thesis in a general sense 'Greek tragedy' suggests Attic tragedy in the period of its full efflorescence, more precisely, Sophoclean tragedy. 'The Influence' implies the influence of the form and spirit of Greek or Seneca's tragedy as a whole or individually as the cases may be. 'English drama' suggests a few English tragedies, duly selected for case-studies in 'influence'.

Nature of the Study: As the explanation of the title shows, an attempt is made in the thesis to ascertain the exact nature of the impact of classical tragedies (Greek and Seneca's) on their English counterparts and its significance.

To that end an attempt is made first (Chapter II) to show how the constituent elements of Greek and Seneca's tragedies have contributed to render them 'models' of Tragic Art. Thereafter the study is divided into five self-component parts.

The first part (Chapter III) deals exclusively with the impact of Seneca's tragedy on English tragedies. This chapter is divided in the following sections and sub-sections in order to show the different dramatic impulses and traditions represented by Seneca in the growth and development of English tragedy:

(I) The Influence of Seneca on the Elizabethan Tragedy:

A. The first invasion of Seneca on the popular stage;

B. The popularised Senecanism in Elizabethan tragedy : Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy;

C. Senecan stance of self-sustained defiance : Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great;

D. The re-making of the Senecan tradition : Shakespeare's early tragedies;

E. Combination of the rival conceptions of Senecan and popular drama; Chapman's 'bussy plays';

F. A pure Seneca fit for public stage : Jonson's Roman tragedies;

G. Seneca cast in the rigours of the classical form : English imitations of the French Seneca.

(2) The Revived Senecanism in Jacobean tragedy: Webster's The Duchess of Malfi.

(3) Addison's Cato and Dr. Johnson's Irene : Plays constructed on the neo-classical model.

The second part (Chapter IV) deals with the impact of Attic tragedy on the following English plays:

1. Milton's Samson Agonistes;
2. Shelley's Hellas and Prometheus Unbound;
3. Arnold's Merope; and
4. Swinburne's Atalanta in Calycon and Erechtheus.

The third part (Chapter V) examines the nature and significance of the classical analogues in

1. Bridges' Prometheus the Fire Giver;
2. O'Neill's Desire Under the Elms and Mourning Becomes Electra;
3. Eliot's Murder in the Cathedral, The Family Reunion, The Cocktail Party, The Confidential Clerk and The Elder Statesman.

The fourth part (Chapter VI) is in the form of a summary of the observations made on the impact of Greek and Seneca's tragedies on English drama. This part also deals with the possibility of writing high tragedy in the modern age.

The last part is in the form of an appendix showing the list of consulted readings.

Objectives of the study: The proposed study, as already stated, seeks primarily to ascertain the nature and significance of the impact of classical tragedies on some of their English counterparts.

By way of examining the nature of the Latin impact, the study seeks to establish the fact

(i) that Seneca exercised a profound, and at times, salutary influence on the English tragedies in matters of structure, thought and style;

(ii) that the English plays, confessedly written on the Attic model, fail to capture the Greek spirit and that they are interesting not as experiments in Greek tragic form but as tragedies, sincere and moving, in such feelings as they evoke and

(iii) that the use of Greek myth towards the modern ideology requires an acute awareness of the great changes in meaning and intonation but the same awareness is so often lacking in the English plays which recast the ancient action in a modern setting.

The study arrives at the conclusion that classical impact on English tragedies was profound only when it was conditioned by historical as well as a literary movement, that is the Renaissance. But when the imitation of classical tragedy is a self-imposed rule or deliberate, it fails to produce any significant effect. Each work of art (and tragedy as such) is controlled by its own inherent laws and animated by the writer's vision of life. Tragic conception of life has changed since the days of the Greeks. So any attempt to construct tragedy on the Greek model is bound to meet failure.

Research Questions: While analysing the significance of the impact of classical tragedies on English plays, the proposed study attempts to answer the following principal questions:

(i) What are the basic constituents of classical tragedies that affect the English dramatists so powerfully?

(ii) To what extent the impact of Seneca's tragedies has contributed to the development of the Elizabethan and Jacobean tragedies?

(iii) Why do the English neo-classical tragedies, namely, *Cato* and *Irene* fail as drama?

(iv) How far the English plays on the Attic model have been successful as attempts to naturalise Greek tragedy in English?

(v) How far the classical analogues in English plays have been effective in enriching the content of the plays?

Attempts have also been made to touch the following allied questions:

(i) What is the implication of 'the Tragic Sense of Life'?

(ii) What is the nature of the tragic conception of the Greek tragic poets?

(iii) Is the modern outlook congenial to the writing of tragedies on the Attic lines?

(iv) Is it possible to make use of the device of chorus even in modern tragedies?

Methodology: The proposed study, literary in approach and content, is essentially based on the text and on the analytical methodology. For this the primary sources, i.e. the texts have been collected from original writings or compilations. Secondly, the whole ranges

of literature on the impact of classical tragedies on English plays have been analysed for the preparation of a meaningful framework. To that end relevant plays have been selected and, in case of a group of English plays coming under the same category of the impact, the most representative one is taken up for study. Chapters III, IV and V constitute the main part of the argument and as such each of these chapters ends with a concluding portion showing a summary of the observations made in course of the discussion. In the last chapter the focus is concentrated on the impact of classical tragedies as a whole. In regard to the collection of primary data and critical references, the libraries and institutes have been utilised in Calcutta and at other places.

Overview of the Literature Covering the Area of the Study:

Having stated the problem or inquiry and its significance, it would be useful to recount the work done in the area of the proposed study. Available literature may be classified into five broad categories.

The first category covers the primary sources, i.e. the texts of the individual plays selected for study in original, or in case of Greek and Seneca's tragedies, in translation.

In the second category are included those critical studies that deal with (i) various theories of tragedy, (ii) the spirit of tragedy, (iii) the nature of tragic pleasure, (iv) the form and spirit of Greek and Seneca's tragedy and (v) the possibility of modern tragedy. There is a large literature covering these aspects of tragedy. Only those are consulted which are found useful for preparing a conceptual framework. Some of the books consulted may be mentioned in a short space like this.

Allardyce Nicoll's Theory of Drama[1] (Indian Reprint, 1974) is a standard study of the dramatic theory. Renaissance criticism as regards the theory of drama is available in Barret H. Clark's European Theories of Drama (1947). F.L. Lucas' Tragedy in relation to Aristotle's Poetics (1928) deals critically with Aristotle's ideas. J.S. Smart's stimulating essay, "Tragedy" (English Association Studies, Vol. VIII) challenges Aristotle's views, particularly about the nature of the tragic protagonist. Among the commentaries of Aristotle's Poetics consulted for the thesis, mention may be made of Butcher's Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (1932), Bywater's Aristotle on the Art of Poetry (1909), Cooper's The Poetics of Aristotle, its Meaning and Influence (1927). For twentieth century views on tragedy the books consulted are R.P. Draper's (ed.) Tragedy : Developments in Criticism (1992), Laurence Michael's (ed.) Tragedy : Modern Essays in Criticism (1963), George Steiner's The Death of Tragedy J.L. Styan's The Dark Comedy (1968), Raymond Williams' Modern Tragedy (1966), Dorothea

Krook's Elements of Tragedy (1969), Jenneatte King's Tragedy in the Victorian Novel (1978) etc.

W. Macneile Dixon's Tragedy (1924) makes an effort to capture the prime essential of tragic spirit. In R.B. Sewall's The Vision of Tragedy (1960) an attempt is made to explain what is implied by the tragic sense of life and how did it evolve the literary form of tragedy. Herbert H. Muller's The Spirit of Tragedy (1956) is self-explanatory by its very title. Geoffrey Brereton's Principles of Tragedy (1968) offers a rational examination of the Tragic Concept in life and literature.

C.E. Montague's "The Delights of Tragedy" (Atlantic Monthly, CXXXVIII, September, 1936) offers an illuminating discussion on the nature of tragic pleasure. Joseph Wood Krutch's essay, "The Tragic Fallacy" in his The Modern Temper (1921), George Steiner's The Death of Tragedy (1961) and Irvin Ehrenpreis' Acheiles' Choice (1975) deal primarily with the possibility of modern tragedy.

The relevant portions of G.F.W. Hegel's Dramatic Poetry (1818-1829) and Arthur Schopenhauer's The World as Will and Idea (1819), F.W. Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy (1872), Miguel de Unamuno's The Tragic Sense of Life (1921) and George Santayana's essay, "Tragic Philosophy" (in Essays in Literary Criticism of George Santayana, ed. Irving Singer, 1956) provide philosophical interpretation of the spirit of tragedy and of the tragic pleasure.

The form as well as the spirit of Greek classical tragedy and the individual Greek writers and their plays provide the subject of literary study and critical analysis for many a critic and scholar in the past hundred years. Some, among these critics consulted for the thesis, are John Jones (On Aristotle and the Greek Tragedy, 1962), Gilbert Murray (A History of Ancient Greek Literature, 1967; Aeschylus, the Creator of Tragedy 1940 and Euripides and His Age, 1946), Albin Lesky (Greek Tragedy, 1967), H.D.F. Kitto (Greek Tragedy, A Literary Study, 1973 and Form and Meaning in Drama, 1968), A. Piccard-Cambridge (Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy, 1962), R. Lattimore (The Poetry of Greek Tragedy, 1958) and Edith Hamilton (The Greek Way, 1964). Oxford Readings in Greek Tragedy (ed. Erich Segal, 1983), a collection of recent studies on individual Greek plays adds further to the consulted readings. Walter Benjamin's The Origin of German Tragic Drama (trans. John Osborne, 1977) offers a brief but illuminating discussion on the use and significance of myth in Greek tragedy and the significance of the tragic hero's suffering and death.

There is a well-written account of Seneca's works by F.L. Lucas in Seneca and Elizabethan tragedy (1972). Gordon Braden's "The Rhetoric and Psychology of Power in Seneca's Tragedies" (Arion, 9 : 5-41), T.S. Eliot's "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" (Selected Essays, 1961), C.W. Harington's "Senecan Tragedy" (Arion, 5 : 422-427, 1966), J.W. Cunliffe's introduction chapter in Early English Classical Tragedies (1912), Elizabeth Henry's "Seneca the Young" in Ancient Writers (ed. T.

James Luce, Vol. II, 1982) and L.F. Watling's Seneca, Four Tragedies with Octavia, 1974) deal with the theme, style and spirit of Seneca's tragedies.

The list of studies on the classical tragedy is far from complete. The scholars and critics as mentioned above and those not now referred to but formally acknowledged in the relevant sections of the thesis have furthered the researcher's understanding of tragedy in general and classical tragedy in particular. The researcher, however, has restricted his study to those aspects of Greek tragedy which constitute its beauty and power, taking into special consideration Sophocles' Oedipus Tyrannus. As far as Seneca is concerned, he has concentrated on the peculiarities of his (Seneca's) dramatic art and outlook (as manifest mainly in Thyestes) that appealed most to the English dramatists who took him as their literary guide.

The third category includes the studies on the impact of Senecan drama on some of the tragedies of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. There is a good number of critical studies with apparent adequacy right from J.W. Cunliffe's Early English Classical Tragedies (1912) and The Influence of Seneca upon English Tragedies (1893, reprint 1925) to Gordon Braden's Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition (1985). Many competent scholars have been in the field with their exegesis : J.W. Manly ("The Influence of Seneca's Tragedies upon English Drama" in The Tragedies of Seneca, Trans. Frank Justus Miller, 1907), A. H. Witherspoon (Influence of Robert Garnier on Elizabethan Drama, 1924), C. Mancell (Our Seneca, 1941), F.P. Wilson (Elizabethan and Jacobean, 1945),

T.S. Eliot ("Seneca in Elizabethan Translation" in Elizabethan Dramatists, 1958; "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" in Selected Essays, 1961; and Introduction to Seneca, his Tenne Tragedies, Translated into English, ed. by Thomas Newton Anno 1581), Wolfgang Clemen (English Tragedy before Shakespeare, 1961), Hardin Craig ("The Shackling of Accident : A Study of Elizabethan Tragedy" in Elizabethan Drama, Modern Essays in Criticism, 1961), Eugene M. Waith (The Herculean Hero in Marlowe, Chapman, Shakespeare and Dryden, 1962), G.K. Hunter (Introduction to Marston's Antonio's Revenge, 1965), J.W. Tompson (The Origins of English Tragedy, 1967), Fredson Bowers (Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy, 1971), F.L. Lucas (Seneca and the Elizabethan Tragedy, 1972), H.B. Charlton (The Senecan Tradition in Renaissance Tragedy, 1974) etc. Una Ellis-Fermor in The Jacobean Drama : An Interpretation (1961) and Irving Ribner in The Jacobean Tragedy : The Quest for Moral Order (1962) deal with the impact of Seneca's tragic outlook on the Jacobean tragedies succintly if not exhaustively.

The importance of Seneca on English drama is minimised by Howard Baker (Induction to Tragedy, 1339, 1965) and G.K. Hunter ("Seneca and the Elizabethan : A case-study in Influence" in Shakespeare Survey, 20, 1967).

Stephen Orgel's The Influence of Power : Political Theatre in the English Renaissance (1975), Stephen Greenblatt's Renaissance Self-Fashioning, from More to Shakespeare (1980), Jonathan Dollimore's Radical Tragedy (1984) and Alan Sinfield's Literature in the Protestant England 1560-1600 (1985) throw light on the forces other than Senecan working in the literature of the Elizabethan and

Jacobean periods.

Critics and scholars have analysed the various facets of Senecan influence on English drama, fragmentary, palpable, extensive or obscure, as the nature may be. There is, however, no agreed opinion on the nature and significance of the said impact. For instance, while John W. Cunliffe[2] holds that what English tragedy would have been without the example of Seneca, it is hard to imagine, Gordon Bracan[3] argues that the real case for Elizabethan Senecanism rests on a few generic features and matters of technique, a certain sense of mood and feeling, and primarily, a general wash of sentiments and topoi that can be called Senecan. The researcher does not support either of the views. He tries to establish the fact that the English dramatists assimilated much of the Senecan drama but they added their imagination to it and reshaped its characters and conventions to suit their audience.

The fourth category covers the kind of literature that deals with the impact of Attic tragedy on the plays of Milton, Shelley, Arnold and Swinburne. There are some studies that cover the whole range of literature bearing the subject. They, however, lack elaborate analyses of the said impact on the individual playwrights and plays. Gilbert Highet's The Classical Tradition (1967), J.A.K. Thomson's Classical Influences on English Poetry (1962) and The Classical Background of English Literature (1950), G. Wilson Knight's The Golden Labyrinth (1962), Anniah Gowda's Dramatic Poetry (From Medieval to Modern Times) 1972, belong to this category. There are again independent studies on the individual

plays showing their indebtedness to Greek tragic form and spirit, but they, too, naturally do not help to assess, in full, the impact of Attic tragedy on English drama in general. The two essays, one each, on Prometheus Unbound and Atalanta in Calydon in Maurice Bowra's The Romantic Imagination (1976), the clever analysis of Atalanta in Calydon and Erechtheus and Merope in Douglas Bush's Mythology and Romantic Tradition in English Poetry (1977), the revealing study of Milton's adherence to the form and spirit of Greek tragedy in Samson Agonistes in W.R. Parker's Milton's Debt to Greek Tragedy in Samson Agonistes (1937), the commendable edition of Prometheus Unbound by Vida D. Scudder (1892) and that of Merope by J. Churton Collins, (1917) W.R. Rutland's reading of Swinburne's classical style in Swinburne : A Nineteenth Century Hellene (1931), the admirable analysis of Shelley's response to the myth of Prometheus in Prometheus Unbound in O.W. Campbell's Shelley and the Unromantics (1924) are useful for one working on the subject.

The objective of the proposed study, in this section, is to systematise a hitherto incoherent discussion on the Attic impact on English drama in an assimilable form. To that end six relevant plays have been brought under one fold and an analysis of the said impact on these plays is made in an attempt to see how far the English poets have been successful in adhering to the form of the Greek tragedy and in capturing its spirit and with what result.

The last category covers the critical studies on the nature and significance of the classical analogues in English plays, particularly in the selected plays of Bridges, O'Neill and Eliot. It is found that systematic study of the kind is not readily available. However, the individual plays and playwrights have been the haunts of several critics. Bridges' handling of the Promethean myth forms a part of discussion in F.R. Leavis' New Bearings in English Poetry (1961). Doris V. Falk's Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension (1958), Travis Bogard's Contour in Time, the plays of Eugene O'Neill (1972), Thomas H. Porter's Myth and Modern American Drama (1969), to name only a few, offer valuable discussion of O'Neill's recasting of the Greek tragedies in Mourning Becomes Electra. Eliot's use of the Greek tragic myth and chorus forms critical studies in Grover Smith's T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning (1967), F.O. Matthiessen's The Achievement of T.S. Eliot (1959), B.C.S. Maxwell's The Poetry of T.S. Eliot (1961), Raymond Williams' Drama from Ibsen to Eliot (1954), Carol H. Smith's T.S. Eliot's Dramatic Theory and Practice (1963), Helen Gardner's The Art of T.S. Eliot (1949), D.E. Jones' The Plays of T.S. Eliot (1960), E. Martin Browne's The Making of T.S. Eliot's Plays (1969) etc. There are, besides, hundreds of critical essays on the nature and significance of the classical analogues in Eliot's and O'Neill's plays rendering impossible to mention all of them in such a short space like this.

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The nature of the proposed work in this section relates primarily to two basic questions — to what extent does the presence of the classical analogues influence the techniques of the concerned plays; and is this presence necessary to establish the meaning of the plays? A further consideration relates specifically to the value of using analogues from Greek drama in an age when the classics are not common knowledge.

Conclusion:

From the above analysis it is very clear that there is no coherent and comprehensive study on the subject undertaken for the present research. And if there are any, they are not exhaustive. Several of the studies mentioned above deal with the influence either of Greek tragedy or of Senecan tragedy on English drama. This brief overview further highlights the fact that there exists a major gap in understanding the exact nature and signifificance of the impact of classical tragedy on English drama as a whole.

Moreover a truly comperative perspective has not been followed in any of the works cited above. Whenever comparative analysis has been attempted it has been piecemeal. Hence this study has been undertaken to bridge a genuine research gap in an important field in the history of English tragedy.

N O T E S AND R E F E R E N C E S

1. The complete bibliography of this as well as of the other books as mentioned in this chapter is given in the appendix of the thesis.

2. Cunliffe, John W., The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy. Archon Books, Hamden, Conn., 1965, p. 126.

3. Braden, Gordon, Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition. New Haven : Yale University Press, 1985, p. 175

C H A P T E R II

C L A S S I C A L T R A G E D Y :
T H E T R A G I C A R T

Chapter II

Classical Tragedy : The Tragic Art

1. Introduction

Oscar Mandel begins his discussion of tragedy in A Definition of Tragedy with the following observation: "Discussions of tragedy are numberless; definitions of the term few; and of those only one has endured longer than the attacks against it".[1] Mandel is right to hint that Aristotle's definition of tragedy is, up to now, the most fruitful approach to the subject. But, that, too, is not taken to be the perfect by some of the critics and theorists. The fact is that it is not easy to have a comprehensive and typical definition of tragedy. The three doyens of classical Greek tragedy, namely, Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.), Sophocles (496-406 B.C.) and Euripides (c. 480-406 B.C.) were the first of the tragedians and it was upon their works[2] that Aristotle formed his conclusions about tragedy in the 4th century B.C. Now, if tragedy, like major art forms, is to be taken as an expression and reflection of man's nature and his vision of the universe and his role and position in it in any society or period, then the tone as well as the scale of tragedy is very likely to vary in the changing circumstances.

Still Greek classical tragedy is regarded to be the model of Tragic Art. During the fifth century before Christ, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides wrote tragedies of a power and beauty that has never been equalled. After that all through antiquity nothing was allowed to be a tragedy that was not constructed upon the Attic model. Such is the beauty and perfection of the classical

Greek tragedies that even in modern times dramatists who felt their power and spell, have tried to produce in their languages, the form of Greek tragedy. John Milton's Samson Agonistes (1671), Matthew Arnold's Merope (1858) and A.C. Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon (1865) and Erechtheus (1876) are some attempts to naturalise Greek tragedy in English. P.B. Shelley's Prometheus Unbound (1820), a lyrical drama, however, was written not so much as an experiment in a classical form of art; Shelley was determined to write his own version of what happened when Prometheus was unbound. Shelley's Hellas (1822) was written on the lines of Aeschylus' The Persians. In the twentieth century there were some attempts on the part of the dramatists to adapt the stories of Greek tragedies to a contemporary or near contemporary setting or to interpret them in the light of contemporary thought. Among the few dramatists who belonged to this category of dramatists, O'Neill was quite successful in his attempt to 'translate' a Greek trilogy, the Oresteia of Aeschylus into modern terms in Mourning Becomes Electra (1932). T.S. Eliot who wrote a choric play, Murder in the Cathedral (1935) transposed the actions of Greek tragedies (The Oresteia, The Alcestis,Ion and Oedipus at Colonus) to modern settings in The Family Reunion (1939), The Cocktail Party (1950) The Confidential Clerk (1954) and The Elder Statesmen (1958).

The classical stimuli acting upon English tragedy in its beginning, however, was the Roman Seneca (4 BC - A.D. 65). For the early Elizabethans classical tragedy meant Seneca. The Senecan model produced approximately two kinds of tragedy in English :

academic drama based on classical rules and the much more important genre of revenge tragedy. Tudor and Jacobean dramatists owed many debts to Seneca, whose influence extended through Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare to John Webster.

Considering the intense and profuse gusto of the English dramatists for the Greek tragedians and for Seneca, as the individual cases may be, it is necessary to characterize what **kind of** effect classical tragedy has on these poets. This attempt calls for a basic consideration of the form and spirit of Greek and Senecan tragedies.

Now, what is the essence of a tragedy proper? H.J. Muller in <u>The Spirit of Tragedy</u> observed : "In a historical view, the clue to its [of tragedy] essence is not form but content and purpose. Ultimately, it is the tragic spirit, the tragic sense of life"[3]. H.D.F. Kitto has a similar observation. He holds[4] that if we grope our way to the fundamental tragic conception of each play or a group of plays, we can hope to explain their form and style. In other words, it is the dramatist's sense of the tragic which gives meaning to his drama. Before going into any discussion of the form and spirit of classical tragedies in such a work as the present one, it is, therefore, important to trace in broad outlines, the salient traits of the tragic vision of the first tragedians, namely, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

The 'tragic sense of life' is hardly reducible to easy formulas. In a general sense it can be described as a certain apprehension about human life. The great Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno in his monumental book, The Tragic Sense of Life[5] describes it as an attitude toward life which is latent in every man and may be evoked by experience. George Satayana, while discussing the tragic experience writes, "where life is adventurous, combative and prophetic, inspiration must be so too. Ideas however spontaneous, will then claim to be knowledge of ulterior facts and will be in constant danger of being contradicted by the truth. Experience, from being Lyrical will become tragic; for what is tragedy but the conflict between inspiration and truth?"[6] Murray Kreiger has used the term in its relation with tragedy. In his essay, "Tragedy and the Tragic Vision" ("Kenyan Review", Spring, 1958) he uses it in the sense of the romantic, rebellious, demonic spirit which needs, in his words, the ultimate soothing power of the aesthetic form which contained it — of tragedy itself — in order to produce for the world a sanity which the vision itself denied".[7]

According to R.B. Sewall the tragic vision in its first phase "calls up out of the depths the first (and last) of all questions, the question of existence".[8] It sees man as "questioner ... facing mysterious and demonic forces"[9] in his own nature and outside, and in "the irreducible facts of suffering and death".[10] It impels the questioner "to fight against his destiny".[11] Ultimately this "instinctive"[12] phase of tragic vision was absorbed and "verbalized"[13] in tragedy. The artist, however, contemplates "the thrust and counter thrust of man against destiny".[14] Whatever

he finds man capable of in action or under external pressure, is to him "the truth".[15] That is what constitutes his tragic vision.

It follows then that the basic concern of a tragedian is with the root, nature and significance of human suffering. The tragic sense of life lies in the sense of the permanence and mystery of suffering.

2. Greek Tragedy

A. Tragic Vision of the Greek Poets:

Tragedy was an achievement of the ancient Greece, particularly of the Age of Pericles (c. 500-429 B.C.). Historically the very age offered a fitting soil for the birth of tragedy. Critics are unequivocal in asserting that tragedy is a Greek creation. The German scholar-critic Walter Benjamin unhesitatingly decides, "Tragedy begins with the Greeks, is extinguished with them, and after centuries, its 'rules' only are revived".[16] Edith Hamilton analyses the temper of the Periclean age in her inimitable style in The Greek Way. It was a time when life was seen exalted, "a time of thrilling and unfathomable possibilities".[17] Men were thinking more and more about human life and beginning to perceive that life was bound up with evil, that injustice was the nature of things. These people, — the Greeks, — had conquered at Marathan (490 B.C.) and at Salamis (480 B.C.) defeating the Persian invasion. Men knew that they could do heroic deeds. Peril, terror and anguish had sharpened men's spirits and deepened their insights. "This knowledge of something immediately wrong in the world", to quote Hamilton's words, "came to a poet with his poet's power to see beauty in the truth of human life and the first tragedy was written".[18]

Aeschylus was the first tragedian. He was born about 525 B.C. and he died in 450 B.C. The high spirit of his time was strong in Aeschylus. He realised that life was a perilous adventure, but the fulness of life was in the hazards of life. Hamilton sums up Aeschylus' outlook on life in the following words: "Mankind he saw fast bound to calamity by the working of unknown powers, committed to a strange venture, companioned by disaster. But to the heroic, desperate odds fling a challenge".[19]

Aeschylus' tragic vision, however, has a deeper realization. He seeks to comprehend the fundamental issues and deeper realities of life and death. And all this he did as a profound religious thinker. In his tragedies man's inordinate desires come into conflict with a divine order which reveals to man his own limitation and gives meaning to his downfall. His philosophy enunciates that gods do not send disaster without reason but allow disaster to develop out of sin previously committed by men. Such sin is fated for man but not in such a way that he is absolved of his responsibility. The suffering which ensues is the road which leads man to recognition of the eternal validity of divine decrees. To learn through suffering is the road, Xerxes must follow in The Persians. This idea is also found to dominate Aeschylus' trilogy, The Oresteia. That suffering leads to wisdom is put forward as the meaning of life in Agamemnon. Wisdom comes to us by the awful grace of God,

who in his eyes, is One and in him rests the final and reconciling truth or the mystery of undeserved suffering. Aeschylus says in the hymn of Agamemnon (176):

"From the gods who sit in grandeur
Grace comes somewhat violent"[20].

Sophocles, like Aeschylus, shared the temper of his age. He reached maturity at a time when Athens was great, but her greatness differed from that of the years of the Persian wars. During the Persian wars, rivalries, weaknesses and external pressure had brought the community to the brink of destruction. The spirit of patriotism became a legend and a new mental attitude conceived an image of the world in which the gods who had fought for them there were present. Over it all hung the threat of inevitable conflict with Sparta, a conflict that could only be solved by complete victory or utter defeat.

Sophocles' tragedies reveal that he was aware of the two aspects of the life of his day : the unbridled pride of human will and the powers that lie in wait to destroy man's hybris or pride. He could, therefore, depict the most terrible suffering in his tragedies and create the most tragic figures of the Attic stage.

Sophocles' world is full of gods and events are god-given. But the significance of divine activity is not revealed to men. The transcendent powers which Odysseus has to face in Ajax may end his life at any moment, but he will not be perplexed once he has realised the limitations of his existence and has made this knowledge his own.

Sophocles' characters develop from the very roots of human existence. There is an inner citadel where Sophocles' men rule their own spirits. In dying and suffering, they die and suffer nobly. His heroes confront harsh moral choices or irrational suffering. The transcendent powers which they have to face may crush their lives at any moment, but they will not be perplexed once they have realised the limitations of their existence. In this "calm, truly heroic acceptance", Lesky finds the secret of Sophoclean serenity [21].

Sophocles retained a cheerful outlook on life. Jones explains Sophocle' serene vision in the following words: "Life's darkness and its light are not opposed as negation to affirmation within the Sophoclean experience; indeed the entire antithetical sense is drowned in a vision of self-poise"[22]. Lesky understands, "He [Sophocles] saw into the darker depths of life over which we move unawares, and experienced the sheer joy of the radiance, with which, the gods suffuse the world"[23].

Sophocles believes in the eternal laws of justice and religion. Edith Hamilton would suggest that this is the spirit of acceptance. He is an upholder of established order, fair harmony and sobriety. He thinks divine justice and law are engraved in our conscience. Gods are immanent in this world. The hero's task is informed by a pattern, hitherto invisible, which he can discern.

It is found that in Sophocles' tragedies, human suffering visits the innocent as much as it does the guilty. The poet

has a tendency to sharpen the edge of suffering. In his works there is a conviction that suffering is inherent in human nature.

Euripides brought tragedy down to the level of ordinary human existence. He was in line with the sophistic thinking of his day in considering man himself as the centre of events. In his dramas (particularly in The Medea and the Hippolytus) destiny evolves entirely out of man himself and the strength of his passions. Euripides chose for his tragedies situations of violent stress, showing men and women in the grip of passion or torn by conflicting impulses. The firm belief in the traditional gods had declined and the influence of independent thought and feeling created divinities which were far more akin to the new concept of man than their mythical prototypes.

Artistotle considered Euripides "the most tragic of tragic poets" (Poetics, XIII, 9-10) modern critics, however, think that he is, rather, "the saddest of the poets"[24]. Many of his extant plays were produced during the Peloponnesian War (431-404 B.C.). He looked at war through all the sham glory to the evil beneath. Jacqueline de Romilly writes, "One might say that in his tragedies he loved to echo and re echo the sobs of women in mourning, as wretched in one camp, as in the other, and a bitterness for a happiness for ever lost"[25]. Euripides is the great painter of the dark depths of pain what he knows best. In Hamilton's words, "he feels, as no other writer has felt, the pitifulness of human life as of children suffering helplessly what they do not know and

cannot understand. No poet's ear has been so sensitively attuned as his to the still sad music of humanity"[26].

The Greek tragic vision invariably centres on the suffering of a soul that can suffer greatly. It is the spiritual suffering that matters most for the Greek tragedians, — the suffering that squeezes and crushes the mind of man to the point of numbness and despair. Albin Lesky[27], however, comments that Greek classical tragedy in its greatest period does not represent a world-view which we may call totally tragic since such a view rejects the idea of the Absolute — of a meaningful universe that is divine in origin. Classical tragedy, on the contrary, presupposes such an order, and its tragic events confirm it. But we should bear one thing in mind. What the Greek masters are ultimately concerned with is Man. In J.A.K. Thomson's words, "it was man himself that interested the Greeks"[28]. To put it in a more categorical way, the Greek tragic poets were concerned with the dignity of human soul. Unamuno's analysis[29] of tragic vision strikes the same note. The tragic feature of the human predicament is that it originates in man himself; and secondly, it is not soluble by man but demands the rationally unprovable existence of God. Edith Hamilton quotes one of the characters in Euripides' tragedies in order to point out the significance of the existence of God in Greek tragic world. She writes, 'Pain could exalt and in tragedy for a moment men could have sight of a meaning beyond their grasp. "Yet had God not turned us in his hand and cast to earth our greatness", Euripides makes the old Trojan queen say in her extremity, "we would have passed away giving nothing to men. They would have found no theme for song in us nor made great poems from our sorrows" '.[30]

When Aeschylus began to write his plays, there was no complete form of tragedy made ready for him. As a matter of fact questions of form and technique are fully resolved only when fully related to the mind of the artist who makes and uses them. The technical history of Greek tragedy is largely an account of the efforts to make an ideal pattern to which the tragic vision of the individual writer may conform. Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides — each have a different fashion of tragic thought, as we have seen. They invented and moulded the form because it enabled them exactly what they wanted to do, that is, to present their conception of the principles or forces that operate in life. As a result, Greek classical tragedy, during its years of efflorescene, passed through few distinct forms. The pre-Aeschylean drama was enacted by one actor and chorus. Aristotle says in the Poetics that Aeschylus introduced the second actor, reduced the part played by the chorus and attached primary importance to the spoken word. Sophocles introduced the third actor with some painting. Euripides, however, destroyed the inherited mythical infrastructure, retaining the mythical figures and drastically altering the legends. He went back, in nearly all his tragedies, to the drama of the generation before Aeschylus' time — a drama of simple style, which only needed a new leavening of Euripidean rationalism to become in his hands an instrument of propaganda for the fifth century Illumination.

B. Greek Tragedy : the Matter

For the Greek tragedians the myths were the source of the tragic matter. The subjects were regularly drawn from the legendary past, especially, that part of it which recounted the fortunes of the House of Atreus, the House of Labdacus and the House of Priam. No doubt, the tragic poets often went outside these three cycles for their subjects, but there was a marked tendency to keep to them. The old tragic legends were very useful for more than one reason. First, the legendary past was heroic. Secondly, it was known to the audience and at the same time removed from contemporary history. In the typical Greek tragedy the hero is found to walk unconsciously to his doom, the audience watching him in helpless foreknowledge. The art of the dramatist is employed in arousing and maintaining this suspense — this waiting for the blow to fall without knowing just when it will fall — until the soul of the spectator is purged by pity and fear.

The tragedians drew on the ancient myths. But owing to limitless variations down the centuries, very little was immutably fixed about the myths. The Greek tragedians were, however, not the obedient servants but the imperious masters of their sources. Aeschylus and Euripides, in particular, gave the old stories radically new meanings and adapted them to the vital concerns of their fellow Athenians. The great German scholar-critic

Walter Benjamin shows how tragic poetry is a tendentious re-shaping of the legend. He writes, "... the re-shaping of the legend is not motivated by the search for tragic situations but it is undertaken with a tendentious purpose"[31]. The tragic poetry, in his view, is based on the idea of sacrifice. 'The purpose' is to bring a fuller significance of the sacrifice of the tragic hero to the audience. Apart from being "an atoning sacrifice to the legendary gods, who are upholding an ancient right"[32], it acquires the sense of "a representative action, in which new aspects of the life of the nation become manifest"[33].

Besides the Greek tragedians made the mythic stories convey their own thoughts about the political, moral and religious issues of the fifth century Athens. It, however, does not mean that tragedy, in the hands of the Greeks, was a commentary on life with an "edifying idea"[34], which the dramatist would work up in his play; or, that the entire work was from the start subordinated to "pedagogic intention"[35]. It means that the play would be set up within a framework of accepted ideas which would receive "fresh strength and significance"[36] from the play. The Greek dramatist was, after all, an artist. He felt, thought and worked like a painter or a musician, not like a philosopher or a teacher. As H.D.F. Kitto[37] holds, each of the plays is a work of art, and therefore unique, each obeying the laws of its being.

The real basis of a classical Greek tragedy, however, is not the story. Nor is it the people who figure in the story. From

the material the Greek dramatist selected only what was immediately relevant to his task, and the task was to recreate "the inner reality"[38]. Both Aeschylus and Sophocles believed in a world-order which is ultimately rational. In case of Aeschylus the inner or unifying reality proves to be the conflict between the two laws of the Dike or world-order and Hybris. When Aeschylus depicts a conflict between one good and another, he is depicting a world-order in the process of evolution. In the Oresteia there is a forward movement from conflict to further conflict and to an ultimate reconciliation which ensures the establishment of a moral and social order out of chaos. With Sophocles there is a change in the conception of the Dike. It is something inherent in the nature of the universe, and of man; it is something eternal. When Sophocles represents Oedipus as being destroyed though essentially innocent, he is not presuming a flaw in the universe but recognising that its majestic order "may cut the thread of a single life and requite venial unwisdom with utterly disproportionate penalties"[39]. In his plays, the innocent do suffer; their suffering is seen to be part of a world-order which is definitely intelligible. With Euripides the inner reality is shifted to the inner world of contrary passions in man.

Taken as a whole, the Greek dramatist presents a problem or a question in such a way that we see what it really means for a human being. He asserts that the forces which shape or destroy our lives lie outside the governance of reason or justice. There are also around us demoniac energies which prey upon the soul and

turn it to madness or which poison our will so that we inflict irreparable outrages upon ourselves and upon those we love. Greek tragedy, in general, holds up the mirror to a disintegration in the life of an individual who feels himself a victim of antagonistic forces, dreams of a newer order, but is powerless to initiate it, resists and struggles against the doom but is crushed out of existence by opponent forces. For Aristotle Sophocles's Oedipus Tyrannus was the model tragedy. It is "the great drama of the defencelessness"[40], as Albin Lesky has characterised it. In it every step seems to be a wrong step, because it entangles Oedipus more and more in the coils of his destiny. It is, so to say, an overwhelmingly terrible demonstration of Ruin, of Death standing at the elbow to strike; but it is, at the same time, the demonstration of the strength of the human soul to dare all, see all, suffer all. It is in course of this kind of suffering that the Greek protagonist gets the truth about himself. The essence of the hero's personality is brought out by the suffering, he undergoes: "I suffer, I will to suffer, I learn by suffering; therefore I am". In the words of George Steiner, "... in the very excess of his suffering lies man's claim to dignity .... Man is ennobled by the vengeful spite or injustice of the gods. It does not make him innocent, but it hallows him as if he had passed through flame"[41]. The spectator is also touched by the dignity of soul in agony. The fall of the hero affects him, comes close to him, changes him. He is deeply stirred when he experiences the essential tragedy inherent in the fall.

The protagonist of the Greek tragedy, caught in an inescapable conflict, is fully aware of his situation. He suffers no doubt but he suffers knowingly. Lesky has a very important observation in this connection : "Tragedy was a product of Greek way of thinking, and one of its components is 'the need to explain' ... That is why the great figures of the Attic stage never tire of expounding, in long uninterrupted speeches the reasons for their acts, the agony of their decisions and the powers they have to contend with"[42].

The hero gets defeat and he dies ultimately. But his is a proud and grandiloquent acceptance of defeat and death. In his essay, "Tragic Philosophy", George Santayana explains the ultimate significance of the death of the tragic hero in the following words: "Tragedy must end in death, for any immortality which the poet or his hero may otherwise believe in is irrelevant to the passion that has absorbed him. That passion, at least dies, and all he cares for dies with it. The possibility of ulterior lives or alien interests destined in future to agitate the world makes no difference to this drama in this soul"[43]. The moment of the death of the tragic hero, he describes, as "the supreme moment, when a man is entering eternity, his measure taken, his heart revealed, and his pride entire"[44].

At the core of all Greek tragedies is the struggle of man against Fate. The action of the tragedy involves the gods and the

cosmic order of which both mortals and gods are part. In tragedy gods and mortals and gods and gods interact, explicitly or implicitly, sometimes to reaffirm an old order, sometimes to create new relationships and a new kind of consciousness in the cosmos. Behind these gods is Fate, determining the destiny alike of men and gods, and against Fate it is useless to contend.

It is, however, not Fate but Nemesis that is the prevailing note of a Greek tragedy. Nemesis appears strongest in Aeschylus, as a prophetic and awful law, mysteriously felt and terribly revealed. Sophocles uses it to point the deep moralities which govern human life. In Euripides it degenerates into something more akin to a sense of vicissitudes; it becomes more sentimental — less a religious and moral principle than a phenomenon inspiring fear and pity.

The undeniable powers of Fate are clearly recognized in Greek tragedy but they are not admired. The Greek tragedians looked to superhuman forces, personal or impersonal for a purpose behind catastrophe. But this purpose does not, within the whole compass of a drama, preclude the free will of the characters or their responsibility. Most of the time they are presented as free agents working out their own destinies. In Oliver Taplin's words, "never, are the characters of Greek tragedy portrayed as automata or marionettes"[45]. Walter Benjamin shows how in tragedy the hold of demonic fate is even broken by the hero: "Not, however, in the replacement of the inscrutable pagan concatenation of guilt

and atonement by the purity of men, absolved and reconciled with the pure god. It is rather that in tragedy pagan man realizes that he is better than his gods, but this realization strikes him dumb, and it remains unarticulated".[46] George Santayana put the matter in the following way: "Fate was inhuman; it was cruel, it excited and crushed every finite wish; yet there was something in man that ... triumphed in that ruthless march of order and necessity. Something superior, not inferior".[47]

The tone and tenour of the Greek tragedy were determined by the fact of its association with religion. Aeschylus was a profound religious dramatist and he was radical at the same time. He pushed aside the outside trappings of religion to search into the thing itself. He realised that pain and terror are the steps of the ladder of knowledge and in God rests the meaning of the world; in the knowledge of Him all wisdom is contained:

> "Cry aloud without fear the victory of Zeus,
> You will not have failed the truth". (Agamemnon)[48]

Sophocles believed in the eternal laws of justice and religion. To him all that happens is god-given. Divine justice and law are engraved in our conscience. Sophocles' religious essence comes closer to the percept of the Delphic Oracle , 'know thyself', which shows man his human limits.

Attempts have been made to find invariable ritual elements in Greek tragedy[49]. There were certainly some ritualistic procedures during the course of the events of the plays, for example, supplication, ghost-raising etc. But they are not

imposed from without. Modern critics think that Greek tragedy reflects and exploits the rituals of the real world, of course, but it is not itself a ritual. Oliver Taplin observes in this connection: "It was a necessary pre condition of the great age of Greek tragedy that the drama should not have been a ritual. It had to be human and various, beyond the control of repeated superstitions, ancestral taboo, actions stylized and conditions beyond anything mimetic — it had to exploit ritual, not just conserve or subserve it".[50]

C. The Dramatic Art and Pattern of Construction

Tragedy, says Aristotle, is the representation of a serious action performed by characters sufficiently like us to arouse our sympathy but better than we are. The action in a Greek tragedy shows the change in the hero's fortune. This change is from good to bad. The incidents comprised in the tragic action are indissolubly linked, admitting nothing extraneous to the action. This is what is called the Unity of Action in a Greek tragedy. Aristotle says that plot is the soul of tragedy. With a distinct beginning, middle and end, the plot is first complicated and then resolved. The complication consists of the group of incidents which precede the decisive turn in the action, and the resolution of the group of incidents which follow it. The complication culminates in 'the turn of fortune' which is known as 'peripeteia', meaning a change from good fortune to bad or from bad fortune to good. It may be

accompanied with recognition or, as it is called, 'anagnorisis', that is, a change from ignorance to knowledge.

In order to ensure perfect balance and harmony of design, the Greek tragedians observed certain basic principles. They insisted on simplicity in the evolution of plot, which is the pattern that shapes the action around a particular moment isolated from the current of life. Greek tragedy gives us an intense moment of life. Helen Bacon's proposition in this regard may be quoted: "Tragedy reenacts, not the whole event, but the moment of critical choice that has irreversible consequences, usually for everybody on the stage, the moment that is the culmination of many past events, the turning point after which everything is permanently different"[51]. The critic also notes that the magnitude of the tragic event is such that "spectators, even readers two millennia later, are participants"[52]. This is why Greek tragedy does not end in a disaster. The said critic puts the matter in a beautiful language : "Tragedy is ... an act of assimilation. Not only the occurrence but its implications must be lived through on the stage and by the audience. This living-through is part of the event, its completion and validation, the means by which, for all its brevity, the tragic moment becomes a permanent possession of humanity"[53]. Greek tragedy, thus, does not deal with the whole of life, but with a mythical moment, the moment between the deed and the expiation, the crime and the punishment.

Towards the same end, Greek tragedies allowed only a minimum number of characters. Aristotle insists that character is the secondary thing in the tragedy. He means to say that plot is of more importance than the character because plot is but the deployment of character in action. In a typical Greek tragedy the centre of interest is fixed on the protagonist who is an intermediate sort of personage — a man not too good or too bad, but essentially like ourselves, who is to take the initial step. Since this step would eventually lead to catastrophe, it is seen eventually to be taken with insufficient knowledge and in ignorance of the consequences. This is what is called the 'hamartia' in Greek tragedy. It may also be explained as the intellectual failure to grasp what is right, a failure of human insight amidst the confusion of life which surrounds us. Explaining the nature of hamartia, Lesky writes that it was a type of guilt for which no one was responsible, but "which none the less was objective, was real, a horror in the eyes of gods and men, capable of affecting an entire country like a pestilence"[54]. Oedipus [in Oedipus Rex] is a concrete and thoroughly Greek example. It is within the scope of this type of error or guilt that we find tragedy at its most impressive on the Attic stage.

But it should not be too readily assumed that the tragic hero or heroine is necessarily afflicted with a 'flaw'. Actually innocent people are also tripped by tragedy like Philoctetes and Antigone. It should be remembered that tragedy is deeply affecting because it projects the glory and good in man.

The so-called Unities of Time and Place were the consequences of the focus on the critical moment in the Greek tragedy. It is natural that the more concentrated the moment, the less room there is for long lapses of time or changes of scenes. Helen Bacon explains the significance of the tragic moment in the following way : "Because the brief tragic moment is the summation and fruition of all that has led up to it and determinant of what is to follow, most plays encompass much more than they enact .... It is the concentration of meanings, past, present, and future in the moment enacted on the stage, not just the fate of the individuals, that gives tragedy its impact"[55] Aristotle himself admired this intensity of tragedy, its ability to achieve its effect in a small compass (Poetics 1462a-1462b). It goes to the credit of the Greek tragedians who let the action play out within a strictly defined area of brilliant illumination. The Greek dramastist, in Kitto's words, "uses only one focus .... The mind of the Greek dramatist is a fixed light : there is the one area of illumination, and outside that, a darkness which nothing tempts us to explore, for we know that it conceals nothing which concerns us".[56]

The magnitude of the event depicted in the Greek tragedy is such as to affect, as we have already noted, people other than those directly involved. It is an event significant enough to call for the presence of a chorus. A choral performance is a response to an event that affects a community's sense of itself and its relation to the gods. The Chorus in Greek tragedy not merely

comments on the action or communicates universal truths but also represents the thought of the play. A group of persons occupying a place below the stage, it knows the past, observes the present and has a shrewd sense of the future, and it gives the audience not individual judgement but the collective wisdom of the community. But it is not a detached spectator; it participates in the action in the sense that it suffers its consequences. Its wisdom is rooted in the action and seems to emanate from the characters. The Chorus is one of the devices by which what would otherwise remain an individual experience is magnified and generalised. The static, almost the rigid presence of the Chorus throughout the action, overseeing, inciting, praising condemning every movement of the protagonist, symbolises a social formation in which the inherited family and social structure must be maintained at all cost.

The Chorus, being in a sense 'the ideal spectator' on the one hand, helps the protagonist to control his passions by sympathy, admonitions and instruction; and on the other hand, by their songs and dances, they provide an aesthetic relief to the overcharged feelings of the spectator. By fulfilling these functions, the Chorus, though not part of the action, became an integral part of the Greek tragedy. Taking this role of the chorus into account, Aristotle says in the Poetics that it should be an integral part of the whole, and make a share in the action.

Matthew Arnold in his Preface to Merope shows how the chorus in a Greek tragedy helps to safeguard the preservation of equilibrium and moderation — to combine, to harmonise, to deepen for the spectator the feelings naturally excited in him by the sight of what was passing on the stage — this is the one grand effect produced by the Chorus in Greek tragedy. He writes, "After tragic situations of the greatest intensity, a desire for relief and relaxation is no doubt, natural, both to the poet and to the spectator, but the finer feelings of the Greeks found this relief ... in lyrical song [of the Chorus]."[57]

Chorus is the most remarkable feature of Greek tragedy. Sophocles, unlike Euripides, was careful to secure the unity and symmetry in the structure of his choruses, so that each chorus, each choric expression of the lyrical element, produces in itself the same harmonious effect as the drama, in totality, produces. Thus by the systematic employment of 'strophe', 'anti strophe' and 'epode', a regular correspondence of part with part, a balanced antithesis of thought to thought, of emotion to emotion, is effected, while in an independent final stanza the 'epode', the balance of the whole is struck.

Next to consider is the frugality of expression which is a decided feature of Greek tragedy. There is a severe economy of details in Greek tragedy. The details are not extraneous but organic to the whole. The Greek tragedians make every detail a significant part of the illuminating design. There are no bypaths, no digression

or deviations — the road to catastrophe is rigorously straight. What was aimed at in Greek tragedy was simplicity and concentration. As a result Greek tragedy is very short in its compass. As is said by Pitto[58], the finished structure of Aeschylus' tragedy has the clarity and force of a single statement, the firmness and the cohesion which we find in a mathematical demonstration. Sophocles is as austere as Aeschylus in his methods. He never draws character where character is not necessary. The Greek dramatists had also a hatred of excess in statement, in colour, in ornament as the excess in anything, they thought, weakened the total effect of a work of art. Sophocles' dramas are distinguished by the purity of form and singleness of artistic purpose. About Sophocles' sense of proportion Edith Hamilton writes in her essay on Sophocles: "Excess — the word is not to be mentioned in his presence. Restraint is his as no other writer's. Beauty to him does not inhere in color, or light and shade ... it has its root not in the mystery but in clear truthfulness".[59]

Classical Greek tragedy is not only short in its compass; it is also perfect within limits. The limitations set by its religious origin were accepted as given; the form of the play and the treatment of the myth might develop and evolve, but always within the bounding line drawn by tradition. Greek tragedy is full of varied emotion. It allows a character to make a great, long, rich, continuous speech, with emotion surging and welling and falling back and surging upwards again. But the emotion and imagination are controlled and disciplined by reason. The emotional, the

incomprehensible elements are balanced by the known clarity, exactitude and mathematical precision. Both the striving for ultimate intellectual clarity and the desire to be consumed in the fire of passionate emotions are "profoundly and fundamentally Greek".[60]

Greek tragedy imparts not only significance but also order to suffering. We feel an overwhelming compassion for the hero who undergoes the tribulations and waste which are the stuff of tragedy. But the experience of a Greek tragedy is, by no means, a random series of sensations. The events of the tragedy are in an ordered sequence, a sequence which gives shape and comprehensibility to what we feel. Besides, the activities of the characters which move us are placed in a moral setting which is argued and explored in the play. Oliver Taplin puts it in the following way : "By enthralling its audience tragedy unites emotion and meaning so as to give us an experience which by creating a perspective on the misfortunes of human life, helps us to understand and cope with these misfortunes".[61]

The aim and end of tragedy, as conceived by the Greeks, is the purgation or catharsis of the emotions of pity and fear. We cannot appreciate a tragedy rightly, if we are too much under the sway of such emotions as pity and fear. In this view too much of pity and fear are considered to destroy the harmony in the human emotions and create a condition of mental imbalance. The catharsis

of these emotions, therefore, is necessary before the mind can be restored to harmony and balance and can reassert the powers of correct judgement.

In Greek tragedy, catharsis is coupled with the kommos in which mental equilibrium is finally restored, and the spectrator feels that there is no need to pity and fear. In this state he is purified of such disturbing experiences; in a heightened mood his mind is tranquilised, "calm of mind, all passion spent".[62] The fiery ordeal through which the virtue of the protagonist is made to pass reconciles us ultimately to all the sufferings caused and the final impression is "All is best, though we oft doubt".[63] This solemn and stately finale is what the Greeks called Kommos.

On the Attic stage there was a rigorous distinction drawn between tragedy and comedy. However, there is no objection to evanescent touches of humour even in the most sombre of Greek tragedies. Greek tragedy, besides, has never any admixture of prose. Every character speaks in a diction majestic and remote from ordinary conversation.

One of the remarkable features of the Greek dramatic design is the dramatic irony. It is the expression of contrast between things as they seem to be and things as they really are; it may reveal itself in circumstances and it may reveal itself in speech and in speech it may be either conscious or unconscious. The latter kind of irony is particularly noted in Sophocles' tragedies.

D. Poetry and Versification

Greek tragedy is very characteristic of its versification and style. The lyric measures employed were very various, and exquisitely adapted to express not only every phase of emotion and thought, but every note of both. It is, indeed, in its lyric that Greek tragedy is in any other language unapproached and unapproachable. In the dramatic portions of the plays, a very different form and system of verse was employed. This is known as Iambic Trimeter Acatalectic, a metre particularly appropriate for dramatic dialogue and soliloquy. It is of all metres the nearest to the language of nature and life, and it is at the same time susceptible, with certain modifications, of the utmost dignity and majesty. The Greeks had also a beautiful language for the expression of beautiful thought. In his definition of tragedy, Aristotle characterises the language of Greek tragedy enriched by a variety of artistic devices, appropriate to the several parts of the play.

Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were poets of the first order. Aeschylus' Oresteia is not only one of the greatest of the Greek dramas, but also one of the finest poems. Characters like Oedipus and Antigone are grappled inwardly and it is the absolute and essential contact with the psychic self of the characters that facilitates poetry in Greek tragedy. Music was also an essential part of the production. The Greek tragedians tried, therefore, by interweaving musical accompaniment with dramatic declamation and

lyrical comment, to heighten the emotion of the entire stage. The circumstances of the Greek stage — the open-air-theatre with some forty thousand men and women anxious to follow every word — asked for a massive articulation. For this a rhetorical style was employed. The grand recitative portions have the dignity and sublimity of epic poetry. Again, the high debates with constant references to religious and philosophical ideas intensify the intellectual appeal in significant ways. The stichomythia injects into the argument a sharp disputatious dialogue that varies the tension of the debates, with retorts and raillery. Song and dance of the chorus mingle freely with high-pitched argument. And the whole play would advance to its end with measured and stately movement.

E. The Stage Business

Classical Greek tragedy is marked by some peculiarities of its own. Changes of scenes were very seldom necessary in Greek tragedies. The tragedies are so constructed that the speeches and actions of which they are mainly composed, might, with perfect propriety, pass on one spot, and, indeed, ought generally to pass in the court in front of the royal house. The actions to which no speech is attached, and which do not serve to develop thoughts and feelings are imagined to pass behind or without the scene, and are only reported on the stage. The heralds or messengers are introduced for the purpose.

To prevent monotony, the characters in Greek tragedies are found to express their feelings by corresponding bodily movements. They strutted and stalked; they knelt down in prayer or prostrated themselves in adoration; they held their hands to high heavens or hurled defiance at their adversaries. Such movements heightened the passion. Secondly, the disposition of the chorus in front of the stage either in a single group or symmetrically arranged, and their rhythmic dance movements, added to the emotional and intellectual appeal of the play by simultaneous aesthetic appeals to the senses of the mind. Thirdly, the lyrical and the choral odes amply diversified the dialogue, which was stately. The dialogue had to conform to the requirements of the situation and the character of the speakers.

Greek tragedy did not permit any sensational or horrifying act on the stage; murder and bloodshed were completely ruled out. When they occurred they were reported by a messenger. The suffering of the protagonist is not shirked for it gives reality to the mental suffering. But there was no room for physical brutality on the stage, since it unnecessarily outraged civilised human feelings. The actors wore formal costumes, including head dresses, and high soled buskins. Actors so elaborately arrayed, could not easily manage a physical combat on the stage.[64]

The actors also wore masks that identified them to the spectators in the farthest rows. The masks in turn strengthened

the original tendency of the playwrights to portray types rather than individuals, elemental rather than complex emotions.

Greek tragedy in unique in another respect. Nowhere in it is there any direct address to the audience or any other reference to it. Nowhere in Greek tragedy does the dramatist use the first person of himself or refer to himself in any way and nowhere is there any reference to any kind of theatre.

F. Greek Tragedy : The Structure:

Greek tragedy has a definite structure. There are four main parts to a tragedy : the Prologos, the Parados, the Epeisodia and the Exodos.

The Prologos: It is the introductory scene of monologue or dialogue. This exposition establishes the subject and theme of the play and portrays one or more character.

The Parados: It is the song with which the Chorus would enter in a procession. Originally, it was prefaced by some anapaests delivered by the Coryphaeus, or the leader of the Chorus. Then the melic part was sung by the whole Chorus grouped round the altar in the middle of the orchestra.

The Epeisodia: It consists of four or five episodes which constitute the main action of the play. One or more characters take part in these with the Chorus. The episodes might contain lyrical passages, lamentations etc. They are of about the same length, are uniform in tone (as distinct from feeling), never

admitting prose or comedy, and are composed in the same strict metre and the same elaborate diction. Each episode is separated by a choral ode or Stasimon (song of the chorus in one place). In some plays, a part of the episode may involve a Kommos — a kind of lamentation in which both the characters and the chorus take part.

Each complete choral lyric is divided into strophe, antistrophe and epode. In its metrical structure the strophe corresponds with the antistrophe not merely line by line but syllable by syllable. So does epode with epode.

Exodos: It is the conclusion, which follows the last ode sung and danced by the chorus. The Exodos includes two features: the messenger's speech and the deus ex machina or the interference of the gods; deus ex machina was only used by Euripides.

G. Greek Tragedy : Final Appeal

In European literature tragedy starts with the Greeks and the theory of tragedy with Aristotle. Aristotle bases himself on the examples of the Greek masters. So does every theoretician, critic and philosopher. What they observe about tragedy applies primarily to Greek classical tragedy. In tragedy, Aristotle[65] says, a good man must not be seen passing from happiness to misery or a bad man from misery to happiness. The first situation is not fear-inspiring but simply odious to us. The second is the most untragic that can be; it does not appeal either to the human feeling in us, or to our pity, or to our tears. Nor, on the other hand, should an extremely bad man be seen falling from happiness into misery. Such a story may arouse some human feeling in us, but it will not move us to either pity or fear; pity is occasioned by undeserved misfortune, and fear by that of one like ourselves. There remains then the intermediate kind of personage, a man not pre-eminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgement, of the number of those in the enjoyment of great reputation and posterity, eg. Oedipus, Thyestes and the men of similar families. "The tragic pleasure", says the master, "is that of pity and fear"[66], not of either pity or fear but of both combined.

Next Aristotle stresses the proper function of tragedy. In section 6 of his Poetics he says that tragedy must deal with "incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions".[67] In section 13 he adds that "it must

imitate actions arousing pity and fear, since that is the distinctive function of this kind of imitation".[68] Section 14 reiterates that tragedy has its specific pleasure : "not every kind of pleasure should be required of tragedy, but only its own proper pleasure".[69] And he hastens to add that "the tragic pleasure is that of pity and fear".[70] The obvious fact, then, is that tragedy has a pleasure of its own, which is indeed not a little curious. For tragedy in life merely pains while tragedy in literature surely delights. What may be the explanation thereof?

Aristotle gives his answer by saying that the pleasure of tragedy consists in the catharsis of pity and fear. By catharsis he means purgation, a wash off, an elimination. The pleasure of tragedy, therefore, for Aristotle consists in the pleasure of relief from the oppressive burden of the painful feelings of pity and fear, feelings aroused in tragedy only to be worked off. It is in reply to Plato's charge that tragedy should be banned from the ideal Republic because it encourages painful and debilitating emotions which impede the due performance of daily duties, that Aristotle propounds his concept of catharsis. Aristotle's defence of tragedy consists in admitting all the charges and turning them to the accused's credit. Tragedy generates pity and fear. A mind heavily charged with them is thereby unfitted for practical life. Aristotle says the emotions generated by tragedy are not in fact allowed to remain burdening the mind of the audience. They are discharged in the experience of watching the tragedy. The emotional defecating

leaves the audience's mind finally lightened of pity and fear. The effect is the opposite of what Plato had supposed. So in Aristotle's opinion, tragedy is a safety-valve through which those painful and morbid feelings of pity and fear find a comfortable outlet, a happy release, and in this resulting calm of relief lies the precise pleasure of tragedy. We pass through the storm of tragedy only to escape at the end into a sense of soothing serenity. The rest we feel is silence and peace.

There are critics, however, who hold that pity is the principal passion aroused by tragedy. The Italian Renaissance critics fall into this category. According to Daniello tragedy should arouse the passion of grief in the mind. And so he writes, "Nor does one deny the right to the tragic poet to lower himself when he wishes, to humble speech in order to weep and lament".[71] Minturno[72], likewise, holds that we are moved by the fear and pity of the unhappiness of others and of the two passions pity is of stronger force in our mind. Castelvetro similarly observes that "tragedy without a sad ending cannot excite and does not excite, as experience shows, either fear or pity".[73] The sad ending is characteristic of tragedy and it generates the passion of grief accordingly. The French Renascence critic, Thomas Sibilet emphasises that the ending of tragedy is invariably "sad and dolorous".[74] Jean de la Taille understands that "the true province of tragedy is the depiction of ... tears and extreme misery".[75] The great French dramatist, Racine also puts greater emphasis on the passion of pity as the principal emotion roused

by tragedy. He writes, "He [Aristotle] does not want them [tragic characters] to be extremely good, because the punishment of good men would excite indignation, rather than pity in the audience; nor that they be excessively bad, because there can exist no pity for a scoundrel".[76] In Germany such renowned critics as G.E. Lessing (1729-1791), F.V. Schiller (1759-1805) and A.W. Schlegel (1767-1845) have made valuable contribution to the discussion of dramatic theories in general. According to Lessing, "every tragedy must have some form of suffering"[77] to awaken fear and pity. He hastens to add that the tragic poet should take care to create the sense of terror by spectacle full of sorrow and not by terrible and horrible incidents only. Schiller very categorically mentions that the duty of a tragic poet is to arouse the emotion of pity. He writes, "Tragedy might be defined as ... an imitation which shows us man in a state of suffering and which has for its end to excite our pity".[78] The concept of the true spirit of tragedy has been trenchantly expressed, too, by Schlegel when he writes, "When... we contemplate the relations of our existence to the extreme limit of possibilities; ... when we consider how weak and helpless, and doomed to struggle against the enormous powers of an unknown world, ...; how we are subject to all kinds of errors and deceptions, any one of which may be our ruin; that in our passions we cherish an enemy in our bosoms; how every moment demands from us in the name of the most sacred duties the sacrifice of our dearest inclinations, and how at one blow we may be robbed of all that we have acquired with much toil and

difficultly; ... when we think upon all this, ... every heart ... must be overpowered by an inexpressible melancholy ..." This is the tragic tone of mind"[79]. It appears that Schlegel considers the tone of sadness as the only pervading tone of tragedy and hence the passion of pity as the only passion aroused by tragedy.

The English critics, however, mostly support Aristotle's doctrine of tragedy. According to Sir Philip Sidney tragedy "stirs the affects of admiration and commiseration, teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilden roofs are builded".[80] John Dryden accepts Aristotle's definition of tragedy. He accepts Aristotle's doctrine that tragedy aims at purging the passions of fear and pity by depicting examples of human misery. Dryden, however, adopts the theory of Rapin, the French classical dramatist, in order to explain the process of catharsis. John Milton supports Aristotle's doctrine of catharsis insisting that tragedy arouses the emotions of pity and fear in the mind of the spectator. Joseph Addison writes (in Spectator No. 40) that the principal design of tragedy is to raise commiseration and terror in the mind of the audience.

Modern scholarship has shown that the word 'catharsis' is, in truth, a medical word used in the Poetics metaphorically and that its exact sense is that of purgation in the significance of 'aperient'. F.L. Lucas, in his Tragedy in relation to Aristotle's Poetics (1928), has demonstrated that Aristotle uses it almost with the modern idea of ridding ourselves of repressions, and

uses it, too, with the object of replying directly to Plato's Puritanic strictures on the art of poetry.

The scholar-critic, Allardyce Nicoll, however, does not support Lucas' theory. He writes, "It may be that in his words there is some truth, but we may believe that in itself the theory is far too moralistic to be a complete answer to our question. After all, we do not go to witness a tragedy with the idea of taking a medical medicine".[81] Nicoll does not support Aristotle's dictum either. According to him, there is undoubtedly something feerful in tragedy but fear cannot be a permanent feeling in the mind of the audience. We are not likely to shed tears for Prometheus or Orestes. They are far above us in nobility, personality and in the sublimation of their character. Tragedy, in his view, has for its aim, "not the arousing of pity but the conjuring up of a feeling of awe allied to lofty grandeur".[82]

Joseph Wood Krutch[83], author of the controversial essay, The Tragic Fallacy opines that the main sentiment aroused by tragedy is heroism. Tragedy, in his view, is not the imitation of actions which are noble or are considered noble. It is not to be confused with things merely miserable and pathetic. The final impression is one of exultation and triumph. His explanation is that tragedy arose in Periclean Greece and Elizabethan England when a people fully aware of the calamities of life, is nevertheless serenely confident of the greatness of man, whose mighty passions and supreme fortitude are revealed when one of these calamities overtakes him. If tragedy meant only the spectacle of misery it could not have been

executed in the happiest, most vigorous and most confident ages which the world has ever known, the ages which gave to the world Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Shakespeare. Pity, fear, pain are merely foils to the main sentiment, that of heroism. Hence tragedy is essentially an expression, not of despair, but of the triumph over despair and of confidence in the value of human life.

The interpretation of the Spirit of Tragedy by the philosophers like Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche also deserve mention in this connection. It was his study of Sophocles' Antigone which led the German philosopher and critic G.W. Hegel (1770-1831) to stress the importance of moral conflict in tragedy. Hegel's analysis of the spirit of tragedy is qualitatively different from that of Aristotle. The substance of tragedy, in his view, is conflict. The conflict is between two rights. In Sophocles' play of her name Antigone was caught between doing the right thing from a religious point of view, by giving proper burial to her brother, and doing the right thing, from the point of view of the law, by obeying Creon's orders. Creon himself was caught between his duty as a ruler and a protector of the city, and his duty as the uncle and protector of Antigone. With the example of this tragedy Hegel wants to show that the conflict in tragedy is between two ethical concepts or between two characters who become identical with two ethical concepts. Good is set up against good. The good chosen by the hero is only a partial good though the hero treats it as though it were an absolute good. In Antigone Hegel finds this uncompromising clash of the

absolutes. In the end, neither the claim of Antigone nor that of Creon is denied; what is denied is the absoluteness of the claim of each. On the destruction of both, what is established is a feeling of reconciliation which springs from the sense of eternal justice. This sense of eternal justice is, in his view, the true spirit of tragedy.

The explanation of the tragic spirit put forward by Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) in the third book of The World as Will and Idea (1819) is equally interesting. According to him tragedy represents the terrible side of life, the unspeakable pain, the wail of humanity the triumph of the evil, the irretrievable fall of the innocent and the just. It is the strife of the will with itself. The true sense of tragedy is that the hero atones, not for his individual sin, but for 'the crime of individual existence', as Schopenhauer has called it. The representation of a great misfortune is essential to tragedy. The misfortune may be due to a character of extraordinary wickedness like Richard III in Shakespeare's play or through blind fate, chance or error, as in the Oedipus Rex of Sophocles. Or, and this Schopenhauer thinks the best form of tragedy, the misfortune is due to the mere position of the characters with regard to each other, without any one being entirely in the wrong. For such tragedies show us great misfortunes, not as exceptions to the general rule or life, but as arising easily and of themselves out of the ordinary actions and characters of men.

What Schopenhauer's present philosophy expounds is that life is a thing of misery and the wise man is he who finds, before death comes, a calmness of spirit expressed in resignation and in renunciation of all the fleeting and tormenting joys of existence. This calmness of spirit, effected by the resignation of the joys of existence, is, in his view, the true spirit of tragedy.

In his monumental work, The Birth of Tragedy, F.W. Nietzsche (1844-1900) used the terms 'Apollian' and 'Dionysian' to explain the nature of tragedy. 'Apollian' is thought to signify the 'sunny', 'serene', 'calm' and 'ordered', whereas the 'Dionysian' suggests 'stormy' and 'turbulent'. Nietzsche argued that these elements formed a unity in Greek tragedy where dialogue provided the Apollian element and the Dithyrambic choral songs, the Dionysian. The Greek tragic poets illustrated this combination on different levels of culture.

According to Nietzsche, tragedy is the art of metaphysical comfort, a metaphysical supplement to the reality of nature. The tragic exultation lies not in the hero's triumph over despair but rather in the spectator's perception of the ultimately beneficial effect of the hero's suffering. The moral order may be destroyed through the hero's action but the spectator is made to feel that through the suffering of the hero a new world would be built on the ruins of the world. The spectator is thus filled with a profound human joy and a touch of surpassing cheerfulness is communicated to the whole play.

The interpretation of the spirit of tragedy by the philosophers follow their respective philosophical vision. Needless to say that mere philosophy cannot provide the proper guidelines to explain the function, spirit and effectiveness of the literary form of tragedy. And secondly, what the philosophers have observed may apply to a particular tragedy but may not be common to all. The ultimate feeling aroused in our mind by the sad fall of Oedipus is certainly not the sense of eternal justice as held by Hegel or the spirit of resignation as enunciated by Schopenhauer or the sense of eternal joy as recognised by Nietzsche. So far as some of the critics' views are concerned, it is feared, they have failed to catch the true implication of the word, 'pity', as it is used by Aristotle in connection with tragedy. Pity does not imply simply 'to shed tears'. Pity ultimately generates the feeling of awe allied to lofty grandeur. Pity or compassion primarily connects the spectator with the tragic hero. True tragic impression is not possible without it.

3. Seneca's Tragedies : Elements affecting the English Playwrights.

Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 B.C. - A.D. 65), more renowned as a philosopher in Roman history than as a dramatist, wrote nine tragedies in his youth, which fifteen hundred years after his death, were to have a considerable influence on English tragedy. The subjects of his tragedies are taken from the whole field of Greek drama. Among the tragedies, Hercules Furens, Medea, Troades and Phaedra may be based on Euripides; Agamemnon is based on Aeschylus; Oedipus and Hercules Oetaeus are based on Sophocles; Phoenissae is based on Sophocles and other sources; the source of Thyestes, the most influential of his tragedies, is unknown. The plays, however, show departures in detail from their Greek originals. They also show different conception of tribulation and disaster from that which appears in Aeschylus and Sophocles. Seneca's sense of Fatalism is different from that of Aeschylus. It is philosophic instead of religious. The plays are brilliant works showing Seneca's cleverness in sententious rhetoric and his philosophic views. But as drama they have "gross and palpable"[84] faults. Long ago Schlegel in his Lectures on Drama pointed out that Seneca's plays were beyond all description bombastic and frigid, utterly devoid of nature in character and action, full of the most revolting violations of propiety and so barren of all theatrical effect. Other critics also, by and large, share Schlegel's opinion. J.A.K. Thomson, for instance, writes, "They [The plays] are full of blood, cruelty, natural, unnatural and supernatural horrors. There is hardly any truth

to life either in the incidents or in the character-drawing, and there is a great deal of rant and bombast in the style".[85] The plays are heavily burdened with an excess of declamation, moral disquisition, mythological lore and clever argument. They lack theatrical qualities because, as is generally agreed, they were intended not for performance but for reading or recital at private gatherings. That Seneca had nothing like public performance in mind is strengthened by the fact that in his plays Seneca represents persons talking in a way in which no living person ordinarily talks and suggests events which cannot literally take place before the eyes of an audience.

Action, therefore, in the realistic sense is not the main spring of Seneca's technique. In his tragedies there is, instead, "an illusion of action evoked by words".[86] There is, of course, an attempt on the part of the dramatist to create a dramatic tension but it is done by words and with the minimum of visual aid. Seneca suspends action for the recital of a monologue which is entirely relevant to the character or the speaker or his mood at that moment in the drama.

Seneca, however, has compensated for the reduction of action by the addition of the rhetorical descriptions. The speeches of the messengers in his plays may serve as a narrative almost detached from the action. The descriptive passages are of great charm. Seneca, presumably, seems to pack the maximum effect in the spoken words. The rhetoric of the Senecan

stage with its far-fetched and frigid epigrams, captured the popular imagination. The strong situations in his plays give an opportunity for sounding rhetoric.

Seneca was, most notably, the poet of extreme situation. Lever calls him "the projector of the terrible moment when the hammer blow of tyrannical force brings man to the edge of endurance".[87] But between the situations in his plays there is no organic connection. We have the feeling that the events in his plays just happen to the characters. The characters are no more than the embodiments of a ruling passion or mouthpieces of Senecan eloquence. In Thomson's words, "they are too prone to rant or rave".[88] In Seneca's tragedies the characters have little subtlety and no private life. But the characters are not timid figures. They move and express themselves with a certain tragic sublimity. Most of the characters in his plays are found, to choose, on being impelled, a course of destruction leading to their own doom. It is anguish that drives figures like Atreus in his Thyestes to insanity which leads to his destruction. Atreus declares himself as a monster. This recognition impels him to identify him, and to accept, with this identity, a need to commit further crimes. When the Thyestean banquet is being prepared, Atreus seems to be possessed by a kind of demonic force. Atreus is aware of what is happening to him, though he has no control over the catastrophe, initiated by his choice.

The characters in Seneca's tragedies are, therefore, persons given to self-examination. Phaedra, Hercules, Oedipus, Medea, Atreus — all are pre occupied with their own identity, absorbed in watching as well as experiencing their own moral struggles, until at the moment of choice they triumphantly recognise themselves for what they are. The characters are impelled to try to realise their identities by an ascending series of crimes. After Atreus has tricked his brother into eating the flesh of his own children, he cries out:

"O I am loftiest of all the gods, and king of kings".

(Thyestes, 911)

Seneca's tragedies, thus, can be described as simply a disastrous event pursued ruthlessly to its end. They are marked by a pervasiveness of bloody and unnatural acts. Descriptions of death, disease and physical afflictions are lengthy and detailed. Characters and choruses respond to them with intense horror and dismay. Sometimes the horrors seem to be enacted upon the stage. In the play after her name, Medea apparently stabs her children while standing on a roof top and then flings their bodies at Jason's feet; in Thyestes Atreus uncovers the heads of Thyestes' children before his face. Seneca's plays abound in horrors, piled on horrors.

This fondness for horrors accounts for Seneca's choice of themes, pregnant with the spirit of revenge. The three main themes of Seneca's tragedies are lessons on the inconstancy of fortunes as in Troades and in the tragic story of Oedipus;

portrayals of great crimes and examples of the evil result of murder, as in Thyestes, Medea and Agamemnon; and pleadings in favour of simplicity, of poverty, and of chastity as in Hercules Oetaeus and Hippolytus. Of the three themes that which treated revenge and murder is the most important and inevitably made the greatest impression upon the Elizabethan dramatists.

Seneca strongly emphasises blood-revenge for murder or flagrant injury, or a serious revenge from motives of jealousy. Revenge is looked upon as a sacred duty and it appears as the tragic motive at least in two of his plays, namely, Thyestes and Medea. In these plays the execution of the revenge is kept in mind from the start and let up to the end with little or no faltering in the course of the action.

In order to heighten the atmosphere of horror Seneca introduces ghosts in his plays. The ghosts in Seneca, in addition, prompt revenge spirit. They may be real, or at times, mere hallucinations. The ghost of Tantalus in Thyestes is a real ghost. He is there to mourn the misfortune that will come to his house. The ghost of Thyestes in Agamemnon anticipates the tragedy and heightens the atmosphere of horror. The revengers are occasionally spurred on by the hallucinations that they see the ghosts of the dead. Medea visualises the ghost of her mangled brother, Deianeira sees Nessus rising to demand revenge.

Seneca borrowed not only the themes of murder and revenge from Greek tragedies, but also devices like chorus.

But in Senecan tragedies the chorus is no more an integral part of the events of the play. It exists merely as a "purveyer of interludes".[89] Seneca's use of the chorus is for the most part "flaccid and unconvincing".[90] The chorus in his plays — the labours of Hercules, the lovers of Jupiter, etc., — is served up, in slightly varied forms, on more or less appropriate occasions. The long choral odes are often declamatory and wearisome. In Thyestes the chorus cannot inform the audience of the gruesome murders that are going to be committed. In act III scene iii of the play the chorus sings a long declamatory song that heightens the spirit of the play and reiterates the spirit of stoicism. But the chorus is no more 'the spectator idealised'. Seneca has divided each of his plays in five acts, and, therefore, the function of the chorus has been drastically curtailed.

Seneca has used some other devices of Greek tragedy in his tragedies. He has introduced the character of Nurse in some of his plays. The Nurse is a type character who consoles and advises the heroine. Innocent or deceived accomplices are sometimes used to help the revenge. Medea sends her children to Creusa with the poisoned robe. Among the other devices the Messenger is of a vital importance in Seneca's tragedies. The speeches of the Messenger fall into a stereotyped pattern — the description of a place, the honour of the act or the stoical courage of the sufferer.

Seneca also borrows the 'stichomythia' of Greek tragedy. Seneca's power of mind showed itself chiefly in epigrammatic aphorisms. 'Stichomythia' has been lavishly and exaggeratedly used by Seneca. Seneca also made use of tragic irony in his plays. It is present both in situation and dialogue.

The most remarkable element in Seneca's tragedies is the stoical attitude. This attitude is mingled with his conception of tragic experience. Seneca rejected any evidence of justice in the nature or the gods, who were indeed hardly more than names for the destructive urges in the cosmos and in man himself. Secondly, with Seneca the very nature of things was disastrous and the calamity was irresistible. In Seneca man was sure to be beaten by the blind and malignant forces of Fate. There was nothing left for man but endurance. Man could, by learning to be indifferent both to life and death, rob Fate of its triumph and become a victor in attitude in his ability to resist or meet courageously. Herein lies the essence of Seneca's stoical philosophy. Seneca was "the literary representative of Roman stoicism"[91], as T.S. Eliot has called him. In The Trojan Women, Hecuba, Andromache and Polyxena are all embodiments of stoical fortitude. In the Phoenissae, Oedipus is a stoical hero. In Hercules Oetaeus, Hercules is a stoic hero who, even in the throes of mental agony, retains his dignity and courage and faces death quietly. In Hercules Furens, the hero rises above suffering.

The stoical attitude in Seneca's tragedies is best expressed in his treatment of death and suicide. Death is seen in his plays as having a positive value and meaning. Suicide could mean a chosen withdrawal from the transient chaos of this world to another order of creation, the eternal providence beyond nature. Seneca sympathises with suicide when it saves honour or gives an escape from a life too full of pain; yet he feels it more courageous to combat misfortune than to succumb without a struggle. Death is a part of the order of nature and a part that does not lie within the realm of human corruption. Death is the culmination of the self-discovery that dawns on most of the Seneca's heroes.

Seneca's men and women aspire for death, but, when death comes, they defy it and triumph over limitations and sufferings. In life they are glorious; in death they become more glorious. Seneca did not regard death as the culmination of tragedy.

Seneca's plays are characteristic not only of the stoical philosophy but also of oratorical and lyrical declamation. Seneca's language is full of fine metaphors and ornamentation. Seneca strove to extract the utmost effect from the spoken work. The centre of value in his plays is, therefore, shifted from what the personage says to the way in which he says it. Watling has noted the significance of Seneca's language in the following words : "[Senecan Language] flamboyant with every rhetorical ornament, remained as a compost-heap to enrich the soil of English dramatic verse for a couple of generations".[92] Seneca

also possessed an authentic lyrical gift. He was the master of the moralising lyric. The odes sung by the chorus are graceful and have an ethical flavour.

Seneca was not a constructor of tragic plots. But his plays have a five-act structure with a chorus. Bowers has given an analysis of the composition of Senecan tragedy which is worth quoting : "The Senecan drama starts with a monologue or dialogue which either casts back to previous events or anticipates those to come. The ghosts which sometimes speak the prologue, take no part in subsequent action ... The whole of Act I is thus expository, since the play begins just after the crisis of the story and the drama is little more than the elaboration of the catastrophe. Act II consists of dialogue wherein the chief agent of the catastrophe plans the execution of his revenge. Act III brings the antagonists face to face and almost on equal terms, with the ascendant force of the chief agent growing swiftly. Act IV provides either a lull in the action or else a partial fulfilment of the catastrophe. In Act V the catastrophe is completed".[93]

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CHAPTER III

THE INFLUENCE OF SENECA ON ENGLISH TRAGEDY

Chapter III

The Influence of Seneca on English Tragedy

Introduction:

The main reason for the common adoption of the Seneca's tragedies as the common standard by the English Renaissance critics and dramatists was the very simple fact that the latter were much more familiar with Latin than with Greek. Seneca was the favourite Latin author. His tragedies appeared in English from 1559 onwards and a complete edition was published in 1581. The translators were Jasper Heywood, Alexander Neville, John Studley and Thomas Nuce — all of them being scholars and not dramatists. They inspired a number of readers, who seriously thought of imitating the Senecan models.

Sidney in his Apologie of Poetrie uses Seneca as the standard of excellence in tragedy. Direct influence of Seneca was, during the period, powerfully reinforced by the vogue of contemporary Italian drama in the cultivated circles of England. The contemporary dramatists thought it proper to equal the skill and dignity of the ancients instead of producing the old rude farces and the naive old religious spectacles.

With the coming of the Renaissance in England, the Middle Ages were over, and people felt that man was no longer a puppet in the hands of God, and that in some measure at least, he was the architect of his own fortune. That was the philosophy of Seneca which had an irresistible appeal to the Elizabethans, who

realised for the first time that 'character is destiny'. The Renaissance-England had something more in common with the age of Seneca, a period of religious scepticism , speculative philosophy abounding licence and grandiose display, Seneca's philosophic sensationalism well suited the speculations and extravagances to which medieval religion bore much the same relation as the age of Pericles to the age of Nero. The ethic of Seneca's plays is that of an age which supplied the lack of moral habits by a system of attitudes and poses. The Elizabethans perceived a resemblance between Seneca's ethics and their own, the reason being that he and they alike drew on contemporary moral philosophy. The ethic of sententious maxim was much more sympathetic to the temper of the Renaissance than would have been the morals of the elder Greek dramatists. Death gives Senecan characters the opportunity for the most sententious aphorisms — a hint which Elizabethan dramatists were only too ready to follow.

One finds a certain ethical and religious significance in Seneca's plays. It is rooted in the essentially religious conception of wrong-doing as sin, a wrong done to God. This sense of retribution is also shared by the Elizabethan dramatists. It is also found that English translators of Seneca's tragedies added scenes when they felt that the original play had not been explicit enough in this regard.

The Elizabethan spectator, it should also be noted, had strong nerves and demanded that they be played upon. There was hotness of blood in the world around him and he called for it on the stage. Seneca's emphasis on sensationalism appealed to the English taste, for blood and horror on the stage could not be offensive to the spectators as cruel executions. Ghosts were accepted as fact, and forewarnings were everyday affairs.

The grandiose style and rhetoric of Seneca also had their appeal to the Elizabethans. They loved poetry and drama, revelling in verbal marvels and witchery of expression. The rant and bombast and the ear-piercing rhetoric and dazzling imagery of Seneca captured their imagination.

Again, against the background of intellectual climate a new type of drama was in demand. Seneca was a principal channel through which the wisdom and culture of the ancients reached the English dramatists. They were drawn powerfully to Seneca's understanding of the workings of human emotions and his dramatic use of the system of thoughtand feeling. Harding Craig observes in this connection : "The Renaissance was ... schooled in a method of imitation, schooled also in the belief that human behavior is universal; that is to say, that a particular line of action or a particular affection expresses itself always in accordance with the same pattern, so that the imitation of Seneca and the repetition of his ideas was inevitable".[1]

It should, however, be remembered that Seneca was not the only force acting upon the English tragedy of the time. There were other influences equally active like the morality plays, the chronicles, Lydgate, Chaucer and The Mirror for Magistrates. The influence of Seneca, nevertheless, was the strongest force but it did not clash with the native tradition.

Seneca was the great store-house of tragic material for the Elizabethan dramatists. He exercised a salutary and at times profound influence on the Elizabethan tragedy. The Jacobean dramatists remembered Seneca not as the source of theatrical themes and tricks. They were more influenced by Seneca's thought . Seneca opened to them the language of undefeated despair. They were also fascinated by states of extreme suffering and by stoic virtues which they found in Seneca's tragedies.

The influence of Seneca on the English tragedy grew faint and fainter in the succeeding years. In the eighteenth century, however, playwrights tended to write under the influence of classical rules and models. Joseph Addison and his English followers, adopting the principles of the French, applied them to the reformation of the English theatre which sought to satisfy the taste for romantic passion and the passion of pity. Addison wrote Cato and Dr. Johnson followed him with his Irene. Both cast their plays on the neo-classical model. These playwrights had a great respect for the classical authors, and especially the Roman, who, they believed, had established and perfected the literary genres for all time.

The discussion of the influence of Seneca on English tragedy may be roughly divided into three broad categories:

1. The Influence of Seneca on the Elizabethan tragedy;
2. The Revived Senecanism in the Jacobean tragedy; and
3. Addison's Cato and Johnson's Irene : Attempts to construct tragedy on the neo-classical model.

As Seneca represented different dramatic impulses for different dramatists or groups of dramatists of the Elizabethan period, the discussion of the influence of Seneca on Elizabethan tragedy may be further classified into the following sub-categories:

A. The First Invasion of Seneca on Popular Stage: Gorboduc, Jocasta, Gismond of Salerne, The Misfortunes of Arthur;
B. The popularized Senecanism in the Elizabethan tragedy: Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy;
C. Senecan Stance of Self-sustained Defiance: Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great;
D. The Remaking of the Senecan Tradition: Shakespeare's Titus Andronicus, Richard III, Romeo and Juliet;
E. Combination of the Rival Conceptions of Senecan and popular Drama : Chapman's Bussy D'Ambois and The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois;
F. A Pure Seneca Fit for Public Stage : Johnson's Sejanus and Catiline; and
G. Seneca Cast in the Rigours of the Classical Form: English Imitations of French Seneca.

1. The Influence of Seneca on the Elizabethan Tragedy

A. The First Invasion of Seneca on the Popular Stage: Gorboduc Jocasta, Gismond of Salerne, The Misfortunes of Arthur.

Seneca's tragedies appeared in English from 1559 onwards. These translations of Seneca's tragedies were unfolding Seneca as a mine of tragic material, instinct with melodramatic possibilities and were giving the lead in the further exploitation of his extravagantly romantic appeal.

In 1560 Jasper Heywood specially commended the translation of Seneca to Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton, the students of the Ins of Court and to others of their associates. Instead of translating Seneca, they produced the first set of original English plays on a fairly rigorous Senecan model. The whole group consists of but four plays, of which Gorboduc (acted 1562), Jocasta (acted 1566) and Gismond of Salerne (1567) succeed each other in a range of six years, whereas the fourth, The Misfortunes of Arthur (acted 1587), is first heard of a generation later, though Charlton[1] thinks that it was probably an older play. The decade (1559-70) also saw the publication of a few more plays like R. Edwardes' Damon and Pythias (c. 1564), R.B [ower]'s Appius and Virginia (c. 1563), T. Preston's Cambyses (c. 1569) and Pickeryng's The History of Horestes (c. 1566-67). They are all cast in the Senecan mould. Through them came the first invasion of classical influence on the popular stage. Damon and Pythias, however, shows little influence

of Seneca. There is a long passage of 'stichomythia' in the play and the action is marked by visible hangings, stabbings and flayings. But the dramatist made no attempt to introduce tragic passions and sensational situations in the Senecan fashion. Appius and Virginia, as Margeson[2] holds, is one of the first plays to draw its concreteness from classical story. The play is a vivid illustration of the limitless power of passion to control and destroy a human being just as we find in Seneca's tragedy. But the dramatist is not a blind follower of Seneca. He is original in presenting an allegorical action and in introducing realistic English characters. Cambyses is described in the title page as a lamentable tragedy. The action is marked by a series of atrocious crimes. But the author does not follow Seneca in presenting them through messengers. He stages them in full. The play is full of rhetoric. But Preston's rhetoric is in the highest degree both frantic and artless. John Pickeryng's The History of Horestes treats of the Greek Orestes-story but as Pickeryng is not supposed to know the Greek originals of Seneca, he deviates from the original story to show how a good man yields to vice but ultimately repents.

These plays were primarily written for the Court, but ultimately passed on to the people. They are popular in form but classical in dramatic motive and incident. They create a taste for certain elements of classical tragedy.

In the period, 1559-70, Seneca's influence is strongly marked in English drama and as the process began with Gorboduc and the other three plays of its group, as noted earlier, special attention should be given to how these plays paved the way for Seneca to establish him in the theatre.

Gorboduc: In 1581, Sir Philip Sidney, in his Apologie for Poetrie, politely singled out Gorboduc among the then English tragedies for both compliment and criticism. Sidney hailed the play as a herald of better things than the lawlessness of native English drama. But he criticised the play while defending the Unities.

Gorboduc is frankly imitative of Seneca's form and style. But it displays a healthy independence not only in the neglect of the Unities but also in the choice of a native theme and in the spirit in which it is treated. H.B. Charlton observes that the first English Seneca is "a Seneca partly Italianate".[3] The play is destined solely for stage, and for a striking and sumptuous performance thereon. The theme is one of fratricide and revenge. The playwrights reject the traditional stories of the Latins to broach a hitherto untapped source of dramatic material. They strive to extend the scope of the action and the list of the characters beyond original warrant. Besides, there is the use of a new dramatic verse, which is the English equivalent of the 'versi sciolti'.

The plot, taken from the legendary material of Geoffrey of Monmouth, is, in outline, this. Gorboduc, King of Britain, divides his kingdom between his sons, Ferrex and Porrex. The sons quarrel, and Porrex slays his brother, who is the Queen's favourite. Videna, the Queen, slays Porrex in revenge; the people rebel and slay Videna and Gorboduc; then the nobles kill the rebels, and in turn fall to fighting each other. The country falls into anarchy. The curtain falls upon a scene of bloodshed and utter confusion.

Larger movements of history are chosen for the plot than the individualized and personal crime in such plays of Seneca as Thyestes, Medea and Agamemnon. The plot is allied to Seneca's fragmentary Thebais. Cunliffe, however, points out that this parallel to Seneca's play is "superficial".[4] Nicoll[5] holds that instead of resting content with the exhibition of high passions and monstrous tragic events, the authors made their play into a message for their own times. He obviously wants to mean the general concern to provide Queen Elizabethan with a husband and the kingdom with an undisputed successor. However, the theme is serious and of tragic significance and in this respect the play is "Senecan to the core".[6]

The play is full of bloody sensationalism, which is a Senecan gift to the English stage. It is a play of anarchy, usurpation, piled up crimes, death, misfortunes and horrors that accompany civil war. Mistakes and follies are punished by crimes and in turn punished by further crimes.

The playwrights found revenge motives useful "in intensifying the miseries of civil and domestic chaos".[7] Prosser[8] thinks that Norton and Sackville took every opportunity to name revenge as the cause of all the ensuing chaos. Hearing that his sons are in arms, Gorboduc calls on heaven to send down flames of revenge. Vicena, on getting the news of Porrex's murder, rages for revenge against her surviving son, and stabs him. When the people finally kill the King and the Queen, the playwrights attribute their rebellion once again to revenge. The court is apalled:

"Shall subjects dare with force
To works revenge upon their princes fact?"[9]

It is significant that the playwrights treat every possible evil act as if it were revenge. In Gorboduc revenge is seen as "the uncontrolled force that can tear the state apart".[10] But the fact is that Gorboduc does not fall into the category of the early English tragedies which, leaning heavily on Seneca, had utilized revenge to a certain extent for dramatic motivation. Fredson Bowers observes in this connection, "... in Gorboduc any inicipient interest in the characters' motives of revenge is stifled under the emphasis on the political theme and the general classical decorum".[11] Unlike in Senecan plays, the revenge-motive loses its importance as a tragic motivation in Gorboduc.

The authors of Gorboduc took over Seneca's general scheme of five acts divided by choruses, his councellors and messengers, his rhetorical style and grave sententious percepts. The general treatment is also Senecan. There is no attempt to exhibit

character in action, no collision of personalities, no development, on the stage, of incident or intrigue. 'The dramatis personae' come upon the scene only to utter long sententious monologues. The Senecan influence is also found in the uninterrupted seriousness of the play, in the sustained nobility of the style, in the almost abstract character of the scenes, where all the action falls to messengers and confidants, in the abundant speechifying and in the sanguinary plot of the play. Gorboduc cannot be reduced to the rules, laid down by Aristotle. But the play, in imitation of the Senecan model, is divided into five acts.

Gorboduc is the first work in English to use the device of Chorus. The Chorus, in this play, is borrowed directly from Seneca. But the chorus in Gorboduc is much more detached from the action than in any of Seneca's plays . In Seneca the Chorus occasionally takes the part of an actor, engaging in conversation with someone of the regular characters; in Gorboduc, its expression is confined to the utterance of moral platitudes suggested by the misfortunes of the characters in the main action. In Seneca the Chorus is made up of persons whose fortunes are connected directly with those of the leading actors; in Gorboduc, the Chorus consists of four ancient and sage men of Britain. The Chorus here plays the part of a dispassionate and objective critic, expositor and commentator. In Act IV the Chorus brings into focus the underlying wisdom of the play:

"Beholde how mischiefe wide her selfe displayes".[12]

It also expounds to the audience, at the end of each act (except the last one), the significance of the pantomime presented at the beginning. Beside the Chorus, Eubulus appears (in act III, sc. I as elsewhere in the tragedy) as the expositor of the moral. Dordan (in act II, sc. I), Philander (in act II, sc. II) and Eubulus (at the end of the play), likewise, act as detached Chorus-leaders.

The authors follow Seneca in the use of messengers to avoid the violence on the stage. Nuntius brings the news of the murder of the elder brother to the King (act II, sc. I, Ll. 155-162). Marcella, a lady of the Queen's privy chamber, though not a messenger, communicates the assassination of the younger son by the mother (act IV, sc. ii, Ll. 181-187). Nuntius brings the news of the rebellion of Fergus to the Duke (act V, sc. ii). The murders of the King and the Queen are reported by Cloyton (act V, sc. i, Ll. 5-7).

Gorboduc is Senecan in respect of the sententiousness and length of the speeches. The sententiousness of the speeches is evident from the following extracts:

(i) "By Vse of Vertue, vice shall growe in hate"
(act I, sc. ii, L 121)

(ii) "Blood asketh blood, and death must death requite"
(act IV, L 17)

(iii) "Custome (O King) shall bring delightfulnese"
(act I, sc. ii, L. 12).

The length of the speeches in the manner of Seneca is also unusual, e.g., the speech of Eubulus (in act V, sc. i) contains 85 lines; the speech of Eubulus (in act I, sc. ii) contains 90 lines; the speech of Philander (in act I, sc. ii) contains 99 lines; the speech of Eubulus (in act V, sc. ii) contains 100 lines.

In Gorboduc, as in Seneca, we have moralisings on the danger of pride, the fickleness of Fortune, the fixity of Fate, the impetuosity of youth etc. The mythological allusions in the play are to the infernal company of which Seneca is fond — Tantalus, Ixion and the snake-clad furies. The rhetorical exaggeration of the speech of Videna (in act IV, sc. i) may be ascribed to Seneca. We have also Seneca's over-elaboration and formal preciseness of which an example we find in the pedantic division of the 'sortes' by the rebels in the speech of Eubulus (in act V, sc. ii).

Gorboduc contains the Greek device of Furies, acquired through Seneca. In the dumb-show which precedes the fourth act, Furies are introduced : "... there came from vndre the stage... three furies. Alecto, Megera, and Ctesiphone, clad in black garment, sprinkled with bloud and flames, their bodies girt with snakes, their heds spread with serpents..."[13]

Gorboduc begins in the conventional Senecan fashion. In the beginning, there is an allusion to the dawn:

: The slowe Aurore, that so far loue or shame
Doth long delay to shewe her blushing face

(act I, sc. I, Ll. 4-5)

The idea of the family curse that cannot be escaped appears in Seneca's plays like Hercules Furens (Ll. 386-94), Thebais (Ll. 276-8) and Hippolytus (Ll. 698-700). In this play it is expressed in the line, "plagues pursue the giltie race". (act III, sc. i, L. 13).

The authors follow the characteristically Senecan method of introducing a new actor on the stage. In act III, sc. i, Philander is introduced on the stage by Eubulus.

The authors of Gorboduc use many classical references and phrasings in their play. The story of Phaeton in Greek mythology is alluded to in Ll. 330-1 of act I, sc. ii, and again in the third stanza of the Chorus at the end of the same act. Seneca also makes frequent use of the Phaeton story in Medea. The line "his owne most bloudy hand" (act III, sc. i, L 161) is a familiar Senecan figure. The classical phraseology of the lines 225-6 in act IV, sc. ii is unmistakable.

Among the characters, Videna and Ferrex are Senecan types. The speech of Videna in act I, sc. i (Ll. 1-6) is distinctly Senecan in style. The dialogue which follows between Videna and Ferrex with its speeches of equal length, its play upon words and its general rhetorical quality, is certainly an attempt at Senecan 'stichomythia.' The authors were better fitted to express ideas than to put life in characters. But it is to be admitted

that Ferrex and Porrex are recognizable personalities and Marcella is something more than the messenger of Senecan tradition.

In Gorboduc, many of the details of the plot are brought out in the dumb-shows which precede each of the acts. Indeed the purpose of the dumb-shows was to supply the action which the play itself lacked and to point out the moral lessons which the audience was to derive from the play. Nowhere in Seneca, there is any hint of the dumb-show.

Allardyce Nicoll finds that "every turn of the plot is coloured by the medieval idea of a moral aim".[14] The didactic intention of the dramatists is obvious enough. In the 'argument', in the dumb-shows and in the text there are numerous suggestions to Queen Elizabeth that she ought to provide the throne with an heir. The whole play is overweighed with political reflections. In Act V we are in the dull round of political disquisition and the tragedy ends with obvious allusions to the political situation of the day. Courtney[15] thinks that the play is rather a political argument than a simple tragedy. But, it is, no doubt, an overstatement of the case. Margeson forcefully argues, "... the agony of the individual, whether it is Gorboduc's or that of any of the lesser characters, is neglected for moral lessons and social propaganda... The moral idea takes precedence over the human experience".[16] Courthope, likewise, characterises the conclusion of the play as "a noble conclusion, and quite unlike the moral of Seneca's plays".[17]

This didactic sense connects the play with the English moralities. Allardyce Nicoll hints at the very idea : "the structure is closer to the old chronicle-history manner than to the Roman type".[18] The symmetrical plan of the scenes — Ferrex and Porrex consulting their good and their bad adviser in turn, advisers who are almost as much abstractions as vice and virtue — betrays an artless simplification inspired by morality plays rather than by Seneca. Gorboduc is very far from being a servile imitation of Seneca. Bowers' observation may be quoted in this connection: "The raison d'etre for Gorboduc ... is to be found less in direct imitation of such plays of Seneca as Phoenissae or Troades (to which they conform most closely in classical decorum and generalized interest) than in the paramount influence of French Senecan plays and the English medieval forms".[19] Gorboduc is also historically interesting as the first document of dramatic blank verse in English.

In their attempts to be completely faithful to their classical model, the authors of Gorboduc discarded the rhymed metres which had, up to then, been the sole dramatic vehicle and adopted, in its place, the new blank verse which Surrey had just used for his translation of the Aeneid. The verse of Gorboduc, though not without vigour in parts, is monotonous and stiff.

The play is cold and lacks movement and drama. Allardyce Nicoll criticises the play as "a dull and hopelessly uninspiring

piece of variegated rhetoric".[20] But in spite of its grave defects, it established a high artistic level. Act IV and act V of the play show great power of thought and vigour of versification, variety of tone and richness of character and incident. The blood and violence of Seneca give place to an all pervading scholastic decorum. Seneca, no doubt, exercised a salutary influence on Gorboduc and other tragedies of its group by insisting upon beauty of form and definiteness of structure at a time when the tendency was to satisfy a taste for stage spectacles without regard to either.

Jocasta: The authors of Jocasta, George Gascoigne (acts II, III, V) and Francis Kinwelmersh (acts I, IV) announce that their play was "translated and digested into Acte"[21] from Euripides, but, in reality, they translated an Italian adaptation of the Phoenissae of Euripides, the Giocasta of Lodovico Dolce (1508-1568). It follows, "page by page, and line by line"[22] of Dolce's play. As Giocasta is based on the Latin translation of the original text of Euripides, published at Bassel by R. Winter in 1541, the English play is three removes from the Greek. Consequently, in the development of the early English tragedies, Jocasta is a less significant study than Gorboduc. Cunliffe has a very justified decision that "it did not advance English tragedy on its destined path".[23] Considering also the fact that its authors adopted the method of translation, it is difficult to realise why Edward Albert considered it "a landmark in the growth of the drama".[24]

In the English play, there are some omissions, retrenchments and transpositions, but the main outline of the story of Euripides' play is retained. The authors closely follow Dolce. And Dolce omitted the passages of the original work which proved unintelligible to the audience of the sixteenth century Italy. He added moralizing passages, often suggested by Seneca. His play is full of reversal of fortune, though violent action is excluded from the stage.

The plot of Jocasta is this. Jocasta and Oedipus live in the palace. Oedipus is kept hidden by his sons to avoid public obloquy. Oedipus curses his sons, who have no respect for their father so that they will fight each other for the kingdom. To avoid the curse, they decide to rule alternately. But Eteocles, after ruling the kingdom for one year, refuses to give up the throne. Instead, he banishes Polynices who goes to the court of Adrastus, the King of Argos, marries his daughter and comes back to Thebes with an army. Eteocles seeks the help of Creon, the brother of Jocasta, on condition that, on his fall, Creon will be the successor. Creon consults Tiresias, the blind prophet, who prophesises that the sacrifice of Creon's son, Menoeccus will alone save the city. Creon refuses to sacrifice his son, but the latter, in the larger interest of his country, sacrifices himself. The Argive army is repulsed. Oedipus' sons decide to settle their dispute by a duel. Jocasta is anxious to prevent this fratricidal strife. But before her coming, the two brothers

have killed each other. Jocasta commits suicide. Creon ascends the throne and refuses burial to Polynices. Antigone, a loving sister, wants to defy the royal order, and bury her dead brother. Creon banishes Oedipus from Thebes. Antigone is equally devoted to her father, and decides to accompany him only after the burial of Polynices. Then they proceed to Athens, and Oedipus prepares himself to die.

The play is divided into acts and scenes, separated by choruses. The action like that of the original is continuous. The authors of Jocasta kept closely to the main lines of action as laid down by Euripides. But they departed from the original arrangement of the episodes.

The chorus in Jocasta is Senecan. The four Theban gentlemen who compose the Chorus remain on the stage from their entrance in act I to the end of the tragedy. But as Cunliffe points out, "the Choruses, especially of Kinwelmersh, are more loosely translated than the dialogue".[25] The last Chorus of the play is Dolce's, though the thought is taken from Seneca.

The play, in the Senecan fashion, is marked by the philosophical reflections, the dignity of the dialogue, the stir and movement of the action, the sensational situations and one act of romantic sacrifice. It has spectacular effects and provides a gorgeous and exciting spectacles. This is also due to the influence of Seneca. The play was acted on a scaffold with a grave in it,

from which flames burst forth in the second dumb-show. There are marches and processions about the stage, both in the dumb-show and in the tragedy itself.

Charlton writes, "English Seneca is ..., in his entry with Gorboduc, already inclined to the path of the Italians, and he rapidly becomes more distinctly and more extensively so".[26] Jocasta bears the marks of Italian Seneca. First, it is a translation of a Greek play through the Italian. Secondly, in the original parts it illustrates the increasing desire for stage effects, by its more concrete and stirring dumb-shows and their greater reliance on mechanical stage spectacles. Thirdly, the play contains much of action and striking incident. Further, although its plot presents the Greek theme of Nemesis, Gascoigne's second dumb-show points to the displacement of this by the theme of personal revenge arising from family discord.

The outlook on life which is sad and macabre in spirit and which spreads the play is Senecan. Life is tedious and short and full of pain and the sooner a man is rid of it, the better. Fortune rules the rolling life of man, and it is futile to strive against Fate. At the same time content is possible if only we can abide with patient hearts what is sent to us. Unbridled ambition brings ruin, whereas wise men sustain with patience and a quiet mind the blow of slippery Fortune. In act V, sc. V, Oedipus says:

"Let fortune take from me these worldly giftes,
She cannot conquence this courageous heart,
That neuer yet coulc well be overcome,
To force me yeelde for feare to villainie
Do what thou can't I will be Oedipus"
(Ll. 49-53)[27]

The tenour of the dialogue is often preserved through the whole of the scenes. In the dialogue, the translators followed the Italian text with greater fidelity. But sometimes the translations have lost the beauty and force of the original.

The play is historically significant in the period in which English theatre was enjoying an unmatched flowering season in that it treated of the story of a Greek master for the first time — a period when Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides were not touched even in translations.

Gismond of Salerne:

Gismond of Salerne is the first English Senecan play founded on an Italian novella. The story is that of Boccaccio's first novel of the fourth day of the Decameron and offers an excellent subject for dramatic treatment. The episodes retain much of the original emphasis of Boccaccio's story upon the human emotions of the three main characters.

The story, in brief, is this. Gismond complains of the passing of youth and beauty and longs for the natural human love of the married state. Lucrece is sympathetic to her and she puts

her case to Tancred, Gismond's father but she receives an angry reply. The effect upon Gismond, who has already fallen in love with Guiscard, is violent. Although the lovers never appear in the play together except in the dumb-show, their courage and dignity in facing the furious passion of Tancred and in resolving for death, without regret or fear, must lead an audience to sympathise with them strongly. Even the messenger's report of Guiscard's death, with its many echoes of Seneca, reinforces the sense of the lover's youth and courage and the pity of his death. As Gismond receives her lover's heart in a cup of gold and drinks the poison, she has prepared, we are brought close to the atmosphere of the original story.

Margeson writes, "It [The play] has the advantages of neo-Senecan form, a certain economy of action and characters, concentration upon a single subject, and an attempt at eloquence of expression through the rhetorical development of the set speech".[28] However, the play is marked by excessive formality, stereotyped and rigid characterization and rhetorical dialogue.

The influence of Seneca upon the framework of ideas in the play is as marked as it is upon the scene, structure and rhetoric. The play implements the Senecan idea of Nemesis. The figure of Cupid represents the overwhelming force of love to seize and destroy any human being who comes under its power. Nemesis comes close on his heels in the shape of Megaera from hell, who rises

to punish not only the lovers for their unchastity but also the father who acts as agent for the furies. Like Seneca, Wilmot and his colleagues identify the ancient concept of Nemesis almost completely with the moral concept of retribution for sin.

In Senecan sensationalism, the play does not lack. In the later version of the tragedy which Wilmot prepared for publication, Tancred plucks out his eyes after the example of Oedipus and kills himself on the stage. Gismond of Salerne is the first English Senecan play in which something of violence is shown on the stage within the act, as well as in the dumb-show. Gismond herself dies on the stage; suicides are there, authorised by Seneca himself. More striking is the gruesome goblet shown with Guiscard's heart in it. The same elaboration of the horrible is to be noted in the dumb-show introducing the fifth act in the edition of 1591:

> "Before this act was a dead march played, during which entered on the stage Renuchio... They took up Guiscard from under the stage; then...a strangling cord was fastened about his neck, and he haled forth by them. Renuchio bewaileth it; and then, entering in, bringeth forth a standing cup of gold, with a bloody heart recking hot in it".[29]

The unity of place is observed in the play. The scene is restricted to the court of Tancred's palace and the chamber of Gismond lying immediately behind it. But there is no attempt to adhere to the unity of time.

The play endeavours to present a romantic subject with something of the gravity and dignity of classical tragedy. "It borrows", Bowers holds, "various revenge trappings from Seneca and the Italians, but the pathetic love story usurps the main interest".[30] The combination of pathos, dignity, and a sense of some greater value beyond the vanity of this world is ultimately at odds with the Senecan and retributive tones that dominated the earlier parts of the play. But in spite of that the whole is set in a framework of rigid and impossible declamation.

The treatment of the plot is poorly contrived and it is episodical. The play aims at presenting the whole course of the action, in its inception, development and consequences, rather than a particular situation or crisis, as was the custom in Senecan tragedy.

We have it on the authority of Cunliffe[31] that Cupid, among the characters, is taken from Dolce; Renuchio, Megaera and the Chorus are from Seneca; Lucrece and Claudia are the conventional confidants of classical tragedy.

In act V, sc. i of the play the imitation of Seneca is found to be the most extensive and most obvious. Renuchio is the regular Senecan messenger; the detailed horror of his story is quite after the Senecan manner; and there are many lines translated, with slight alterations, from the narratives of the Thyestes. Megaera, who opens act IV is, no doubt, ultimately

derived from Seneca's Thyestes, where she drives the ghost of Tantalus to curse his own descendants. Gismond's lover is raised in the social scale to the satisfaction of Aristotelian critics; from a varlet he becomes an earl. Tancred is the great obstacle to the fulfilment of the lovers' desires. He is a formidable figure, even without his Senecan enlargement into a furious tyrant and a revenger. As a Senecan revenger he is much less human, but here too, there is a tragic element in that the revenge recoils upon himself and forces him to destroy himself.

The choruses are recited by four gentlemen of Salerne. The chorus holds up 'worthy dames', such as Penelope and Lucrece, as a 'mirrour and a glasse to womankinde', and exhorts their hearers to resist Cupid's assaults and be content with a moderate and virtuous affection (Choruses II, III, IV).

The dumb-shows are realistic rather than allegorical in character. They set forth the action of the drama without words.

In the 'epistle dedicatory', the work is asserted to be, in stateliness of show, depth of conceit or true ornaments of poetical art, inferior to none of the best in that kind, no, 'were the Roman Seneca the censurer'. Originally written in rhyme, it was afterwards cast into blank verse, to recommend it more fully to the fastidious taste of the polite world.

There are Senecan reminiscences in the play from Phaedra, Medea etc. The play shows a considerable advance both in quality and quantity upon the way of lines being borrowed directly from

Seneca. In both interest of theme and manner of treatment, it surpasses the earlier and more academic models. It struck a new path, in which later dramatists followed with infinitely greater art.

The Misfortunes of Arthur: The Misfortunes of Arthur is the best tragedy of the group on the classical model. Bowers[32] is of the opinion that The Misfortunes of Arthur was an attempt at pure Seneca in English. Cunliffe[33] argues that the play is significant historically for four reasons : its imitation of Seneca's form, wholesale adoption of Seneca's material, the maintenance of the traditional blank verse and the return to a native subject.

Thomas Hughes used Geoffrey of Monmouth as his main source and he also consulted Malory's Morte d' Arthur and found there some additional motives such as the incestuous birth of Mordred and the mutual slaughter of father and son. "These sensational situations", Cunliffe writes, "were doubtless welcomed by Hughes as helping to bring his theme up to the proper pitch of Senecan horror".[34]

Hughes chose as his model the most gruesome of Seneca's tragedies, Thyestes. In common with Thyestes and Agamemnon, the revenge-motive is furnished solely by the prologue ghost and not by the events unfolded in the plot. The elements of a true revenge play which rests in the Pendragon story, have no place in the action of the play. Eleanor Prosser holds an identical view: "Revenge is forced into the play solely to intensify the atmosphere of misery and doom. Throughout the play, revenge, in

the work of 'cursed imps' is seen as the cause of all calamities". Guenevora rages for revenge, hearing of Arthur's return. But when Fronia urges her to calm her passion, she turns her anger inward and decides to kill herself. She chooses to take revenge on herself by retiring to a cloister. Throughout the play, motives of revenge are capriciously attributed to all of the major characters, whether relevantly or not, merely to emphasise their misery. King Arthur, too, argues that he should not take revenge on his rebel son. But when Mordred sends a challenge, he decides to fight and the result is disastrous. When dying, he takes all the blame on himself.

Hughes introduces a prologue ghost in the shape of Gorlois. The ghost comes up from hell to recite the first scene and is merely the 'Tantali umbra' of Thyestes in another guise. The ghost calls for revenge, but the specific revenge, he invokes, is irrelevant to the play.

Margeson writes, "The play comes nearest to the Senecan idea of nemesis".[36] The initial dumb-show and the prologue ghost reveal the origin of the tragic action as a curse laid by the gods upon the whole issue of Pendragon because of his 'unlawful heat and love'. The curse has worked itself out through succeeding crimes and sins by which the victims of the curse have damned themselves. The Senecan conception of hereditary expiation of a crime is called upon to explain the conflict of Arthur and Mordred who pay for the evil done by their ancestor Pendragon.

The play has a free use of horror in plot though not in staged action. At the banquet made by Uther Pendragon for the solemnising of his conquest against the Saxons, he fell in passionate love with Igerna, wife of Gorlois. Shortly after his acceptance with Igerna, he slew Gorlois. Igerna gave birth to Arthur and Anne. Pendragon was poisoned by the Saxons. Arthur was a delighter in his sister, Anne, who made him father of Mordred. In the absence of Arthur, Mordred made love to the queen Guenevora and ruled his kingdom and grew ambitious. Guenevora hearing that Arthur was already embarked for return, thought of killing her husband and then herself but at last resolved to enter into a cloister. Mordred sent a challenge, the fight began between the father and the son and both died.

Margeson's comment on the Senecan elements in The Misfortunes of Arthur is worth quoting:

"In neo-Senecan fashion, Hughes fills in the background of sin and crime through the devices of dumb show and ghost and directs our attention to the state of mind of his three major characters immediately before the conflict which brings disaster to them all. There is too much of dumb show, ghost, and chorus, and there are too many confidants and counsellors... He is always trying to strain the pitch of horror through the use of Senecan imagery, and he is unable to give much reality to his formal and imitative portraits of character".[37]

The characters indulge frequently in Senecan aphorisms and are cast in the regular Senecan moulds. Mordred is the typical usurper. Guenevora is the faithless wife. The general relation of Guenevora to Mordred is modelled upon that of Seneca's Clytemnestra to Aegisthus. Cunliffe points out, "the sayings of other Senecan heroines — Phaedra, Medea, Deianira and Jocasta — are also taken over, so that in one speech of twenty eight lines, only one can be put down to the credit of the author, all the rest being translated from Seneca".[38] Arthur, Mordred, and Guenevora are hedged round with confidants and counsellors; they have also apothegm assigned to them taken from so many and so different Senecan characters that all impression of individuality is in danger of being lost. The messengers, counsellors and confidants have very little of originality. Arthur himself utters many Senecan commonplaces. But he is not a merely conventional type. He shows some hint of his personality in the final scene. Hughes does not neglet Arthur's final grief and despair, his recognition of the fulfilment of the curse, and his acceptance of his destiny.

The Chorus consists of four persons according to the established tradition. They recite each a stanza in turn, and this division of the chorus, which occurs also in the dialogue of the fifth act, is the one innovation introduced by Hughes.

The Misfortunes of Arthur shows to a unique degree how far a playwright could carry the process of taking phrases straight

out of Seneca and fitting them together like a mosaic. Wolfgang Clemen points out, "The object of scraping together exaggerated utterances of this kind from different plays of Seneca, and piling them on top of one another in a single speech, seems to be to produce an impression of frenzy and conflicting passions, and if possible to outdo Seneca himself in the accumulation of purple passages".[39] This may be illustrated from the two long speeches of Guenevora in act I, sc. ii (Ll. 1-16, 19-47); here eleven passages, taken from three different plays of Seneca, namely, Thyestes, Agamemnon and Hercules Oetaeus have been run together to produce this cumulative effect.

The play is not solely Senecan; in its hatred of tyranny, its detestation of the crime of usurpation, its condemnation of political ambition, it is adapted to the Elizabethan scene. Un-Senecan too, is the concern with the welfare of state:

> "Thou Realme which I reverence as my Saint
> Thou stately Brytaine th' auncient type of Troy".[40]

B. The Popularised Senecanism in Elizabethan Tragedy : Thomas Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy

The period beginning from 1580 is important in the history of English drama for the historic growth of English Seneca. Seneca was found to be the most potential force in shaping the popular drama of the period. Peele's Locrine (1586?)[41] and Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy (c 1587) show an amalgam of Seneca and popular tradition. The popularised Senecanism characterizes many tragedies written in the succeeding years of which special mention should be made of John Marston's Antonio and Mellida (1600) and its sequel, Antonio's Revenge (1602). "Marston is the greatest debtor of Seneca"[42], as Lucas has called him. In both of his plays we find the influence of Seneca most plainly manifested. In his comedy, Sophonisba, Marston falls back upon Seneca's ghosts and witches, his blood-curdling descriptions of crude horrors, his unnatural imagery, his rhetoric and reflection. Marston, however, was concerned with attacking vice, painting it in its most horrible and revolting forms. His impulse was satiric and hardly tragic.

Besides Locrine and The Spanish Tragedy there are a number of popular plays[43] written in the period between 1580 and 1590 which contain conventional trappings of Seneca's tragedies. In these plays "what of Seneca was found suitable was adopted and completely naturalised by incorporation with the main body of popular drama".[44] The dramatic impulse active in the period may best be illustrated with the help of Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy.

The Senecan character of Thomas Kyd's (1558? - 1594?) The Spanish Tragedy (c.1587) has been established by a number of investigators. F.S. Boas says, "[Kyd] had Seneca's dramas at his fingers' ends. In The Spanish Tragedie almost everyone of them is drawn upon".[45] In English Drama 1580-1642, Tucker Brooke describes The Spanish Tragedy as, in many ways, a much truer representative of Seneca than the confessed imitations like Ferrex and Porrex. H.B. Charlton in Works of Sir William Alexander and J.W. Cunliffe in The Influence of Seneca on Elizabethan Tragedy have traced the influence of Seneca upon The Spanish Tragedy in details. Fredson Bowers in his Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy has made an admirable analysis of the Senecan traits in The Spanish Tragedy. "The most significant popular play under Senecan influence is", writes T.S. Eliot, "of course The Spanish Tragedy, and the further responsibility of Kyd for the translation of Pseudo-Senecan Cornelia of Garnier has marked him as the disciple of Seneca".[46] Modern editors of the play like Philip Edwards (1959), B.L. Joseph (1964), Andrew S. Cairncross (1967), Thomas W. Ross (1968) and J.R. Mulryne (1970) have dwelt upon the influence of Seneca on Kyd's play in details.

Howard Baker, however, in his Induction to Tragedy, has tried to minimise the importance of Kyd's borrowings from Seneca. He holds that the real difference between the two authors lies in their dissimilar attitude towards revenge. For Seneca, revenge results from a family curse of long duration; for a revenge

movement to begin slowly and mount to a wild climax is foreign to Seneca, but it is the whole story of Kyd's play.

Seneca had, in any case, an irresistible attraction for Kyd. But, Kyd had a real dramatic faculty, an eye for striking situations and stage effects and showed some gifts for the expression of the popular motive of romantic passion. And, as Gregory Smith shows, Kyd was "the first to discover the bearing of episode and of the movement of the story on characterisation"[47], and the first to give the audience the hint of the development of character. Naturally Kyd could never have attempted a blind imitation of Senecan tragedies in The Spanish Tragedy. What Kyd learnt from Seneca was how to produce terror by the ghost of his prologue who relates past events, by atrocious circumstances, and by speeches heightened with striking lyrical expression. Kyd makes no attempt to simplify the construction of the popular drama and he cares nothing for the unities. He takes from the Latin poet only what he thinks an English audience will assimilate, and leaves the loose facile construction of the national drama intact. He owes to Seneca's Thyestes his theme of vengeance. He learns from him to envelop his whole work with an atmosphere of gloom, and adds the use of the most powerful stage expedients known to his own experience. Kyd also feels the necessity of allowing the audience to see the action with their own eyes, instead of having it described by messengers, though he retains the messenger to report events that cannot very well be represented.

The leading motive of the Spanish Tragedy is revenge. A wild insatiable fury of revenge is the sole animating impulse of all the chief personages of the play. But the revenge-motive is not strong until the middle of the play. Kyd starts the play in the Senecan fashion as in Hercules Furens and Thyestes by presenting the ghost of Andrea seeking blood for his own blood. The gods look with favour on Andrea and are prepared to bring him peace by destroying his murderer. The parallel with the ghost of Achilles in Seneca's Troades which rises to demand vengeance for death in battle is obvious. But Kyd abandons the theme of revenge for a person, who had been murdered before the start of the play, soon, and, at the end of the second act, the play disregards the revenge for Andrea. Kyd has an eye for the audience and so he settles down to dramatize a revenge among men for a crime already seen and appreciated by them.

Kyd's revenge-scheme in The Spanish Tragedy is vast. Bel-imperia wishing to avenge her lover, Andrea, falls in love with Horatio and by doing that slights Balthazar who is a suitor for her love and the murderer of Andrea. Balthazar was taken a prisoner in war by Horatio. And now Horatio has preempted his intended bride. So Balthazar has reasons for a revenge for Horatio. Lorenzo's fierce pride was previously wounded by the lowly-born Horatio over the capturing of Balthazar, his friend, and now, in his sister's preferring Horatio to Balthazar. Horatio is murdered in the bower. And now a real revenger of

of blood appears — Hieronimo, the father of Horatio, who does not know the murderers of his son, but plans to dissemble until he learns and then to strike. The essence of the drama thus, as G. Gregory Smith observes, "lies in the slow carrying out of the revenge".[48] Edward Philips, likewise, observes, "... he [Kyd] chose to set layer within layer, wheels within wheels, revenge within revenge".[49]

Hieronimo is the real revenger in the play. To him, as to a Senecan revenger, revenge is a sacred duty. But it is not always so. He also longs for revenge as a means of relieving his own misery. And next, he feels that a life for a life is the law of nature and the legal penalty for murder. After his son's murder, he, the man of justice, pleads first to Heaven for vengeance, then as a good judge, he decides to take his case to the King; but the distraction of his grief and the machinations of Lorenzo keep him at bay. Only when heavenly and social justice have failed him, does he take vengeance into his own hands.

Thus the idea of revenge as a personal satisfaction for wrongs endured is enlarged into the idea of revenge and punishment, a universal moral satisfaction for crime committed. Though Hieronimo's wrongs are personal, he sees his claims for satisfaction as the claims of the order of things.

Hieronimo, though possessing the clinching evidence which he needed, finds it difficult to lay an accusation. When Hieronimo is ready to call down punishment on the criminals, the strain on

his mind begins to tell and his madness begins. Consequently he is kept away from the king and justice is not secured.

Revenge-scheme has, therefore, gained a larger range and scope in The Spanish Tragedy than in Senecan tragedies. Bowers thinks it highly probable that Kyd drew his main inspiration for the working out of revenge-scheme not from Seneca. He is categorical[50] in stating that terrible revenges for blood in the stories of French and Italian novels influenced Kyd's play not only in incident but also in character and motivation.

The abundance of horror and sensationalism in the play is the offspring of the atmosphere of revenge. The spirit of Death stalks throughout the play and there are murders galore. Andrea is killed by Balthazar in a cowardly manner. Balthazar and Lorenzo hang Horatio to a tree. Pedringano kills Serberine at St. Luigi's park. Pedringano is arrested, tried by a court and executed. Isabella, Hieronimo's wife, mad with grief, stabs herself to death. In course of acting of the play-within-the-play, Lorenzo and Balthazar are killed by Hieronimo and Bel-imperia respectively — all of them being the actors. Bel-imperia commits suicide. To avoid answering question, Hieronimo bites off his tongue. And then with a knife he kills Lorenzo's father and kills himself. In this way, ten characters, in total, are killed, eight of them on stage. The exhibition of Horatio's body, the letter of Bel-imperia written in blood, Hieronimo's frantic deed and cries evoke a spirit of horror.

The play is often criticised as a crude cumbrous but powerful melodrama. But Kyd's play does not display the dance of death, blood and horror as does Seneca's Thyestes. The atmosphere in Seneca's tragedy is charged with unrelieved horror and the air is thick with the smell of blood. It is true that Kyd introduced the melodramatic element to please the Elizabethan groundlings. But, as Bowers[51] justifiably says, the horrors of The Spanish Tragedy have little to do with the unnaturalness of the crude Thyestean banquets and elaborate dissection and poisoning scenes of the Italian.

The ghost of Andrea and Revenge provide the Induction of the play. The Ghost seeks revenge and Revenge is represented as a spirit consoling the Ghost. The two are the spectators of the dramatic action of the main play and make comments on the situation.

The Ghost in this play is a prologue ghost as well as a revenge ghost. The ghost is introduced after the fashion of Seneca. Howard Baker, in his Induction to Tragedy, has tried to minimise the importance of Senecan influence on Kyd as regards ghosts. In his view, the ghost of Andrea, unlike Thyestes, has no responsibility for the tragedy; nor is he in any ordinary sense the victim of Revenge. Andrea, moreover, has no vengeful tendencies until he is inspired to them by the events which he is witnessing.

Elizabeth Maslen, a modern critic, minimises the role of the ghost of Andrea in a similar way : "In the course of the play, not only do we see the Ghost being educated into the desire for revenge by what he sees and hears, but we see Revenge as both an external presence on stage and an internal goad within the characters, where each responds with greater or lesser reluctance according to his moral values".[52]

Both these views are to be taken with certain reservations. It can better be said that Andrea and Revenge do evoke Tantalus and Magera; Andrea's Prologue does stem from a Senecan tradition at least as much as from the De Casibus' Induction.

The machinery of the ghost of Andrea and Revenge is Senecan in construction. The spirit of Revenge is presumably influencing the action of the characters in much the same fashion in which the ghost of Tantalus casts his malign influence over the house of Pelops in Thyestes. Such a pulling of the strings from without, therefore, is wholly Senecan, as is the parallel to Thyestes where a particular revenge enacted on the stage satisfies the debt to an unrelated crime from the past.

But the action of the latter half of the play does not spring from the motive of a revenge for him nor is this revenge chiefly directed at his slayer. Consequently, the ghost has no real connection with the play. Again, in none of Seneca's plays does the ghost of the recent dead rise to demand vengeance for his own murder, as Andrea does. Bowers' observation in this

connection should be noted: "Such a demand is common in Italian tragedies like Cinthio's Orbecche (1541) and Deicio da Orte's Acripanda (1591)".[53]

Philip Edwards gives an admirable analysis of the part played by gods in the happenings of the play. The play is built upon irony, upon the ignorance of the characters that they are being used to fulfil the decree of the gods.

Actual madness, as we find in Seneca, is limited to the madness, sent by Juno upon Hercules, a situation which is without a parallel in The Spanish Tragedy. Hieronimo's madness is something closer to the madness of Medea and Deianira. But the origin of Hieronimo's insanity does not seem to come from Seneca. Hieronimo is afflicted with passing fits of genuine madness brought on by his overwhelming grief and overwhelming sense of his obligation and his helpnessness to revenge which saps his will.

An important dramatic device is the justifiable hesitation of the revenger who requires much proof, and on the failure of legal justice, supposedly lacks a suitable opportunity for straightforward action. Hieronimo finds his task difficult; he is burdened with doubt and human weakness and delayed by madness. In Medea the hesitation of the revenger appears momentarily when Medea once falters in her resolve, and in Agamemnon, Clytemnestra requires the goading of Aegisthus. Neither of these plays,

however, utilised the motive of hesitation to prolong the plot as does Kyd merely to fillip the interest of the audience for a moment with the possibility that revenge might be abandoned. The true source of Hieronimo's madness is not here. The note of Bel-imperia with the names of the murderers in it is so startling that Hieronimo suspects a trap, for he knows of no motive why Lorenzo and Balthasar should have killed his son. He must, therefore, assure himself of the truth before he acts.

On getting the letter on Pedringano's body, Hieronimo could dispel the doubts from his mind and his delay ended. But Kyd introduced the motive of madness because the revenger must be made to delay once more to save the tragedy from running towards that of an accidental sort. Isabella's madness makes Hieronimo's wits unsettled. He thinks of committing suicide but thrusts the thought aside before the reviving sense of his duty to avenge. His distraction, however, keeps him away from gaining the King's ears, and when he recovers, he feels that he can never get legal justice but must act as the executioner himself. At this point the reasons for delay, previously logical, break down. Hieronimo says simply that he will revenge Horatio's death but

> "not as the vulgar wits of men,
> With open, but inevitable ills,
> As by a secret, yet a certain mean
> Which under kindship will be cloked best"[54]
> (Act III, sc. xiii, Ll. 21 ff.)

The madness of the revenger as well as his delay in The Spanish Tragedy are the two chief breaks with Senecan tragedy.

The suicides of Bel-imperia and Hieronimo have no relation to the expiatory suicides of Seneca's characters who have caused the death of some beloved person. Hieronimo was a villain to the English audience at the end and was forced to commit suicide to satisfy the stern doctrine of morality. Isabella's suicide whetted Hieronimo's spirit of revenge and so it was dramatically significant.

Kyd's villains have no trace of Seneca. Lorenzo, the villain, is a Machiavellian character full of villainous devices and free from scruples. It is the carrying-out of the revenge tradition which makes Hieronimo an Italianate villain.

The accomplices in Senecan tragedies are innocent or deceived. They are used to help the revenge and not to consummate it. In The Spanish Tragedy we have three accomplices, Bel-imperia, Serberine and Pedringano. The accomplices in Kyd have got larger dimensions and more significant role to play than those in Seneca. All of the accomplices in Kyd's play are killed.

The Elizabethans were delighted with Seneca's rhetoric for they were still so intellectually young as to be impressed by bombast and flamboyance.[55] The figures used in the play are not only articulate and rhetorical but also a distinct part of the drama.

Kyd's rhetoric at times heightens theatrical effect. Half-lines and outcries speed up or break off accelerating action. Seneca was determined to out-Seneca Seneca in the use of rhetorical commonplaces of classical origin. The soliloquy of Hieronimo in act II,sc. v is a case in point.

With the mantle of Seneca upon him, Kyd at times adds rhetorical point and colour to his play, which becomes a mixture of thought and feeling. In the laments of Hieronimo and Bel-imperia, Kyd seems to have been influenced by Seneca. The long speeches in Seneca are always emotion-loaded with rhetoric. So is the case with Kyd. In Seneca some of the long speeches do not appear to be an integral part of the play. In fact passion and emotion run riot, and the language becomes unimaginably exaggerated. Kyd has, however, in a large measure, tempered passion with thought. The long set speech of lamentation of Hieronimo (in act III,sc. ii) illustrates this point. It is extremely rhetorical. But the important thing is that its structure and proportion are worked out with an almost mathematical exactness.

Kyd is the disciple of Seneca in his fondness for declamation. In act III, sc. ii, Hieronimo begins with a declaration:

"O eyes, no eyes, but fountains fraught with tears",[56]

And the declaration continues up to the twenty fourth line. It gathers momentum and reaches its climax:

"Eyes, life, world, heavens, hell, night and day,
See, search, shew, send some man, some mean, that may".[57]

Kyd has also made an excellent use of 'stichomythia.' Here is an example, from the play, of this device in which the characters are engaged in a verbal duel in single lines:

Bel-imperia - Why stands Horatio speechless all this while?
Horatio - The less I speak, the more I medidate.
Bel-imperia - But whereon dost thou chiefly meditate?
Horatio - On dangers past, and pleasures to ensue[58].

Kyd has not used the chorus in the classical or Senecan way. But he has not done away with the device in his play. He substituted Andrea's Ghost and Revenge for the chorus. And they are far more effective than the chorus as a dramatic device at least in Kyd's play.

The political background of the play, namely, the victory of Spain over Portugal in 1580, is relegated by Kyd to be an insignificant position, while Seneca not only alludes to political events quite frequently but also takes part in attacking the tyrants in his plays.

There are classical allusions and Latin quotations scattered throughout the play; all this is a legacy from Seneca. Several characters actually quote Seneca in Latin. The beginning of the Induction is modelled upon the opening scene in

Thyestes. The opening eleven lines of act III are a paraphrase of seventeen lines in the Agamemnon, and in I, ii, 7, and III, xiii, 72, we have reminiscences of phrases in Phaedra and the Octavia. As is shown by Robert S. Miola,[59] there is another echo of Seneca's Oedipus in this play. The echo appears in English, rather than in Latin, in Hieronimo's pointed question to the King (IV, iv, 197-80) which can be compared with Creon's question to Oedipus (523-4).

Kyd saw the necessity of allowing the audience to see the action with their own eyes instead of having it described by messengers, though he retained the messenger to report events that could not very well be represented, such as the battle described in the opening scene. Boas holds that "the speeches of Senecan messenger are here Kyd's general model".[60]

As regards characterisation, Kyd is the first dramatist in the history of English drama who succeeded in creating a convincing character by means of soliloquy, as Wolfgang Clemen observes in English Tragedy Before Shakespeare. Kyd also gives his characters lurid psychological twists. The unique art of characterisation that we find in the play, Kyd did not borrow from Seneca, but was himself master of.

Kyd's play is divided into acts and scenes. But there is nothing Senecan in the type of the plot used by Kyd in this play. Eliot[61] has shown that 'plot', in the sense in which we find plot in The Spanish Tragedy, does not exist for Seneca.

He took a story perfectly well known to everybody, and interested his audience entirely by his embellishments of description and narrative and by smartness and pungency of dialogue; suspense and surprise attached solely to verbal effects. One is to agree on the point that the plot of the play owes nothing essential to Seneca. Unlike Seneca, Kyd presented his atrocities on stage, and he had a good instinct for ironic juxtapositions.

Again, Kyd throws Seneca's Unities of Time and Place to the winds. The scene of action takes place in Spain and also in Portugal. The time taken covers several days. But there is the Unity of Action and motive as well, for it centres round revenge. The beginning is effectively supplied by the murder; the end is effectively supplied by the vengeance. Kyd manages crudely but skilfully to bridge the gap between the two.

The play-within-the-play is another device which Kyd uses successfully in his play. It becomes a powerful explication of the theatrical structure latent in the Senecan tragic climax. Hieronimo does not forget Nero's ambitions as an actor (Act IV, Sc. I, Ll. 86-88). He is interested not merely in eliminating his enemies, but also in the self-display that comes as he steps before his own curtain and claims the recognition to which Seneca's Medea and Atreus aspire in their last scenes:

> No, princes, know I am Hieronimo,
> The hopeless father of a hapless son.[62]
> (Act IV, Sc. IV, Ll. 83-84)

The introduction of soliloquy in The Spanish Tragedy is an innovation of Kyd. By means of the soliloquies Kyd added to the play an inward drama which is played out in the soul of the protagonist and which causes him to lead to a solitary existence in this world. Hieronimo's emotional and declamatory set speeches, therefore, though they remain strongly indebted to the style of Seneca, acquire a new significance.

There can be no denying the fact that Kyd is original for a mastery of situation, shown in the skill with which he works out some of the episodes, and for a grim use of dramatic irony. There is yet another thing in Kyd, to which we should call attention. The plays of Seneca have no romantic element. In The Spanish Tragedy, on the other hand, the love of Horatio and Bel-imperia seems to be an acre of grass amidst the lurid saturnalia of passion, distrust, violence and revenge.

Until recently it has been customary for the critics to classify The Spanish Tragedy as a Revenge drama on the Senecan model. Lucas, however, held, "... it [The Spanish Tragedy] does not retain a great deal that is definitely Senecan. It is already rather flesh and blood, than merely blood and thunder".[63] Cunliffe also pointed out, "... the distinctive features of Seneca's mode of treatment are wanting [in The Spanish Tragedy]".[64] Recent critics hold that while Seneca cannot be discounted as part of Kyd's heritage, he forms only

a part, and is mixed with many other ingredients by the dynamics of word and gest available to playwrights of the time. For example, Elizabeth Maslen writes, "Kyd's play bears only a superficial resemblance to Seneca's drama. Seneca's moral aphorisms from his tracts may appear from time to time, and the very occasional translation of a point in one of his plays, but these serve mainly to give the drama authority, a favourite sleight-of-hand trick from the earliest medieval times. There is much more sense of an organic growth from native dramatic tradition in The Spanish Tragedy".[65] Percy Simpson holds that Kyd's debt to Seneca "is really superficial, showing itself in mythological references and the use of Latin tags, and strongly influencing the style and expression".[66] He thinks, Kyd is important, not for what he derived from Seneca, but for what he added to him — for a mastery of situation, shown in the skill with which he works out some of the episodes, and for a grim use of dramatic irony. When Horatio's body is hoisted into the tree, Lorenzo comments,

> "Although his life were still ambitious proud,
> Yet is he at the highest now he is dead".[67]

He can overlook the Senecan rant when a man can write like that. He further holds that in Kyd's play there are the most powerful representations of madness in Elizabethan drama, outside Shakespeare, and they recall the style of Webster and the technique of Shakespeare. They develop, and, on the whole, they accentuate, what is already there. For all these reasons,

we cannot say that the play, in the main, is a "noisy nonsense".[68] We can best say that the play is the outcome of the Elizabethan response to Seneca. Kyd's primary concern was not with Seneca but with the popular stage, with the English audience, with the very period he lived in. And the period had a large admiration for Seneca. He was not a Senecan copyist but a conscious and careful artist in that period in which English drama was getting its true shape. Truly has Smith observed, "In such a scene as that where Pedringano bandies words with the hangman when the boy brings in the empty box (act III, sc. vi) or in Bel-imperia's dropping of her glove (act I, sc. iv), we are parting company with ... the English Senecans ... and we are nearer Shakespeare".[69]

C. Senecan Stance of Self-sustained Defiance : Christopher Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) was a great genius and an original thinker. His plays are also original in dramatic power. Marlowe escaped the direct influence of Seneca. Cunliffe has placed him above Seneca : "Marlowe indeed was immesurably superior to Seneca, both as a poet and as a dramatist, and in his hands, the very crudities and faults of the tragic model of his age were transformed by the transcendent power of genius till they often became sublime and beautiful".[70]

With Marlowe the essence of tragedy does not consist in the fall of the true, noble, great and lovely, as occasioned by their own weakness, onesidedness and want of freedom, but in the annihilations, conflict of the primary elements of human nature, the bloody struggle between the most vehement emotions and passions. In his tragic conception Marlowe comes nearer to Seneca. But Marlowe was the product of the Renaissance. He was acutely aware that he was living in an age of revolt, whose intellectuals were making the claim of self-sufficiency in innumberable ways. Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great (1587), in two parts, give the story of the Scythian shepherd who dreams of world conquest, fulfils his ambition magnificently and dies in his triumph. In his Tamburlaine we find a stance of self-sustained defiance. Braden[71] would like to define it as a sign of Renaissance Senecanism. In his words, "Calling himself the fear and terror of the world places him in the simplest tradition of Renaissance Senecanism, a stance of self-sustained

defiance".[72] Braden further observes, "In Tamburlaine the Senecan dramatic self calls up some of its most powerful resources for affirming its price in the face of judgement, indeed for affirming the rightness of its place in the very world it has devastated".[73]

In Tamburlaine we find a version of the Herculean hero. Seneca's Hercules Furens looms large in the background of a number of scenes of this play. Tamburlaine describes his motivation in the following lines in the same fashion in which Hercules does (in Hercules Furens, Ll 958-61):

> "I might move this turning spheres of heaven,
> For earth and all this aery region
> Cannot contain the state of Tamburlaine".
>
> (2 Tamburlaine the Great,
> Act Iv, sc. i, LL 118-20)

Tamburlaine says this immediately before he strikes his son. This reminds us of the most terrible deeds of Seneca's Hercules. Hercules, however, kills his sons in a fit of madness.

Another instance of analogy may be quoted. The speech in which Tamburlaine voices some essence of the Renaissance heroic spirit is the speech in which he crosses paths with Seneca's Eteocles:

> "Our souls whose faculties can comprehend
> The wondrous Architecture of the world:
> And measure every wandering planets' course :
> Still climbing after knowledge infinite,

And always moving as the restless spheres,
Wills us to weare our selves and never rest".

(Tamburlaine the Great, Part I
Act II, sc. vii, LL. 21-29)

The speech in which Tamburlaine urges Amyras to control the chariot of state gives vent to Senecan stoicism:

"Let not thy love exceed thine honour son,
Nor bar thy mind that magnanimity,
That nobly must admit necessity:
Sit up my boy, and with those silken raines
Bridle the steeled stomachs of those Jades".

(Tamburlaine the Great, Part II,
Act V, sc. iii, LL 199-203)

As a whole, Tamburlaine the Great, Part I & II, reminds us of Seneca's tragedy in its insistence on violence and horror. J.A. Symonds, in his Shakespeare's Predecessors, describes the action of the play by saying that here blood flows in rivers; shrieks and groans and curses mingle with heaven-defying menaces and ranting vaunts. Tamburlaine's case hints at how much more of the expansiveness of Senecan villainy can in fact be retained in the process, and in so doing sets the tone for the English theatre to some.

Marlowe's second play, The Tragicall History of Doctor Faustus (1588), is marked by the use of chorus in which Marlowe, undoubtedly, was influenced by Seneca. The chorus introduces the theme of the play. We are informed that the dramatist will not in this play deal with the subject of war or depict scenes of love or present "proud audacious deeds". The play will deal with

Faustus' fortunes, good or bad . The Chorus appears again in act III on the stage and infonms us that Faustus has been learning the secrets of astronomy by studying the clouds, the planets, the stars, the Tropic Zones and quarters of the sky. The Chorus again appears in act IV and gives us information regarding Faustus' journeys and whereabouts. The speech of the Chorus, at the end of the play, contains the moral. The Chorus calls upon the wise people only to wander at unlawful things and not to practise necromancy. Thus, the Chorus has a far greater role to play than the chorus in a Senecan tragedy. It discharges rather the functions of the chorus of a Greek tragedy.

Marlowe's third play The Jew of Malta (1589) is a study of lust for wealth, which centres about Barabas, a terrible old money-lender. It is certainly a Revenge Tragedy and influenced by Seneca or rather Kyd. There is, however, a difference between Kyd and Marlowe. The revenger differs from the Senecan or Kydian hero as the overwhelming weight of a bounden duty is never felt. Barabas' revenge ends in the second scene of the third act. In this play revenge, unlike in a Senecan play, is treated as a criminal passion. Bowers rightly observes, "The Jew of Malta for much of its action and characterization owes an obvious debt to The Spanish Tragedy, yet it is obviously original".[74] Marlowe went to Machieavelli for the springs of his action.[75]

Marlowe's last play, Edward II (1592), is unquestionably Marlowe's masterpiece. It is a tragic story of king's weakness

and misery. In its execution it surpasses a Senecan drama. The tragic effect of the play depends on the emotional tension that exists between pity for the tragic character in his predicament and a strong sense of its inevitability. At the end, there is a sense of finality. Cunliffe comments in this connection, "Where Seneca would be simply disgusting, Marlowe reaches the topmost height of tragic power in Edward II, V, 5, for instance, as Dr. Ward remarks, 'the unutterable horror of the situation is depicted without our sense of the loathsome being aroused'".[76] The master portrait of villainy in this play, however, is obviously due to the influence of Seneca.

Professor Una M. Ellis-Fermor[77] observes that the spirit of Marlovian tragedy is the sense of human limitations and the tone of human defeat. Seneca also believes man sure to be outwardly beaten, since worldly calamity is irrestible and inescapable. But Seneca proposed to build up something within the heart of man which would enable him to gain a pyrrhic victory over fate.

D. The Remaking of the Senecan Tradition : Shakespeare's

Titus Andronicus, Richard III, Romeo and Juliet.

In the fine laudatio which Ben Jonson wrote for the First Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays, he claims that Shakespeare's plays are worthy to rank with those of the greatest Greek and Latin dramatists. But Jonson equally observed that Shakespeare had small Latin and no Greek. It is not known how small Latin Shakespeare had. We do not know for certain if Shakespeare was fully equipped with sufficient knowledge in Latin to go through Senecan tragedies with ease. Yet we can be certain that Shakespeare had a prodigious memory and it seems probable that what he learnt in his school-days remained with him for the rest of his life, to be drawn upon, when needed for the writing of his plays and poems. It is probable that Shakespeare read Seneca at school; and even if he did not, we may be sure that at some period of his career he would turn to the generally accepted model of classical tragedy, either in the original or in the translation. As Cunliffe[78] shows, a number of instances are there which show that Shakespeare might have been influenced by Seneca. But it cannot be said that in any case the resemblance is absolutely convincing. Eliot in his essay "Shakespeare and The Stoicism of Seneca", observes, "I think it is quite likely that Shakespeare read some of Seneca's tragedies at school ... So far as Shakespeare was influenced by Seneca, it was by his memories of school conning, and through the influence of the Senecan tragedy of the day, through Kyd and Peele, but chiefly

Kyd. That Shakespeare deliberately took a view of life from Seneca there seems to be no evidence whatsoever".[79]

Gilbert Highet[80] holds that Shakespeare knew much more sensitively about Rome than about Greece with the single exception of the Greek myths which reached the modern world through Rome. Admittedly, Shakespeare had more command over Roman than Greek themes; so the spirit of his tragedies is much less Greek than Roman.

The treating of familiar themes drawn from ancient history and climbing to the height of Senecan style became almost an obligation for the popular dramatists of the early Elizabethan reign. It is to be accepted that Shakespeare would turn his hand to something in the classical manner.[81] He did, and like the other dramatists of his period, he was also influenced by Seneca at least at the early period of his dramatic career.

In Shakespeare's three earliest tragedies, Titus Andronicus, Richard III and Romeo and Juliet, we find Shakespeare inheriting the dramatic tradition from Seneca and adapting and changing the Senecan devices of the late 1580s.

Titus Andronicus:

The dominant mode of English tragedy when Shakespeare began to write was the popularized Senecanism of Thomas Kyd. Titus Andronicus (1594) was Shakespeare's first attempt at the Kydian revenge tragedy. The incidents, though fictitious, are

supposed to be drawn from the annals of Roman empire. Titus Andronicus, the general of the Romans, conquers the Goths in battle, and takes captive their queen Tamora with her three sons, the eldest of whom he sacrifices at the tomb of his ancestors. Though he is unanimously chosen by the people to fill the vacant royal throne, he declines in favour of Saturninus, son of the preceding ruler. Saturninus is anxious to marry Lavinia, the daughter of Titus, but his own brother, Bassianus proves to be a rival who carries her off against her father's wishes. Titus slays his son Mutius for taking his sister's part. Saturninus then marries Tamora, by whose charms, he has been captivated. Tamora now starts taking revenge upon Andronicus and his family. Her husband, her sons, and her lover, Aaron the Moor, all, in turn, become instruments in her scheme, which includes the murder of Bassianus, the mutilation and rape of Lavinia and the execution of two children of Andronicus, whose mind is crazed by these accumulated ills. With the craft of a mad man, Titus lures Tamora and her sons in a trap and kills them with his own hand, at the same time putting an end to Lavinia's unfortunate life. He himself is killed by Saturninus. The latter, in his turn, is slain by Lucius, the only surviving son of Andronicus, who is, in the end, chosen as the emperor.

Most of the critics are in agreement in their verdict on the merits of Titus Andronicus. The word which most nearly sums up their feelings is 'disgust'. Coleridge said that it was "obviously intended to excite vulgar audiences by its scenes

of blood and horror — to our ears shocking and disgusting.[82] Dover Wilson called it a "broken-down cart, laden with bleeding corpses from an Elizabethan scaffold".[83]

The features of the play which have had such enduring power to repel the critics are easy to identify. The succession of extraordinarily violent episodes has given rise to the opinion that the play is crude — fit only for vulgar audiences. No doubt, the plot is a tissue of horrors. There are some fifteen murders and executions in Titus Andronicus, most of which take place on the stage; the heroine is raped, a little off, her tongue and hands cut out; Andronicus agrees to sacrifice his right hand to purchase life for his sons, in return for which their decaptitated heads and his severed hand are thrown in contempt at his feet; in revenge for all this, he then slits the throats of his daughter's violators in full view of the audience, while she holds a basin between her stumps to catch the blood; and the play rises to a grand finale in a Thyestean banquet to which Tamora is lured that she may be made to feed upon her sons. The last scene, in R.A. Brower's words, "is a melodramatic free-for-all in a society of maddened killers, a Senecan runaway in dramatic style and action, like the Agamemnon in moral disorientation".[84] Cunliffe holds, "The subject and style of the tragedy are thoroughly Senecan".[85] He elaborates by saying, "No detail of physical horror is spared; from beginning to the end the stage reeks with blood and the characters vie with one another in barbarity. Even the gentle Lavinia helps to prepare the Thyestean banquet; and Titus and his sons

are no less eager for revenge, and no less cruel in its execution than Tamora and Aaron".[86] F.S. Boas believes, "In Titus Andronicus the worst excesses of Kyd's Spanish Tragedy are reproduced, combined with the most unnatural horrors of classic fable. The ghastly legends of Atreus and Thyestes, of Tereus and Philomela directly suggest incidents in the play..."[87] F.L. Lucas holds, "Quite unquestionable ... is the Senecan indebtedness of the last scene, where Tamora is treated to a Thyestean pie in which her own son's flesh is baked, and four murders are perpetrated in the brevity of twenty lines".[88] Margeson argues, "The Spanish Tragedy and Titus Andronicus both work up to catastrophes in which the peculiar Senecan mixture of horror and self-satisfaction is strikingly evident".[89] R.F. Hill holds, "the inconsistencies, the physical horrors, and the lapses of taste are about what one might expect from a first dramatic essay in the Senecan-Ovidian manner".[90] Comparing the play with The Spanish Tragedy, Cunliffe writes, "There are in both plays sensational horrors; but Kyd never glances at the grosser side of sexual relationship ". Titus Andronicus largely deals with this theme, and so does Seneca".[91] The play is undoubtedly Senecan in the portrayal of blood and horrors.

Titus Andronicus reflected the stern morality of Seneca, who saw destruction as the ultimate price of sin in a world governed by an inexorable nemesis. It is a tragedy of damnation with no hope for the fallen sinner.

Senecan horrors and cruelties do not, however, add to the enrichment of the play. It is possible to dismiss as historical convention the Roman coldness of Titus' acts against his sons in the early scenes of the play; but it is less easy to put up with his behaviour when he turns into the butcher-baker of the final act. Brower gives support to this view by saying,"As noble Roman and aged father driven by extremity of woe, Titus should not join the happy criminal society of Seneca's Clytemnestra and Medea or of Aaron, Tamora and her sons. When he does, the play gets out of joint ..."[92] Shakespeare remade the Senecan revenge tradition as an essential image of tragic life and human response,[93] The Senecan horrors are intensified to design for Titus and his family a condition of absolute suffering which disorders the most basic principles of justice and threatens to obliterate the very humanity of the characters.

But, as W.H. Clemen[94] puts it, instead of preparing us for one great event, for one climax, and leading us through all the stages of development upto this peak, Shakespeare overwhelms us from the first act on with climaxes, with a multiplicity of fearful events and high sounding words. We may feel, on first reading of the play, that Titus Andronicus is more like a pageant than a play.

Titus Andronicus may not be a tragedy in any proper sense, but so far as the treatment of revenge in the play is concerned, the play cannot be labelled as a Senecan tragedy of revenge.

Titus Andronicus is not Senecan in its treatment of revenge. In Senecan tragedies, revenge spirit is generally personal and it is treated as a sacred duty. But one has to support the view of Prosser when he writes, "Any assumption that Shakespeare automatically conceived of blood revenge as a sacred duty must grapple with Titus Andronicus".[95] Titus withstands the temptation to revenge for three and a half acts. Even when two of his sons are killed, he does not turn to private revenge. By the first scene of the fourth act, Titus solemnly swears revenge but he does nothing personally to revenge his wrongs. In fits of madness, he relieves his feelings by sending ominous tokens to the sons of Tamora and to Saturninus. Later by his feigning of harmless madness he lures the villains to his house and secures possession of Tamora's sons. Next he slits their throats. From this point on, he is, if not a villain-revenger, at least a tainted revenger who has forfeited our sympathy.

However, there are some thematic similarities between this play and Seneca's Thyestes. Two sons are served up at the banquet in both Thyestes and Titus Andronicus. One of the sons is found guilty of ambition in both the plays. The mother is not the murderer either in Seneca or in Shakespeare but the cook. Both the plays are marked by elaborate preparations for the killing. In both the feast is public and the head is not shown. The summoning of Revenge from below in Titus Andronicus (Act IV, Sc. III & Act V, Sc. ii) reminds us of Seneca's apparitions from the underworld.

G.B. Harrison, while comparing the last scene of Titus Andronicus with that of Thyestes, notes that Shakespeare fails to evoke the feelings of horror and pathos in a Senecan way and the scene is full of absurdities. His arguments are worth quoting: "This last scene is hopelessly muddled. If the device of the cannibal pie is legitimate on the stage, it must be used effectively and slowly; for the great moment in revenge is revealed when Tamora takes her first mouthful. Seneca did not so bungle in Thyestes; heaven and earth are moved at the horror. In Titus Andronicus, the episode is rushed through in about ten seconds, and the dialogue at the crisis is singularly banal. The author of this passage has in fact attempted something far beyond his dramatic skill".[96]

In Senecan tragedies, insanity is generally not used for purposes of deception. In Titus Andronicus, Titus, although unbalanced, is not absolutely insane and so can detect the motives of the villains and spell their downfall. The device of madness is thus given a new and unique dramatic importance, for the villains' final device is based on the assumption that the revenger is mad.

There is no traditional chorus in Titus Andronicus. But Shakespeare makes of Marcus a virtual chorus to comment upon the action as the action unfolds. He counsels Titus; "But yet let reason govern thy lament" (act III, sc. i, L. 219). He offers in his counsel a way of redemption to Titus. He states the theme at the end of the play:

"You sad-faced men, people and sons of Rome,
By uproars severed, as a flight of fowl
Scattered by winds and high tempestuous gusts,
O, let me teach you how to knit again
This scattered corn into one mutual sheaf,
These broken limbs again into one body;"[97]
(V, iii, 1167-72)

Titus brings evil upon himself. He gives himself to evil by three specific deeds: the sacrifice of Alarbus, the violation of Lavinia's betrothal to Bassianus, and the slaying of Mutius. In his encounter with evil, Titus fails. All of his crimes proceed from perversions of virtuous instincts; in each instance Titus makes a wrong moral choice in which he sacrifices the greater good for the lesser one. Titus is not a tragic protagonist who claims our respect. R.F. Hill writes, "He shows no remorse. The tragic potentialities of the predicament of Titus in the first act — the conflicting demands of honour and nature — are neither realized nor developed. It is inevitable that the sufferings of such a man should lead only to revenge — as Tamora's did — and not to the self-knowledge which would ennoble him, and claim our sympathy".[98] The passions of Titus transcend the limits of character to become in their own right, so to speak, phenomena of nature : his grief, like the Nile, "disdaineth bounds" (act III, sc. i, 71). As a tragic hero he forfeits our sympathies in the early scenes, but as the action proceeds, he becomes a man more sinned against than sinning, and he atones for his misdeeds in the scene where he sacrifices

his hand. But his horrible revenge upon his enemies at the close proves that his moral purgation has been but superficial.

Cunliffe holds, "I should be inclined to give to this play rather than to The Spanish Tragedy the attainment of perfection in the Senecan style".[99] Eugene M. Waith thinks, "The florid style of many of the speeches has seemed appallingly overwrought".[100] There is an excess of refinement, or an overloading with classical allusion. The formal and rhetorical style of the play tends to make most of the characters purely emblematic figures. Caught in some fantastic pose in the midst of their most violent actions, the characters are petrified by a blast of eloquence — plunged, as it were, in the deep-freeze of rhetoric.

There are quotations from Seneca's Latin text in Titus Andronicus and there are also passages imitated from Seneca. Cunliffe points out, "The highly polished versification, the lively touches of natural description, and the weight and beauty of the reflective passages — the redeeming qualities of Titus Andronicus are Senecan characteristics".[101] He also points out that the fine passage in lines 150-156 in act I, sc. i is modelled on Seneca's Troades (Ll. 145-161). Tamora's appeal in act I, sc. I (Ll. 104-20) resembles Andromache's for her son (Troades, Ll. 691-704).

Two speeches of Andronicus in the opening scene of the play show affinities with Senecan style. As the tomb is opened for the bodies of his sons, Titus hails them in elegiac lines;

"There greet in silence, as the dead are wont,
And sleep in peace, slain in your country's wars!
O sacred receptacle of my joys,
Sweet cell of virtue and nobility,
How many sons hast thou of mine in store,
That thou wilt never render to me more!"[102]
(Act I, sc. i, Ll 90-5)

There is a trace in this speech of morbid lingering over the tomb as a sweet resting place, and more than that, a trace of Stoic attraction to death. That the mood is Senecan and Stoic is certain from Titus' farewell:

"In peace and honour rest you here, my sons,
Here lurks no treason, here no envy swells,
Here grow no damned drugs, here are no storms,
No noise, but silence and eternal sleep;
In peace and honour rest you here, my sons!"[103]
(Act I, sc. i, L 150-6)

The lines have many similarities in phrasing and diction to the chorus on 'the sweet evil' of death, in Seneca's Agamemnon (581-611).

The last lines of Titus' farewell include the two most exact references to Seneca: 'eternal sleep' and 'peace'. Brower notes that equally Senecan is the way this stately elegy comes smack on the news of 'the lopping of Alarbus' limbs'. To Lucius' suggestion that "they now inter our brethren," Titus replies with Stoic imperturbability, "Let it be so..." As often happens in the plays of Seneca, the most monstrous acts are reported without

the slightest hint that any one on stage is responding to the physical reality behind the words.

Seneca's reflective tendency is strongly marked in this play and we have a number of brief sententious percepts like those which are found in his gruesome tragedies.

We cannot dismiss the play as blood and thunder. The theme, in the final analysis, is of the problems of life and death and of the mystery of a soul in torment. In the character of Titus, some of the great questions are raised : why should the noble man suffer, why are his cries for justice unheard; how is he to act, how is he to be 'like himself in a wilderness of tigers' ?

And, in spite of the crudity of style and Senecan horrors, there is a controlling idea of tragedy behind Titus Andronicus — a conception of how evil operates in the world and may cause the destruction of a virtuous man by his own moral choice. We have to support the view of Eugene M. Waith when the critic writes, "Titus Andronicus is Shakespeare's contribution to a special tragic mode. Its final spectacle is both horrible and pathetic, but, above all, extraordinary. Ovid more than Seneca or the epic poets was the model for both characterization and style with the result that Shakespeare's rhetoric of admiration, as seen in such lines as Marcus' description of Lavinia, is more elegantly florid than that of is contemporaries".[104] Shakespeare even altered the dramatic tradition of the Kydian revenge

play so that he might express man's relation to the forces of evil in the world in a meaningful complex of events. However, Shakespeare made himself thoroughly familiar with the Senecan form of drama before he wrote Titus Andronicus, and later, while writing the great tragedies, he rejected it not out of ignorance but deliberately.

King Richard III

Richard III has been called Shakespeare's nearest approach (not counting Titus Andronicus) to Seneca. It is a historical tragedy produced probably in 1594, printed in 1597. The pattern for tragedy which Shakespeare developed in this play reflected the stern morality of Seneca who saw destruction as the price of sin in a world dominated by nemesis, although Shakespeare wanted to create a sense of the salvation of the whole to be effected by the damnation of the villain-hero. The play centres on the character of Richard of Gloucester, afterwards King Richard III, ambitious and sanguinary, bold and subtle, treacherous, yet brave in battle, a murderer and usurper of the crown.

In Richard III, Shakespeare finds himself with a tragic hero who has already been cast for him in conventional Senecan terms by a long line of writers, including the anonymous author of The Tragedy of Richard III (1591). The latter play is "a wooden piece"[105] with definite Senecan influence. Its plot is crude and chaotic. Shakespeare's play is centred about the rise and fall of a Satanic hero who bears the mark of the devil from

his very birth. Richard begins his career fairly low on fortune's ladder, but through the force of evil, he is able to rise in worldly power. As he rises higher and higher in worldly power, he sinks lower and lower into moral depravity, compounding sin upon sin, atrocity upon atrocity. Finally, when he is at the height of worldly place, and at the same time at the lowest point of moral degradation, God intervenes, striking him suddenly from the top of Fortune's wheel and damning him utterly in hell.

Richard is, no doubt, a typical Senecan tyrant. But he is more than a Senecan prototype. Shakespeare has created in him the illusion of an intriguing individuality. The Senecan elements in Richard III have been amply commented upon by eminent critics. The revenge-motif, the villain-hero with his self-revealing soliloquies, the use of supernatural, the stichomythic dialogue and the abundant echoes of Seneca's own plays are among such elements.

The whole play is pervaded by the ruthless spirit of violence and bloodshed and abounds in the crude horrors of physical repulsiveness. The murder of the young princess is narrated and the execution in this play generally takes place off the stage. Only Clarence and Richard die in sight of the audience. Richard sustains to the full his character of fiendish cruelty. Cunliffe succinctly describes him in the following lines: "He has the vindictiveness, the intellectual force, the undaunted spirit, the ruthless cruelty, the absolute lack of moral feeling of Seneca's Medea coupled with the

haughtiness of Eteocles and the bloody hypocrisy of Atreus".[106]

Not only the character of Richard, but the ghosts, who are a reality, haunt Clarence's last night. The wild old queen Margaret is no ghost but an embodiment of the curse of the House of Plantagenet.

There is no nominal chorus functioning in Richard III. But Queen Margaret, somehow, acts as a chorus. She is remote from the action; and she broods over the action like a dark shadow and interprets its terrible progress with the comments of a chorus.

By the ritual action of Richard III, Shakespeare comments chorally upon the theme of his play. The great choral scenes of lamentation, the curses of old queen Margaret, the dream of Clarence and his penitential lament, are all ritual scenes which perform specific thematic functions. And the ritualism is emphasised by the neat and formal balance of the stichomythic dialogue, a Senecan device, which is not nearly so prevalent in Titus Andronicus as it is in Richard III.

Some of Seneca's leading ideas like the role of destiny, the presentiment of evil etc. are repeatedly reproduced in the play. Richard is also tinged with Seneca's stoical fatalism.

In Richard III Shakespeare learned to enrich his Senecan matter with symbolic elements, and to do so he fell back upon the native English stage tradition. Ribner says, "In spite of its high degree of Senecan formalism, Richard III continues also in the morality play tradition which is an important shaping force upon the entire tetralogy .... England continues as a kind of morality hero torn between good and evil forces; in Richard III she suffers the depths of degradation, and finally through God's grace, she is allowed to win salvation by a proper choice : the acceptance of Henry of Richmond as King".[107]

Indeed Richard III is more than a Senecan tragedy. It continues the tradition of Marlowe's Tamburlaine. Richard has been called a symbol of Renaissance aspiring will in opposition to the medieval world of order; and thus, as A.P. Rossiter[108] observes, he must inevitably be destroyed by fortune and punished for the crimes.

Romeo and Juliet:

Romeo and Juliet (probably 1595) is a further attempt at Senecan type of play. It has its root in the Italian vendetta, the blood feud nourished by revenge. It is a passionate love-story acted out against a background of bloodshed. The tragic conception of Romeo and Juliet is stated for us in the opening prologue. Harold Wilson writes, "The Greek tragedians and their imitator Seneca, whom Shakespeare knew better, could count on their audiences' familiarity with the story of the play. Shakespeare uses his opening prologue in Romeo and Juliet to establish the

same condition".[109]

There is enough bloodshed in the play and there is a nominal chorus which has the function to throw over succeeding action a Senecan force of fatal compulsion. But the play is distinctly a development of the Senecan type of play. Kibner rightly says, "... in Romeo and Juliet Shakespeare is able to take an inherited Senecan formula and out of it shape a vehicle for tragedy which is distinctly his own".[110]

First, the question of fate may be discussed. In Senecan drama fate is the inexorable agent, an artitrary force. We cannot overlook the role of fate in Romeo and Juliet. But the fate that destroys the lovers is not the arbitrary force of Seneca's drama. Through the death of the lovers is shown the operation of divine providence. The social order is poisoned and the lovers, through their death, cleanse it and restore it to harmony.

Secondly, the act of suicide is not looked upon as a heroic means of release from a vicious world, as we find in a Senecan drama. Shakespeare, on the contrary, deals with suicide as a symbolic acceptance of inevitable death. Romeo, with a sense of maturity, accepts the self-inflicted death as a means of uniting with Juliet.

Lastly, the spirit of the play is Christian and not Senecan. The lovers are foolish and hasty. They may commit mistakes, but they are not deliberate sinners. Through his encounter with

evil, Romeo learns to accept fate as contributing to a harmonious plan. This is a Christian and not Senecan outlook. Christian stoicism provides one means by which one can cast off Fortune's control. Romeo does the same when he receives the news of Juliet's supposed death.

Thus the play, along with Titus Andronicus and Richard III, goes beyond the inherited Senecan tradition. Each play in its own way is a serious exploration of man's place in the universe, and in each play there is implicit a positive statement which affirms justice in the universe and benevolence of God.

The Elizabethan dramatists were powerfully affected by certain elements of Seneca's tragedies. Shakespeare was no exception, as we have already noted. It is now to be seen how Shakespeare converted them into a sombre fury of his tragedies and history plays.

Henry VI (ca.1590-92), in its three parts, is influenced by Senecan tragedy. The chief characteristics of Senecan tragedy are present in all the three parts of the play. Henry VI, in three parts, is pervaded by the spirit of violence and bloodshed and abounds in the crude horrors of physical repulsiveness. In Part II, Suffolk's mutilated body is brought on the stage. In Part III Richard of Gloucester assumes the role of a cynical villain-hero. Here Shakespeare strikes the keynote of the blood - thirsty vengeance on personal grounds which made the War of the Roses a horrible spectacle. The plays are full of

examples of formal Senecan declamation. The speeches give vent to the feelings of indignation, grief, hatred, envy and defenceless suffering. Some of the speeches are also long Senecan soliloquies of self-revelation. In Part III, Richard's destruction is displayed as divine punishment for his ruthless ambition. In Part II, a spirit is conjured up.

Henry V (1598-1599) is marked by the use of chorus. It is observed that in some cases Seneca's choruses might even be transferred from the tragedy to another without loss of appropriateness. Shakespeare's use of chorus, in this play, however, is very different from the manner of Seneca. In Henry V the chorus is a necessary part of action. It sets the scene and describes Henry's first public visit to his troops. It gives the dramatist the opportunity of calling upon the spectators to eke out the historic and scenic illusion by the aid of imagination. Gary Taylor observes in this connection : "The structural device of the chorus is inherently undramatic and the very apologies of the chorus confirm this. His speeches are to be taken as the poet's own direct confession to the audience about the meaning of his play and the inadequacy of his medium".[111] It speaks some of the play's finest poetry. Shakespeare's use of the chorus in this play is a notable advance on classical authority and was peculiar to the contemporary stage.

Hamlet (1600-1601) is the greatest of the tragedies of revenge. "It is", as Bowers says, "a living vindication of an Elizabethan treatment of a tragic situation which had engaged Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides".[112] As in a typical Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy modelled on Seneca, the revenge is treated here as a sacred duty; revenge motif is also strong and has been fully exploited in Hamlet. There is a ghost crying for revenge, and, at the end, an orgy of bloodshedding. There are some eight violent deaths, not to speak of adultery, a ghost, a mad woman, and a fight in a grave. There are plots and counter-plots. Sensations follow each other in quick succession. Ophelia goes mad and dies of drowning. Laertes raises a rebellion, and storms the palace, sword in hand, at the head of a mob. Hamlet assumes the role of a Senecal revenger (English style) and in it he encounters Claudius at prayer and in the same role he spares him. The style, too, is often bombastic and grandiloquent.

But in spite of all these, Shakespeare's treatment of revenge in Hamlet is different from Seneca's. As a revenger Hamlet is wholly blameless. His sole action as a revenger consists in the play-within-the play to establish Claudius' guilt, his refusal to murder a man at prayer and his killing of Polonius. Bowers holds, "Hamlet differs from the imitations of Senecan tragedies... only in the measure that Shakespeare was above his fellows in genius".[113] Hamlet is certainly not to be regarded as a tragedy of revenge, but, instead, as a tragedy

of human soul. It shows us the inner workings of a man's soul. Shakespeare's supreme achievement in the Revenge play was to make the issue turn on the character of the avenger. Thomson aptly says, "Hamlet as a whole is a Senecan play, improved out of recognition".[114] Percy Simpson, however, notes that Shakespeare "found the Senecan copyists useful when he penned 'The Murder of Gonzago' and the player's speech on Hecuba".[115]

In his tragedies Seneca used phantoms frequently and violently. The Senecan tradition is that the ghost must be a damned and furious creature. The ghost in Hamlet speaks language appropriate to a Senecan ghost like Tantalus or Laius, no doubt, but Shakespeare "softens and humanises"[115] the tradition. The appearance of the ghost of Laius in Seneca's Oedipus forms no unworthy study for the famous scene on the platform before the castle in Hamlet; but of Shakespeare's ghost-scene, there is nothing to be found in Seneca beyond the very baldest suggestion. The ghost in Hamlet gets a greater dimension and significance than the ghost in a Senecan tragedy. The ghost in this play is the motive force that puts into motion the action of the tragedy. It reveals the truth behind the murder of Hamlet's father. It also tells Hamlet of the adultery of his mother. We should admit that without the ghost's initial revelation of the truth to Hamlet, there would be no occasion for revenge. In its second appearance it hastens the denouement by whetting Hamlet's blunted purpose. Besides, as Bradley[117] puts it, the ghost is a majestical phantom, having a measured

and solemn utterance, and so it strikes the imagination as the representative of that hidden ultimate power which appears impossible for man to discover.

In Seneca, there is a strong sense of fatalism. In Shakespeare's Hamlet, as in his other tragedies, the sense of Fatalism is not as strong as in Senecan tragedies. The tragic flaw in the character of the hero brings about his downfall. But this tragic flaw is fatal in that particular situation in which the hero is placed. The situation in which Hamlet is placed requires prompt action. But he cannot act promptly. Cruel destiny makes from him the one demand he is not able to meet.

Hamlet's world is full of evil and disaster. Hamlet struggles through an evil existence. Ultimately he finds a remedy for its evils in death. The "To be or not to be" soliloquy definitely indicates Senecan play of mind. For the boldness and freedom of thought, as explicit in these speeches, Shakespeare is, no doubt, indebted to Seneca.

The tragic calm at the end is more evident in Shakespeare than in Seneca. It is only at the moment of death that Hamlet acts promptly with courage and determination. However, both Senecan and Shakespearean heroes meet death in glory and in nobility.

In Seneca insanity is never used for purposes of deception. However, Deianeira is found accusing Hercules of having feigned madness in order to rid himself of his wife and children. In Shakespeare's play, Hamlet puts on "an antic disposition". Hamlet assumes madness as a means of concealing his actual disturbance of mind. The bitterness of Hamlet's soul might be relieved in his disguise by the utterance of wild and hurling words. Hamlet, however, suffers from melancholia. His disgust with life can easily assume the form of an irresistible urge for self-destruction. Thus in Hamlet Shakespeare treats of insanity with an eye to dramatic motivation and force.

Shucking writes, "With the figure of Hamlet there begins... a whole galaxy of leading Shakespearean figures, ... who are without question the victims of passion".[118] True, Hamlet is a man of passion and Senecan hero is also passion incarnate. But what is typical of Hamlet is that he is a universal figure; he is Everyman, so to say. "He", as Bradley has put it, "has the soul of a youthful poet, an unbounded delight and faith in everything good and beautiful".[119] It is true that Shakespeare, at times, gives to Hamlet moments of seemingly unguarded Senecan impulse and declamatory fury (as evident in Act III, Sc. ii, Ll 390-94 & Act II, Sc. ii, Ll 571-75), but Hamlet is, nevertheless, a unique creation, completely original, of Shakespeare's genius.

King Lear (1605-1606) is further removed than Hamlet from the spirit of Senecan tragedy. There are, however, structural resemblances between King Lear and Seneca's plays. Oedipus' sorrow for his own deeds is like that of King Lear. The blinding of Gloucester reminds one of the blinding of Oedipus. The relation of Eteocles and Polynices in Phoenissae resembles both in general situation and in treatment that between Edmund and Edgar in King Lear. Oedipus, like Gloucester, desires to die by jumping from a high cliff. The speeches of Oedipus to Antigone are much like those of Lear to Cordelia.

Bradley[120] holds that King Lear is the record of a time when contempt and loathing for his kind has overmastered the poet's soul, and in despair he pronounced man's life to be simply hateful and hideous. The play is full of wholesome slaughter and physical horrors. The blinding of Gloucester's eyes bears similarities with the horror of Senecan tragedies. The blinding of Gloucester is the most horrible thing in the play.

"Of all Shakespeare's plays", Eliot writes, "King Lear is often taken as the most Senecan in spirit".[121] We have Seneca's hopeless fatalism, not only in the catastrophe but in the course of the play. In King Lear there are several significant phrases which bear a tone of Senecan fatalism. So far as the revenge motive is concerned, there is no sign of personal revenge working in Edgar's mind. He neither desires nor takes revenge other than to effect the revenge of outraged

order on evil. The atmosphere of the play bears some similarities with the same in Senecan tragedies but it cannot be said that Shakespeare was influenced by Seneca in writing his tragedy.

Macbeth (1606) is "a great tragedy of witchcraft, oracles, ghosts, murder and madness".[122] C. Mencell[123] in Our Seneca believes that Macbeth without Seneca would have been impossible. This observation suffers from a little exaggeration. Other scholars and critics[124] have also pointed out affinities with Seneca in the structural and rhetorical features of the play, as well as in the presence in action or language or both, of night, blood and supernatural. Bradley writes, "It cannot be an accident that the image of blood is forced upon us continually, not merely by the events themselves, but by full descriptions, and even by reiteration of the word in unlikely parts of the dialogue".[125] He again observes, "In its language as in the action, the drama is full of tumult and storm. Whenever the Witches are present we see and hear a thunder-storm; when they are absent, we hear of ship-wrecking storms and direful thunders; of tempests that blow down trees and churches, castles, palaces and pyramics; of the frightful hurricane of the night when Duncan was murdered".[126] All these point to the atmosphere of the play which might be influenced by Seneca. Critics like Kenneth Muir and N. Fleming[127] think that in preparation for writing Macbeth, Shakespeare may have read or re-read at least part of Seneca's dramatic works. Francis R. Jonson[128] feels that Shakespeare paid particular attention to

Hippolytus and Hercules Furens — plays in which the protagonists' crimes are accompanied and followed by violent fear and remorse. Shakespeare's Macbeth is, no doubt, closer to these plays so far as the theme of the play is concerned. Inga-Stina Ewbank[129] observes how another play of Seneca, namely, Medea, contributed in similar way towards the creation of Shakespeare's play. The critic writes, "Shakespeare has seized on a few emotional key-moments in the Medea, linked them with other themes and images in the play, and built them into his own moral structure".[130] But there are differences between Shakespeare and Seneca so far as their vision of evil is concerned. Seneca's Medea finds the best of her heroic self through evil. But both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth lose themselves through evil. What is emphasised in Shakespeare is the defeat of the evil. G. Wilson Knight thinks that Shakespeare's vision of evil consists in "the wrestling of destruction with creation".[131] There is no doubt that the imaginative understanding of the total meaning of such fiend-likeness as we find in Lady Macbeth is completely Shakespeare's own.

Shakespeare may have seen in the bloody story of Macbeth a subject suitable for treatment in Senecan manner. Besides the general resemblance of the atmosphere of violence and murder in Macbeth, there is also the general resemblance of the super-natural. Banquo's ghost is romantic and so are Seneca's ghosts. Like the Senecan revengers, Macbeth is also spurred on by the hallucination that he sees the ghost of the dead. The witches

in Macbeth, undoubtedly, are romantic. The witchcraft in Seneca's Medea and Hercules Oetaeus is also 'romantic'.

In Seneca revenge is personal, for in case of true blood-revenge, it takes on the sense of a religious duty. But in Macbeth Shakespeare takes care to avoid putting motives of personal vengeance to Macduff. Only on one occasion Macduff's revenge takes on the sense of personal duty. On the battlefield he swears that if someone has stolen from him the right to kill Macbeth, his wife and children's ghosts will haunt him still (Act V, sc. vii, LL 14-20). But except on this occasion, the denial of personal revenge motives to Macduff is explicit in the rest of the play. Eleanor Prosser aptly writes, "Like Shakespeare with Macbeth, he could easily have given Malcolm a blood revenge motive. Following the murder, he has an uneasy suspicion of Macbeth, but Shakespeare never makes his suspicion explicit. In which Macduff Shakespeare seems to be avoiding an obvious motive".[132]

Bradley writes, "For the swelling of the style in some of the great passages... one certainly or the tragic accent which occasionally appears in Macbeth Shakespeare might easily have found a model in Seneca".[133] Shakespeare's reflective tendency is also displayed after the manner of Seneca. In Macbeth the reflections are uttered not only by Macbeth alone but also by almost all the characters in brief pregnant lines quite after Seneca's manner. A number of verbal resemblances to lines in Seneca (both the original tragedies and the translation in the Tenne Tragedies) have been pointed out by critics no

especially Salanio, Lucullus Iulius, Titus Olitus in Much Ado have the same subjective as sources of action. It is widely recognized that Lucullus's function in the story of Timon's abode on his woods —

> "All did grow out of Timon's doom upon this place
> Upon my hand?"
>
> (Act II, Sc. ii, ll 55–60)[214]

— is an anticipation of two passages like Titus Olitus (lines 15–16) and the Lucullus Julius (lines 2025–) respectively. Titus Olitus may be found in the Interlude Scene (IV) in which Lucullus's appeal to the Senate (Act I, Sc. i, ll 43–54).

Shakespeare uses the device of Lucullus frequently in some of his other plays. Just as Titus Olitus in Henry V is done and quiet, so Lucullus is done with this device in his own way in Coriolus. The Hunter's Calue, Titus Andronicus, Troilus and Cressida, Antony and Cleopatra, Juliet, Timon of Athens and Coriolus all have Lucullus, the Titus Andronicus and Troilus and Cressida Lucullus is Titus Andronicus as in Henry V. Otherwise each Lucullus is done in connection with the scurrilous Lucullus in Troilus and Cressida and Antony's Lucullus. Lucullus in Antony and Cleopatra, Juliet, and Timon of Athens functions. The Lucullus of Timon of Athens is the Lucullus of Troilus and Cressida. Juliet, Timon of Athens and Coriolus — each of these plays contains

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...kespeare uses the supernatural as one of the legiti-
...te devices of dra...tic art in ...mlet, ...acbeth, and Julius
Caesar. The ghost in Julius Caesar is a part of the original
story of the lives of Caesar and Brutus. Shakespeare retains
it for dramatic effect. In the latter part of the play, it is
highly important, if not indispensable, in espousing the contin-
uing influence, after death, of the power of Caesar's personality.

...kespeare's ...lay, introspective ... self-...ra...tising
...eech ... partly inspired by Seneca. The ambitious tyrant,
Lavinius, ...ro ...ken for ...ence as is Aaronlike in Tamora III.

...kespeare's great tragedies are dominated by a ...ssi-
...istic entirely. Sometimes the tragic heroes look upon life as
filled by meaningless acts; sometimes they cry out against
...ellow ...ankind ... cruel fate. Shakespeare might not have
...erived the sense of ...ertain ...eal ...orkers but ... a ...ew ...
...ressed ... ...ently in Seneca's tragedies.

...kespeare is indebted to Seneca for his conception of
...e ...oral character. It is suggested that in Shakespeare's view
...oral ...ortu... implies a ...omplete mastery of the passions by reason,
... the ...ependence of all exterior influence, together with
...e ...ability to face ...eath ...ithout fear.

[illegible] that Shakespeare observes Senecan [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible], the effects of sleep, etc. The figurative description of the effects of sleep in the following lines

> "O sleep, O gentle sleep
> Nature's soft nurse, how have I frighted thee
> That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
> And steep my senses in forgetfulness?"
>
> (2 Henry IV, Act III, sc. i, ll 5 ff)[136]

is also akin to

> "O sleep, O brother of our ills,
> The spirit's rest, the better part
> Of human life..."[137]
>
> (Hercules Furens, ll 1065 ff.)

Shakespeare also adopts the basic idea of some of Seneca's other images to suit his purpose.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact nature or extent of Shakespeare's borrowings from Seneca. Green very rightly says, "... one after all omits Othello's suicide speech Seneca only has a belief in the term's general appropriateness to the situation and not that the speech is a translation or adaptation of any particular passage in Seneca".[138]

Some of the supposed borrowings of Shakespeare from Seneca seem to be mere coincidences. Lucas notes, "... to cry 'Seneca' over [illegible] the lights burn blue is preposterous".[139] [illegible] go to the authority of Cunliffe to [illegible] it is rejected." Cunliffe writes, How Shakespeare takes a thought suggested

by Seneca, it is crystallized in the alembic of his wonder-working imagination, and comes out so changed in form as to bear out slight traces of its origin, so that we are often in doubt whether the thought is not entirely Shakespeare's own, and the resemblance to Seneca is merely accidental".[140]

To substantiate the discussion on Seneca's influence on Shakespeare's tragedies, it may be said that Shakespeare as a man of his age was definitely influenced by Seneca's conception of tragedy in one way or the other. In writing his tragedies, he, decisively, gives voice to the doctrines both of Aristotle and Seneca. So far as the themes of his tragedies are concerned, Shakespeare conveyed something of Seneca's concern with the individual's destiny, something of Euripides' cosmic challenge.[141] His concern was with a dramatic formula of his own which may express significant truth about the relation of mankind to the forces of evil in the world. At least in the period of writing his great tragedies when Shakespeare grew into maturity so far as his tragic vision of life was concerned, he saw Senecan plays not as store-houses of plot and character material, as some of his contemporaries did.

Shakespeare is great in his art of characterisation. It is widely different from Seneca's. Cunliffe observes in this connection : "How wide is the gulf between the mythical figures of Seneca and the living spirits of Shakespeare".[142]

Shakespeare is influenced by Seneca's fatalism and outlook on life. But there is no evidence, as is already noted, that Shakespeare took a view of life from Seneca deliberately.[143] However, the attitude of self-dramatization against an environment full of evil and disaster, assumed by some of Shakespeare's heroes, is undoubtedly, derived from Seneca. Gilbert Highet observes in this connection, "... the general tone of tremendous emotional pressure in his [Shakespeare's] tragedies, of a boiling energy which repression only increases and which threatens to erupt at every moment — that, however strengthened by the pains and ardours of his own life and increased by the excitements of the Renaissance, is Shakespeare's inheritance from Seneca".[144]

So far as his moral outlook is concerned Shakespeare widely differs from Seneca. Seneca's tragedies are didactic and marked by ethical and religious significance. Seneca believes in the religious conception of wrong-doing as sin. But Shakespeare abstains himself from any definite pronouncement upon the ethical or religious significance of the dire events, he presents in his tragedies. On the contrary, Shakespeare's tragedies close on a human note. In Shakespeare's view, evil is not a sin or an offence against God. Shakespeare recognises it as man's inhumanity to man. Consequently, Shakespeare never raises the thought of divine retribution to a higher level by a confession of the chief actors. Shakespeare refrains from giving to his plays the Christian feeling of his day or the crude Senecan religious significance to justify the horrors of his plays. In Shakespeare's plays the note of humanity is what matters most.

It is true that Shakespeare's thought is much influenced by Seneca and other classical authors, and he may be indebted to Seneca for some of his ideas. But the number of Shakespeare's borrowings of Seneca's thoughts, ideas and imageries in his plays, seem to have been very much exaggerated by the critics. Constant and penetrating observation on life made him a master in reflections and maxims.

Shakespeare is the creator of modern tragedy. And the structure of modern drama comes to us from Greece via Rome. Shakespeare took some of the conventions of Senecan drama, no doubt, but he added his own imagination to it, reshaped its characters, its irony and its conventions as the occasion might be to suit his own sense of art and to suit his peoples and left the rest. He is a great master of drama with a seriousness of purpose, great moral imagination, supreme gift of compression and a superb art of characterization. He is one of the four great tragedians of the world of all the ages. Such a great genius cannot simply be a copyist.

E. Combination of the Rival Conceptions of Senecan and Popular Drama; George Chapman's Bussy D'Ambois and The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois.

"Of all the Elizabethans, George Chapman is nearest to Seneca"[145], writes George Steiner. Steiner made this comment in the sense that Chapman's vision of human affairs was stoic, and his style had a natural darkness and complication. Chapman entirely accepted the neo-Aristotelian belief in the moral purpose of drama. His view is that the popular theme of tragedy is the defeat of a great soul, the undeserved ruin of one, who whatever his faults, establishes a claim upon the heart and the imagination. Chapman was a great reader of Greek and Latin authors. In his tragedies he is concerned, as Ellis-Fermor[146] notes, "with men of action or of that blend of thought and action glorified by Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, Marcus, Aurelius and the Stoics generally". In his edition of the tragedies of George Chapman T.M. Parrott makes a very important observation in this regard. He writes, "Chapman's full length portrait of the perfect man of stoic doctrine placed in a Renaissance setting ... an ideal of character and conduct that, regarded from the ethical point of view, is stronger and loftier than any to be found in contemporary drama".[147]

Chapman, however, was not blind to the contemporary taste for violence and melodrama. Eliot[148] very justifiably remarks that Chapman owes much, both good and bad, of his dramatic style to his admiration for Seneca. Bussy D'Ambois (1607), Chapman's

first tragedy, is Senecan in its violent scenes and display of horrors. It is characterised by scenes of fighting, devil conspiracy, ghostly visitations, letters signed in blood. The play is a study of an old sailor (Bussy) lost and betrayed in a courtly intrigue. At the end of the play the ghost of Friar speaks Bussy's epitaph in words which identify him with Hercules who was defeated by the gods. Henry III has an important role of a choric commentator. There is a passage of equally Senecan 'stichomythia' on the Senecan reflection of birth and worth in act iii, sc. i. Chapman has compressed the action within an almost classical span of two days. Events are centred upon the French court. The duel fought by six noblemen is reported by a messenger. In The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois (1613), in keeping with the Senecan tradition, Chapman introduces the ghost of Bussy who rises and calls on his brother Clermont to take revenge with an obvious reminiscence of the shade of Agrippina in Seneca's Octavia. T.M. Parrott comments on the grotesque rallying of the ghosts of Bussy, the Guise, Monsieur who perform a dance of triumph round the victim's body after Clermont has killed Monsurry seeing in it an attempt on the part of the management of the Whitefriars Theatre to add "a little spectacular divertisement".[149] In his tragedies Chapman is excessively rhetorical, sometimes to the extent of bombast. His tragedies also abound in profound reflection and magnificent outbursts of poetry.

But the traditional revengers of the revenge play and their melodramatic actions accorded ill with Chapman's correct

idea of the dignity of the classical hero and the gravity of the classical tragedy. Fredson Bowers[150] remarks that "the fevered action of the revenge play could have no place in his [Chapman's] moral definition of traged, prefixed to The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois : 'Material Instruction, elegant and sententious excitation to virtue, and deflection from the contrary, being the soul, limbs and limits of an authentical tragedy'".[151] Bussy D'Ambois might be called a revenge tragedy in reverse, where revenge is not taken by the challenger of the order but by the order itself, exercising its built-in sanctions against the man who defies it. In The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois, the most obvious disparity between Clermont's philosophy and his actions is the revenge itself. Clermont quite explicitly conveys his misgivings concerning vengeance:

> "I repent that ever
> (By any instigation in th' appearance
> My brother's spirit made, as I imagin'd)
> That e'er I yielded to revenge his murther,
> All worthy men should ever bring their blood
> To bear all ill, not to be wreak'd with good;
> Do ill or no ill: never private cause
> Should take on it the part of public laws".[152]

Clermont subsequently approaches the revenge obligation with caution and within the established norms of his society, but the basic dilemma remains. Una Ellis-Fermor writes of Clermont, "Chapman has brought him into the plot to fulfil an act of vengeance which no sixteenth century gentleman could have neglected but no stoic would have considered worth performing".[153]

In Bussy D'Ambois and The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois, the central concern is less with an action than with a man. Bussy and Clermont alike stand above the height of common men. Chapman's protagonists are moral types. They are either slaves-of-passion or exemplars of calm. Bussy belongs to the first category while Clermont to the second. Lever describes Chapman's heroes in the following words: "Like Seneca's Hercules, like Seneca himself... Chapman's historical heroes are crushed by the antagonism of the powers that be..."[154] Like Seneca's heroes they are undone by forces they cannot master and the conflict results in tragedy.

Bussy's career shows that Bussy is a brilliant swordsman at the court of Henry the Third of France, who was trapped by Count Montsurry for an intrigue with the countess and killed with the help of the King's brother Monsieur and the Duke of Guise. Bussy tries to achieve a Stoic calm. The words are aptly borrowed from the lips of dying Hercules in Seneca's play when Bussy bids farewell to the world.

It is very clear that Bussy is not led to his fall by the divine hand of destiny. He has a free choice like the Senecan heroes.

A.S. Fergusson is one of the several commentators to agree in the statement that Bussy is for the dramatist "the classical Hercules born anew, accomplishing similar feats, and lured to a similar tragic doom".[155] Braden[156] has a similar observation when he writes, "... Bussy has more than personal

sanction for his self-inflation precisely in the source that he is quoting [in act V, sc. iii, Ll 147-55 of the play]." The story of Hercules, so invoked, gives mythic legitimacy to Bussy's claims that his own detachment from the social norms and constraints of his milieu fits the pattern of an older style of heroic independence. Bussy's valour declares itself in the Herculean pattern when he offers himself as a cleanser of the court and is given by the king the role of scourge. Bussy meets his fate with the fortitude of a Hercules. However, the ending of the play is quite un-Senecan when Bussy forgives his enemies, acknowledges his own 'worthless fall' and proclaims that his fate is a warning to express 'the frail condition of strength, valour, [and] virtue'.

In The Revenge of Bussy D' Ambois Chapman is concerned with an ideal man in the figure of Clermont D'Ambois. This character is wholly invented by Chapman — on whom he imposed the duty of taking swift and ruthless action of avenging Bussy. He is a grave moral teacher, 'the Senecal man', a protagonist fixed in himself with a most gentle and unwearied mind. In this play Chapman sacrifices everything else in the play to his need to proclaim the virtue of the stoic ideal. When Clermont is arrested unjustly he resigns himself philosophically:

> "In short, this Senecal man is found in him
> He may with heaven's immortal powers compare,
> To whom the day and fortune equal are :
> Come fair or foul, whatever chance can fall,
> Fix'd in himself, he still is one to all".[157]

Clermont commits suicide like a Stoic, though he fulfils an act of vengeance.

Some critics find Clermont little more than a mouthpiece, through which Chapman preaches his brand of stoicism. James Smith, for example, complains, "When Clermont dies I am affected, not as with tragedy, but as with a person's moving out of hearing, or with the stopping of a gramophone".[158] But this cannot be supported. Chapman manages to present a viable tragic hero. Clermont's uncertainty humanizes him, providing a depth and complexity of character befitting a tragic hero who continually struggles to accommodate belief and behaviour. In their courage and their consistency, their passion or their rationality, Chapman's heroes claim an inherent right to judge rather than be judged.

In Chapman's The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron the hero is destroyed by his own passions. Chabot, Admiral of France explores different aspects of stoical virtue. In Caesar and Pompey the interest centres on the stoic calm of Cato.

Chapman wanted to write authentic tragedy. He was also striving for success on the popular stage. Hence he gave to the audience its due ration of physical brutality, ghosts and amorous intrigue. But Chapman was not successful in combining the conflicting ideals of classical and popular drama. His tragedies, as a result, lack the unity of design.

F. A Pure Seneca Fit for Public Stage : Jonson's Sejanus His Fall & Catiline His Conspiracy

John Dryden is almost ecstatic in his enthusiasm for Ben Jonson (1573-1637) when he writes in his Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1668), "As for Jonson, ... I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre had ... He was deeply conversant in the ancients, both Greek and Latin, and he borrowed boldly from them ... Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing".[159] Frederick S. Boas holds that Jonson is "the chief Grecian of all Elizabethan dramatists".[160] To Douglas Bush Jonson was the first great English theorist and practitioner of neo-classicism, "the first really direct, learned, deliberate, and single-hearted heir of antiquity".[161] A classicist by temperament as well as erudition, Jonson, in his works, unceasingly strove for the ageless classical virtues of clarity, unity, symmetry and proportion.

With a mind, cast in a critical and dogmatic mould, Jonson derived his classical outlook mostly from Philip Sidney whose Defence of Poesy had a momentous influence on him. His respect for the Ancients as well as his independence of judgement is clearly marked in what he says of the Ancients in his Discoveries: "It is true they opened the gates, and made the way they went before us; but as Guides, not Commanders".[162] He further wrote, "I know nothing can conduce more to letters, than to examine the writings of the Ancients, and not to rest in their sole authority, or take all upon trust from them; ... Nothing is more ridiculous than to make an author a dictator ... For to many

things a man should owe but a temporary belief, and a suspension of his own judgement, not an absolute resignation of himself, or a perpetual captivity".[163] Jonson's style is marked by the simplicity of truth, round and clean composition of sentence, weight of matter, worth of subject, soundness of argument and depth of judgement. He realised that "to all the observations of the ancients we have our own experience, which, if we will use and apply, we have the better means to pronounce ..."[164] In Ben Jonson : The Man and His work, the author very pertinently observes that Jonson's drama "bears witness in every line to a reverence for antiquity, which like all his other references, stopped short of idolatry".[165] Harry Lavin, likewise, holds, "As the first of a line of neo-classicists, he [Jonson] wanted not to surrender to Greece and Rome, but to rival them, to wed ancient form to modern substance. He had hoped to achieve a perfect embodiment of this ideal in the pastoral fragment of The Sad Shepherd, where his proclaimed purpose was to garner

... such wool

As from mere English flocks his Muse can pull, and henceforth to fashion

... a fleece

To match on those of Sicily of Greece.

It is characteristic of the culture of the Renaissance at its ripest, that it should seek to give classical precedent a local habitation and a name".[166]

Before the arrival of Ben Jonson, the professional men of letters, the scholars and the friends of the countess of Pembroke had failed to revive tragedy in its pristine beauty and purity. Jonson raised a voice of protest against the formlessness of most of the Elizabethan dramas. He scorned the romantic plays, the fantastic comedies and the stupendous tragedies. He deplored their lack of proportion and restraint, ridiculous absurdities and creaking mechanisms, frequent change of place, long duration of time represented, absence of a coherent structure, mingling of farce and tragedy and lack of ethical aim. The matter was as objectionable as the form, for it was similarly unrestricted. Marlowe, Greene, Shakespeare and the rest had dealt with remote places, idealised persons, marvellous adventures etc. in their plays. They did not attempt an orderly analysis of history or a rationalized imitation of the contemporary life. The contemporary English drama ran counter to the theory and practice of the Greek and Latin writers.

Jonson revolted against the artistic principles of his contemporaries and sought in the classics a cure for the uncontrolled, romantic exuberance of the Elizabethan drama. In his view, the stage's main concern should be with the "deeds, and language, such as men do use (Prologue, Every Man in his Humour). He was clearly determined to abjure cheap romantic effects and to keep his art within the limits, set by reason and commonsense. By doing so he aimed at achieving the unity of effect. The whole action of his drama usually covers only a few hours or a single day. His dramas abound in classical learning and

are carefully constructed and comedy and tragedy are kept apart. When he wrote plays based on Roman history, he knew what Roman historians to quote from and what phases of Roman life to refer to. Side by side, Jonson showed enormous vigour and a good deal of consideration too, even when most closely following classical models or applying rules, derived from classical theory or practice. In this connection, Jonas A. Barish[167] thinks that Jonson's art lies in his stress on decorum, in the subordination of details to the whole, and in his attempt to construct harmonious unities, to make the parts fit, and the end crown all. L.C. Knights adds a little more: "His plays have the tightness and coherence of a firmly realized purpose, active in every detail, and a commentary on Jonson's technical achievements — the weight and vigour of his verse, the intensive scrutiny that it invites — is only one way of indicating his essential qualities".[168]

It is on the basis of the above discussion that we may proceed to discuss the nature of Senecan influence on Jonson. It may be assumed that Jonson had a close acquaintance with Seneca's plays, for he was a voracious reader of classical literature, in which Seneca held a prominent place in that period. It can also be safely assumed that it was upon Seneca, and not upon the Greek masters that Jonson modelled his tragic style. In the Preface to Sejanus, His Fall, Jonson sums up the characteristics, not of Greek tragedy, but of Seneca's.

It was natural for Jonson, the Latinist, to throw his Roman plays into the traditional Roman form. Yet by choosing Seneca for the purpose of curbing the romantic extravagance of contemporary tragedy, he was ultimately led to change completely the English Senecan tradition. Charlton[169] is right in his observation that Jonson's task was to make Seneca both classically pure and theatrically attractive to a popular audience. Jonson was in search of an aristocratic Seneca, who could satisfy a coterie, whilst the popular Seneca ran his course untouched; he was attempting the reformation of the people's Seneca without destroying his popularity. His intention was to make Seneca more legitimately dramatic. And so he was deliberately choosing to reject all the melodramatic and most of the theatrical elements which had belonged either to the original model or to its English equivalent. Thus his choice of the Senecan form was merely a means to an end, and he was never its abject slave.

In effect, Jonson's sense of 'the truth of argument' involves a comprehensive realism which is at once "the negation of the spirit of the original Seneca".[170] Seneca's extravagance in incident, in language, and in character is curbed by a realism trained in the minute observation of contemporary society. Jonson's characters are types and so different from the impersonal types of Senecan plays.

Sejanus: His Fall was produced at Court in the winter of 1603, and again at the Globe in the spring of the following

year. Jonson's second tragedy, Catiline His Conspiracy was produced in 1611. An unfinished tragedy on the downfall of the Earl of Mortimer was found among his papers at his death.

Jonson's conception of tragedy was nearer to the medieval idea of tragedy in general than to Aristotle's in particular. To him tragedy is the downfall of a great man, and it does not make much difference if he is good or evil. In either case, the moral is the same. The gifts of Fortune are all uncertain; only God does not betray. The fall of mighty civil men affords better subjects because they have a more easily recognizable moral message.

In the Preface to Sejanus, Jonson admitted, his tragedy was deficient in the formal qualities. He did not keep to the classical unity of time. He did not employ the classical chorus. But he pleaded, he had "discharged the other offices of a tragic writer ... in truth of argument, dignity of persons, gravity and height of elocution, fulness and frequency of sentence".[171] Jonson's Sejanus is, no doubt, a literary attempt to entice the Elizabethan audience back to Rome by giving them a play in which many distinctive Senecan features are dispensed with, without sacrificing the type.

Jonson's choice of the Senecan form had a definite purpose. He wanted to reshape the ancient tradition for the right use of lines. The play has unity of time and a proper chorus, as already noted. The play is also marked by wide inclusion of events, crowd of

actors, admission of comic relief and passages of realistic dialogue. Jonson himself defends these omissions and concessions in the Preface to Sejanus purely on the ground of the needs and the possibilities of the modern stage and the modern audience: "let not the absence of these Formes be imputed to me, wherein I shall give you occasion hereafter ... to thinke I could better prescribe than omit the due use, for want of a convenient knowledge".[172]

Jonson adhered to the principles of 'truth of argument' and 'dignity of persons' by taking his plot from Roman history. Seneca also chose historic or legendary matter. Jonson drew on the original Latin sources — Tacitus, Suetonius, Juvenal, Seneca and Dion Cassius in the case of Sejanus and introduced numerous details from these works. But Jonson's is a comprehensive realism which is the negation of the spirit of Seneca. He was not interested in Seneca's extravagance in incident and in character. On the contrary, he had all-absorbing interest in the humours and peculiarities of human nature and he produced sharply contrasted figures.

Senecan tragedy treats of persons of high degree and represents them as falling from the state of prosperity into the adversity. This fall is occasioned by the fickleness of Fortune. The story is thus endowed with a didactic interest.

Sejanus, in this line of approach, is cast in the Senecan mould. It is a true 'Wheel of Fortune' tragedy. Its theme is

Sejanus' rise to power, the uncertain stasis while his fortune is at its highest and his rapid downfall. It is also didactic. It demonstrates the uncertainty of worldly Fortune and the inherent instability of political success. More specifically, Sejanus is a demonstration of the dangers of flattery, with the evils of tyranny. It is a presentation of an all-consuming lust for power.

The plot of Sejanus, in brief, is this. Sejanus is an upstart who has rendered himself indispensable to a tyrant, Tiberius, whose evil is unchecked. When the tragedy opens, he is on the verge of a complete success. Tiberius, who is too indolent to manage the Government affairs, seems ready to allow Sejanus to become the real ruler. The only opposition, though weak, comes from Agripinna. By the middle of the play, Sejanus seems to have succeeded in breaking this slightest resistance and to remove Agrippina's sons, the lawful heirs to the throne. But then he makes a fatal error by asking for the hand of Livia, Tiberius' daughter, whose lover he is and whose husband, Drusus, he has poisoned. His permission in seeking alliance with the Imperial family arouses Tiberius' suspicions. Tiberius immediately sets up a counterpoise to Sejanus in the person of Macro. Sejanus passes from being a flatterer to being a traitor, and drunk with ambition, he refuses to see the dangers of his own position.

Sejanus' hubris is soon punished. Tiberius' letter to the Senate invites the Senate to turn against Sejanus and

punish him as a traitor. Macro has surrendered to the Senate house with his guards. Sejanus is taken off to his death. The moral on the fickleness of Fortune is voiced at the end of the play.

In Sejanus Jonson portrays a vicious world of the rulers and senators. The mere representation of such a society is, in itself, a kind of warning. L.C. Knights observes in this connection, "The world with which we are presented is completely evil. Tiberius and Sejanus are equal in cruelty and cunning. Macro ... is ... explicity Machiavellian; the satellites and senators are servile and inconstant; the mob tears the body of the fallen favourite ... The good characters are choric and denunciatory merely, representing no positive values".[173]

A sketch-analysis of the plot shows how murders, revenge, intrigue, the act of poisoning, suicide — all are piled on each other in Jonson's play as we find in a Senecan tragedy. The ambitious intrigues of Sejanus bear the weight of the plot. One of his intrigues is motivated by private revenge. Sejanus bears a personal grudge for an unrequited injury against Drusus. He takes revenge by cuckolding him and then lays plan for his destruction. Tiberius, infuriated by the false reports of Sejanus that Drusus was to poison him, forces the innocent Drusus to drink the poisoned wine which Sejanus says Drusus had prepared for Tiberius. Quite sensational is the suicide of Silius on the stage. Macro's declaration of his own position

(in lines 714-35 of act III) is brutal in its clarity. Jonson had to make concessions to popular taste for murder and violence. He even introduced violent incident on the stage and indulged his preference for a crowded stage. Quite surprisingly, he retained comic scenes of the courtesan. But Jonson avoided any grotesque mixture of the comic and the tragic.

Sejanus is concerned with the downfall of evil man. According to Aristotelian dictum, such a story cannot be tragic because it lacks the element of pity. Sejanus is an unmitigated villain. He resolves to debauch Livia before her husband has struck him. He suffers from moral depravity. Such a villain cannot be a tragic hero. His fall from prosperity to adversity produces tragic terror, but it does not bring with it pity. There are good characters in the play, Agrippina and Arruntius, for example, but Jonson fails to make them living. Agrippina is haughty. Jonson displays a clear insight into the nature of man in so far as he is a political being. The characters lack subtlety but they have a convincing consistency. Tiberius has little role to play but he emerges as a very clear portrait of an ageing, self-indulgent, morose and unpredictable dictator.

Sejanus lacks a chorus. But the function of the chorus is partly played by Arruntius, an invention of Jonson in Sejanus. Arruntius speaks for the author. He tries to correct the degenerate men of his own day by the standard of the heroes of the last days of the republic:

"Where is now the soul
Of god-like Cato? he that durst be good
When Caesar durst be evil, and had power
As not to live his slave, to die his master?"
(Act I, Sc. i, L 89 ff)

When after the suicide of Silius, Tiberius affects grief, Arruntius exclaims in a grimly pregnant language calling him an 'excellent wolf'.

Arruntius is equally contemptuous of the mob when Sejanus falls and they wreck their vengeance on him:

"Had Sejanus thrived
In his design and prosperously oppressed
The old Tiberius, then in that same minute
Those very rascals that now rage like furies
Would have proclaimed Sejanus emperor".
(Act V, L 800 ff)

Thus Arruntius sums up the struggle for ascendency which is the leading motive of the play.

Jonson allows himself considerable freedom in his observance of the unities of time, place and action in Sejanus. He adhered to the Unity of Place only in so far as the action of Sejanus takes place within the city of Rome. He did not adhere to the Unity of Time in the play; the action of Sejanus spreads over several weeks.

The play deals with one main action and there are no sub-plots. There is, however, little action in the play and what there is seems monotonous. Long and involved as the argument, Jonson never loses his grasp of it and all its part fall fitly into his designed plan. The play is divided into acts and scenes. Economy and firmness are apparent in the construction of the play. There is a resolute avoidance of side-issues and a firm concentration on the development of the story. Jonson omitted battles, jigs and spectacles, and secured a coherent and carefully integrated development of the main action. L.C. Knights' comment in this connection is worth quoting: "Sejanus ... is the product of a unique vision ... It is not merely that the matter on which the poet works is provided by the passions, lusts and impulses of the actual world; the firmly defined individual spirit which moulds that matter springs from a rich traditional wisdom; it relies, that is to say, on something outside itself, and presupposes an active relationship with a particular audience".[174]

'Gravity and height of Elocution, fulnesse and frequence of sentence', Jonson's tragedies, undoubtedly, have. In striving to attain the height of elocution, Jonson is sometimes guilty of using Seneca's rhetorical exaggeration of expression. Jonson's tragedy is rather like a law-suit. The catastrophe in Sejanus is brought about by an actual exercise of the wits of rhetoric by the reading of Tiberius' letter. Jonson, no doubt, lacks Seneca's eloquence. His style, especially in long speeches, is too often rhetorical, and rarely displays great beauty or dramatic power. But we should remember that the Roman's extravagance in

language was curbed by a realism trained as was Jonson's. Charlton justifies Jonson's rhetorical extravagances by saying that "the very fulness and frequence of sentence is not an abstract moralising, but a legitimate dramatic method in default of action for revealing the subtle complexities of their speakers' minds".[175]

Jonson borrows from Seneca in Sejanus. Cunliffe remarks in this connection, "When Jonson borrows, he takes Seneca's crude ore, and rarely troubles to melt it down and recast it".[176] The critic cites parallels from Sejanus and puts them side by side with extracts taken from Medea, Thyestes, Thebais and Hercules Furens.

Catiline : His Conspiracy:

Remembering his concession that Sejanus was "no true Poems",[177] Jonson flauntingly entitles Catiline : His Conspiracy "a legitimate Poem".[178] As a result, we find the author's increased reliance on classical form and tradition in this play. Yet in Catiline Jonson's instinctive dramatic sense held him from bringing all the rigour of Senecan form. He is not directly indebted to Seneca for anything except the Thyestean prologue of the ghost, the choruses, the poetry and the rhetoric.

Catiline was first acted in 1611. The play is based on the events of the year 63 B.C., when Catiline organised a conspiracy to overthrow the existing government and to renew with the aid of Sulla's veterans the scenes of bloodshed.

In act I, we see the meeting of the conspirators at which Catiline announces his plan, promising Rome itself as a prize to those who would support him and compelling all present to attest their allegiance by drinking a mixture of wine and human blood. In act II we see how Catiline's conspiracy is doomed when the patriotic Fulvia elects to barter what little virtue she has for such information as the garrulous conspirator Curious is able to give her. Act III and IV show us how Cicero, having defeated Catiline for the consulship, uses Fulvia's information to frustrate Catiline's attempt to have him assassinated; then how he brings the whole conspiracy into the open, addressing Catiline in the Senate and calling upon him to leave the city and, finally, how he manages to foretell the attempt of Catiline's adherents to turn the warlike Allobroges against Rome, their nominal ally. The last act shows the complete collapse of the conspiracy; we see there how the conspirators remaining at Rome are apprehended and executed, and we hear how Catiline and the remnant of his two legions meet destruction in the desperate stand at Fesulae.

In Catiline Jonson drew upon recognized authorities, Plutarch, Dio Cassius, Cicero, and Sallust — sometimes directly and sometimes through the intermediary of a compendium called Historia Conjurationis Catilinariae, by the Renaissance scholar, Constantius Felicius Durantinus. On Jonson's classical use of history Ellis-Fermor writes that "Jonson has again and again in Sejanus, and to almost equal extent in Catiline, subjected his imagination"[179] to history and the result is two plays which

are "not Jacobean London transposed to a foreign setting but Rome itself, the Rome of Tacitus and Sallust not only in fact and historical detail, but in spirit".[180]

If we support the critic's assertion, the state itself takes the role of the tragic protagonist in Jonson's plays and in that case Jonson was the first to make drama serve as a medium for presenting the tragedy of a whole state. But such a tragedy, certainly, could not be presented entire within the limits of a five-act play without sacrificing the concreteness of the dramatic art. Catiline presents recognizable segments of tragic patterns that Jonson found in the verified history of Rome. In this play we have the picture of a state at the peak of its prosperity, power and pride, but taking the first step toward disaster. Joseph Allen Byrant has explained the point figuratively : "Catiline the symptom, Caesar the disease, Cicero the will of the state, Cato is all but submerged conscience — all these are elements in a body politic that is outwardly flourishing but spiritually doomed ... In neither play, not even in Sejanus, is the tragedy of a whole state indicated so movingly, so subtly, and yet with such terrifying clarity".[181]

Catiline is a demonstration of the dangers of political turbulence. Catiline is the pure rebel, having no cause and striving for no ideal, anxious to revenge the slight given to his pride by being rejected as a military commander, determined to possess himself of the privileges he sees enjoyed by others.

He feels his past crimes cannot be expiated and can only be justified by further evil.

Jonson's picture of the bold, restless and bitter ambition of Catiline, and the mingled blood-lust of this character, is sharply drawn. But like Sejanus, Catiline is not a tragic protagonist drawn on Aristotle's lines. He has, rather, some sort of affinity with Senecan tyrants.

T.S. Eliot in his essay, "Ben Jonson" comments that the soliloquy of the ghost in Catiline is characteristic of Jonson's success in versification.[182] He quotes the passage:

> "Dost thou not feel me, Rome? not yet is night
> So heavy on thee, and my weight so light?
> Can Sylla's ghost arise within thy walls,
> Less threatening than earthquake, the quick falls
> Of thee and thine? Shake not the frighted heads
> Of thy steep towers, or shrink to their first beds?
> Or as their ruin the large Tyber fills,
> Make that swell up, and drown thy seven proud hills?..."[183]

And he comments, "This is the learned, but also the creative Jonson".[184] He is right in pointing out that without concerning himself with the character of Sulla, and in lines of invective, Jonson makes Sylla's ghost, while the words are spoken, a living and terrible force. Eliot says, "The words ... are a perfect expression for "Sylla's ghost"; they do not exhibit prolixity or redundancy or the other vices in the rhetoric books".[185] "The ghost of Sylla speaks the usual Seneca's ghost's prologue",[186]

as Lucas has observed. But Jonson, here, does not follow Seneca blindly. There is definitely a touch of genuine artistic emotion in which Jonson masters in his own way.

Critics are of the view that Jonson follows Seneca in his use of the chorus. Cunliffe, for instance, writes, "Jonson employed the Chorus not after the manner of the Greek, but of the Roman stage".[187] Herford observes, "Jonson had a craving to revive this feature [Chorus] of the Senecan drama".[188] In Catiline, each act, except the last one, ends with a chorus. Cunliffe further notes, "In Jonson's Catiline, as in Seneca's tragedies, the Chorus left the stage during the performance of the play, and were supposed to be ignorant of the course of the action, for at the end of act IV the Chorus profess to be in doubt as to Catiline's designs, which could not have been the case if they had been present when the conspiracy was formed, as would be required by the rules of Greek tragedy".[189]

The Chorus brings out the morality of the play. After act I, it comments on the cycle of movement in the state; the progress runs from Poverty, through War to Peace and Prosperity; Prosperity in due course becomes Luxury and Corruption which leads to Oppression and Civil War; and thus the state is brought back to Poverty again. The Chorus observes that nothing great remains for 'so long'; its own weight ruins it. It laments that Rome which is 'The Mistris of the whole world' will also be destroyed by its own power.

It is evident that the poetry of Seneca was in Jonson's mind throughout, at least, in the early parts of the play. Catiline has a dark beauty of image which is of the very quality of Seneca himself. Occasionally Jonson tries to rise to the heights of Seneca. In general the tone of Jonson's lines is weighty, grave, precise and dignified, and not urgent or exciting. Catiline is rhetorical in a good sense; only occasionally does Jonson's style become overstrained and inflated. Eliot in his essay, "Ben Jonson" was right in pointing out that Jonson's poetry was not only more accomplished and learned than that of his contemporaries, but more open and honest as well.

Both Sejanus and Catiline are essentially rhetorical. They are like law-suits : Sejanus versus Tiberius, Cicero versus Catiline. The denouements in both are brought about by an actual exercise of the arts of rhetoric — in Catiline by Cicero's speeches. The following passage from act III, Sc. i of the play may be quoted to show the influence of Seneca's style:

> "It likes me better, that you are not consul.
> I would not go through open doors, but break'em;
> Swim to my ends through blood; or build a bridge
> Of carcasses; make on upon the heads
> Of men, struck down like piles, to reach the lives
> Of those remain and stand: then is't a prey,
> When danger stops, and ruin makes the way".
>
> (Act III, Sc. i)

Jonson adheres to the unity of place in Catiline as the action of the play takes place mainly within the city of Rome. But he does not adhere to the unity of time at all. The action of the play spreads over three days. Although the play deals with one main action, and there are no sub-plots, Jonson indulges in his preference for a crowded stage and in the play there are over thirty speaking parts. More surprisingly, Jonson admits a comic element. There is comic relief in the passages between Fulvia and other ladies. The play also contains scenes of horrendous spectacle.

The play is concerned with the downfall of an evil man, and we instinctively accept Aristotle's dictum that such a story cannot be tragic because it lacks the element of pity. We cannot identify ourselves with Jonson's tragic hero because he is evil. There are good characters in the play as well — Cato, and, of course, Cicero himself — but Jonson fails to make them attractive. Cato is waspish and Cicero is intolerably self-satisfied.

Catiline is more Senecan than medieval. He is the bad man, the scourge of God, similar to Tamburlaine and Richard III. The besetting sin of Catiline is pride or ambition. His downfall is brought about by the kind of stupidity and lack of foresight which accompanies this sin. Catiline is less self-deluded than Sejanus; he knows clearly what he means to do and is under no illusion about the quality of his supporters. Yet he does not fully appreciate their instability. He feeds himself in thinking that he can stage a successful rebellion with men such as this,

just as he is guilty of wishful thinking in believing that the Allobreges will support him in his attack on Rome. The ambitions of Catiline move us less, and we can, therefore, more clearly see his absurdity. The element of conflict is missing in Catiline. In accordance with the doctrine of decorum, Catiline is simple and consistent embodiment of evil, without redeeming qualities, and incapable of doubt or internal conflict. There is not even a part of it with which the audience sympathises, and this is one of the two major restrictions on the effectiveness of Jonson's tragedies.

The characters in Catiline have a convincing consistency and clarity. In his tragedies Jonson practises greater economy in characterisation than in his comedies; he has many characters, but he gives only those aspects of their personalities which are immediately relevant to the political situation in which they are found.

The firmness of the moral outline, together with the authenticity of the historical truth of his play, gives to Jonson's tragedy an impressive gravity and force. The sense of economy and firmness is apparent in the construction and the development of the story. One of the obvious dangers of a rigid concentration on the tragic theme is that there will be too many scenes conducted at the highest pitch of solemnity. There are altogether thirty-two scenes in the play. Jonson has not avoided this — it is part of the reason for the comparative failure of the last acts of Catiline .

T.S. Eliot has a very fine saying on the Latin influence on Catiline : "It is not the Latin erudition that sinks Catiline but the application of that erudition to a form which was not the proper vehicle for the mind which had amassed the erudition".[190] It is true that in tragedy Jonson's conscious artistry and control and his seriousness of moral purpose seem to have prevented him from achieving intensity and pathos. Behind his ultimate failure in tragedy J.B. Bomborough finds yet another reason : "In the end, despite all his thought and care, he lacked the true tragic vision of humanity ... in his emotional range pity played only a small part. As a result, the virtues of his tragedies are something we can see but can hardly feel, and they move us, if at all, to something close to horrified wonder at their events, and (at the best) respectful admiration for their artistic skill".[191] Jonson's failure is also due to the fact that his genius was more satiric than tragic.

It is noticed that among Seneca's plays, Thyestes is more frequently laid under contribution than any other play in Catiline. From this tragedy Jonson borrowed the opening of Catiline. Jonson also borrowed from Hippolytus, Octavia and Hercules Furens.

The Fall of Mortimer is an unfinished work of Jonson. Mortimer was to have only nine characters beside the Chorus, whereas there are thirty seven and thirty eight in Sejanus and

Catiline respectively. Apparently it was to have much less action, omitting all events except the last climax; and it looks also as if the unities were to have been ostentatiously adopted. Charlton writes, "it shows an even wider divergence still from popular practice through the increasing stress of scorn for popular opinion; it must have embodied almost all the limitations imposed by the outward form of Roman tragedy".[192]

The judgement of critics, generally, has almost unfairly been against Jonson's tragedies. T.S. Eliot has very aptly noted the reactions of the critics to Jonson's tragedies. He writes, "It is generally conceded that Jonson failed as a tragic dramatist; and it is usually agreed that he failed because his genius was for satiric comedy and because of the weight of pedantic learning with which he burdened his two tragic failure".[193] But Eliot did not subscribe to either of the views: "The second point marks an obvious error of detail; the first is too crude a statement to be accepted".[194] Joseph Allen Bryant Jr. observes, "Jonson's Roman plays, if they are to be called tragedies, must justify their role by some other means ... Jonson's practice in both Catiline and Sejanus indicates that he recognized a second function for the dramatist-historian; if it was his function to cast his light upon the segment of history, it was also his function to reveal with the penumbra of that light the broad movement, the larger action, from which the chosen segment should draw its full significance. And in both of Jonson's Roman plays, that larger action

turns out to be a tragic action, with the state itself taking the role of tragic protagonist..." [195]

Jonson owed to Seneca something more than the external form of his tragedies; their spirit and style are Roman, not Greek. But as Lucas observes, "Jonson is more classical though less specifically Senecan than the school of Pembroke and Daniel". [196] In the two tragedies, Jonson attempts to improve the form of popular drama by the example of Seneca; not by a slavish imitation but by adaptation, to make of popular drama, a finished work of art. He reshaped an ancient tradition for the right use of the modern stage. But Jonson, as a tragedian, can hardly be said to have influenced his age profoundly. Charlton rightly observes, "partly by accident, partly through spleen, Jonson virtually condemned Seneca to mummification in an academic museum". [197]

G. Seneca cast in the Rigours of the Classical Form: English Imitation of French Seneca

It remains to consider the group of English plays made on the model of French Seneca in the Elizabethan period. These plays had little importance in the growth of Elizabethan tragedy. They also added little to the force of the Senecan tradition active in the period as they were not intended for the popular stage or even for the private or the academic theatre.

The Countess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister, gathered round her a coterie influenced by the French Senecan Garnier (flor. 1563-90). She herself translated his Antonie in 1590. Kyd followed by translating on similar lines another tragedy, Cornelia (c. 1592) of the same author. There is almost no action in Kyd's version. Cornelia weeps profusely at the beginning and even more profusely at the end. The Chorus voices against war and sings of the transience of all things. The Unities have been rigorously maintained. There is also the use of messenger in the Senecan fashion.

Nearly all the members of the group depend on the French tragedies for the material of their own plays. Samuel Daniel, a member of the group, wrote two tragedies, Cleopatra (c. 1593) and Philotas (1600-4). Cleopatra is the best work of the school. It opens with a long monologue by the heroine and ends with the

messenger's report of her death which is also of unusual length. The choruses are charming but the play lacks action. These and the use of rhyme instead of blank verse bring the play close to the French models. Philotas is full of vigour. It deals with the ruin of a fearless lieutenant of Alexander on a charge of conspiracy against the King by his rivals. Both the plays owe their form to Seneca. But there is little of the spirit of Seneca, the poet, in these plays.[198]

Samuel Brandon's Tragicomedy of the Virtuous Octavia follows Cleopatra only in metre but does not approach it in excellence. Another follower of Daniel was a lady of rank, Elizabeth, who wrote Mariam the Fair Queen of Jewry. She wrote her tragedy with classic elegance.

Fulke Greville was another important member of the group. His dramatic poems, Mustapha and Alaham, were not printed until 1632. Writing of these in his Life of Sidney, he set forth a new aim for tragedy. His purpose was neither to exemplify the disastrous miseries of man's life nor to point out God's revenging aspect upon every particular sin. He wrote, "... it was no part of my purpose to write for them, against whom so many good and great spirits have already written".[199] His plays are meant for a vehicle of the ideas of his age. He further wrote, "... for the arguments of these Tragedies, they be not naked and casually, like the Greeke and Latine, ..."[200] His plots, however, have a simplicity and are archaic and ferocious and not without grandeur.

Greville imitates Senecan situations in his plays. One such instance is in Alaham where Caelica supports her blind, deposed old father like Antigone. His plays present the political implications of the human dilemma. The choruses of both the plays are very various; Good Spirits and Ill, Priests and Tartars discuss with seriousness the profoundest philosophy. Actually the Chorus becomes the nucleus of his drama. Greville's style indulges at times in verbal capers which out-Seneca Seneca. Lucas aptly observes, "... they [his tragedies] are of interest showing how a profound and highly original mind could accept the Senecan mould".[201] Greville, as he observes, speaks more for Seneca than Seneca can for himself.

Lastly come the tragedies of William Alexander, Earl of Stirling (1603-7). Four of the tragedies, he wrote, are extremely Senecan. They are Croesus, a dramatisation of the story of Herodotus, Darius, written on Alexander's conquest of Asia, The Alexandrian Tragedy, dealing with the troubles following Alexander's death and lastly, Julius Caesar. Charlton characterises these tragedies as "the final crystallization of all the tendencies of Seneca in the French school".[202] Darius is best constructed among them all. The Alexandrian Tragedy surveys a series of loosely connected scenes. Croesus has a loosely knit plot. In Julius Caesar is the perfect type. In Alexander's tragedies, there are philosophisings on the blessings of the humble, a feeble rant and choruses on the mutability of all things. Lucas calls them "consumedly dull".[203]

The English imitators of the French Seneca did not write for the popular stage. They presented the authentic story of the past in a simple and moral scheme. They follow their models by restoring full length to the Chorus. The Chorus in their plays becomes the nucleus of the drama. There is, side by side, an avoidance of bombast and high-astounding fury in language. Action, in their plays, is completely removed. Its place is taken by long narratives either from the formal messengers or in the songs of the choruses. The plays are marked by the narration of violent deeds. There is nothing beyond suicides and accidental deaths. There is but one ghost, the very philosophic ghost of The Alexandrean Tragedy. These plays are not meant for the stage and so neither dialogue nor anything else dramatic is to be sought in them.

2. The Revived Senecanism in Jacobean Tragedy: Webster's The Duchess of Malfi

A. Introduction:

Senecan influence on English drama in the Jacobean period (1603-1625) as well as in the Caroline period (1625-1649) was not as profound as it had been in the Elizabethan period. True, the dramatists, namely, Thomas Middleton (1570? - 1627), Francis Beaumont (1584-1616), John Fletcher (1539-1625), John Ford (1586-1639), John Webster (1580? - 1625?), Cyril Tourneur (1575? - 1626), Philip Massinger (1583-1640), James Shirley (1596-1666) and Sir John Suckling (1609-1642), in the main, made popular the revenge-play which owed its origin to Seneca, whether the original Roman or in the English translations or much more obviously in the modernised manner of the Italians. But, as Lucas observes, the influence of Seneca on the Jacobean tragedy "grows too faint and derivative until at last it faints altogether in the first twilight of the English stage, and the mutterings of the coming Civil War".[1]

The Jacobean dramatists were stimulated by Seneca in choosing themes of lust, murder, incest and unnatural crime. They also took from Seneca his rhetoric, his ghosts, his flair for horror and blood-vengeance. But the Jacobeans remembered Seneca more as a moralist. As Una Ellis-Fermor notes , "... he [Seneca] shared their vision of a decaying civilisation. He opened to them the language of undefeated despair".[2] The Jacobean experience of

universal decay and corruption echoes Seneca's vision, and it is, no doubt, more important than the survival of his sense of horror in Jacobean tragedy.

With the ascension of James I on the throne of England, the English play-houses became the haunts of the foppish courtiers. The Jacobean stage increasingly divorced itself from the general audience that could make for a great national theatre. The rich courtiers who were, in general, politically corrupt, morally depraved and spiritually bank-rupt formed the bulk of the Jacobean audience. These courtiers, finding no diversion in the shape of war and danger which alone could bring out their heroism and nobility, became interested in sensational drama, gripping episodes and perverted sexual relations. They called for the blood and thunder of the melodrama, for crude sensationalism, for immorality and obscenity and for rant and noise. The dramatists catered to the depraved tastes of the audience. In Senecan drama they found their main ingredients, needed for the contemporary stage.

The political and social conditions of the period were equally powerful in shaping the art and outlook of the dramatists. The Jacobean age was an age of bewilderment and chaos. Machiavelli was understood to provide a materialistic and Satanic interpretation of the world order. Spiritual and moral theories of the governance of the universe were rejected. That is why weakness, ingratitude, ill-will, wickedness and cruelty were the essential elements of human character and society. Religion

was merely an instrument of exploitation in the hands of kings and princes. It was a degenerate and decaying world in which virtue was incapable of survival.

The bewilderment, chaos and pessimism of the age left an indelible mark on the tragedies. R.B. Sewall sums up the world of the Jacobean dramatists in the following words: "In the post-Shakespearian drama, the stature of man shrinks. Vision becomes clouded, distinctions blurred and knowledge chimerical".[3] The hell that concerned the Jacobean dramatist was here on earth, more specifically in the social and political world he lived in, and heaven was no compensation for it. The result was a dramatic treatment of the special shape in which evil revealed itself in his age; the phenomena of state power and the debasement of human values. Farnham[4] points out that there are no villains in Jacobean tragedies; the evil is within the heroes themselves. Lever's is the similar observation: "The heroes may have their faults of deficiency or excess; but the fundamental flaw is not in them but in the world they inhabit; in the political state, the social order it upholds..."[5]

Alan Sinfield has shown the reasons for the prevalence of the scepticism and atheism in Jacobean tragedy in an admirable analysis. He writes, "The political and social conditions of the sixteenth century facilitated an institutional split in Christendom and the consequence was a polarisation and hardening of doctrine. Issues which at other times were accommodated by logical evasions and evocative phraseology were teased out and stated in uncompromising terms, and the problems which ultimately confront

all traditional Christianity came sharply into focus".[6] The scepticism encouraged by this constitutes in part the interrogative aspect of Jacobean tragedy.

Jonathan Dollimore's[7] analysis of the tragic sense of life underlying the Jacobean tragedy suggests the critic's historical understanding of subjectivity in the Jacobean tragedy. Referring to the Marxist proposition that human consciousness is determined by social being and next to Benjamin's description of 'untragic hero' (in Understanding Brecht) who is 'like an empty stage on which the contradictions of our society are worked out'[8], he comes to the assertion that it is true also of the protagonists in Jacobean tragedy. In his view the decentring of man in Jacobean tragedy was contemporaneous with and influenced by the revolution (Galelio's discovery) whereby 'man' and his 'planet' were displaced both from the real and metaphysical centre of the universe. In the England of the early seventeenth century the decline of Christian essentialism also led to the decentring of man and a corresponding emphasis on the extent to which subjectivity was to be socially identified. Jacobean tragedy challenged Christian essentialism and its stoic and humanist derivatives. Individual extinction led to the apotheosis of man who became his own universe. Suffering and loss were mystified, rendered inevitable and unalterable. Dollimore quotes John Tinsley's description of the tragic sense of life to show how the same may be applied to describe the Jacobean tragic sense : 'a vision of man remaining incomparably superior to all those circumstances which seem only

to underline his ultimate insignificance and transitoriness... it expresses a solicitude for, and a stoic pride in man who is the victim of so much pain, and a resentment against the fortuitous character of human calamity and against any god, who, if he exists, must be held to permit this'.[9]

The Jacobean tragedians seek in their various ways to discover some meaning in human suffering, some kind of affirmation which can make life possible in a world which seems to give reason only for despair. They are very naturally drawn to the philosophy of stoicism which offered as the only means of survival in such a world a stoic control of human emotions and a consequent imperviousness to pain.

The quality of the protagonist's response to the chaotic, pessimistic and conflicting situations characterisesthe Jacobean tragedies. Liver aptly summarises the situation: "Their [the heroes'] attitudes range over the whole gamut from total commitment to the destruction of evil, even at the cost of destroying in the process their own integrity, to an opting out of the conflict by self-chosen death, or retreat into an impregnable kingdom of the mind... The rational man who remains master of himself is by the same token the ultimate master of his fate".[10] It is here that the Jacobean dramatists shared Seneca's vision of life and stoical attitudes.

Seneca, as Una Ellis Fermor[11] observes, shared the Jacobean dramatists' vision of a decaying civilisation. There was an aptness of Senecan thought to their present need. The

revulsion, on the part of the Jacobeans, from the spectacle of universal decay and corruption, is invariably Seneca's own. The acceptance of the bitter fate, the sense that there is no safe place 'on the ridge of the world' and the true stoic repudiation of wealth, power and high place occupies with the Jacobean dramatists approximately the same position as in Seneca's dramas: it is freely professed in the form of wistful comments in the mouth of the characters in Jacobean tragedies. This affinity of experience that echoes Seneca's vision is, no doubt, more potent than the survival of his sense of horror in Jacobean tragedy.

The Jacobean dramatists used some of the elements of Senecan drama, but they modified the conventions of Senecan drama to suit their personal needs. Seneca was the great storehouse of tragic meterial for Kyd and his successors and he provided the most tragic motive, revenge exacted on the closest consanguinity. But in the Jacobean tragedies, vengeance for murder was no longer the emphasised theme. It is true that the revenge-theme, as Nicoll[12] points out, appealed to this age not only because it offered opportunities for thrilling dramatic situations but also because it raised fundamental philosophical and religious issues. But as a motivation revenge loses its force in Jacobean tragedy. In The Atheist's Tragedy (1611) Tourneur produces a hero who is absolutely denied his revenge by the ghost of his murdered father. In his Revenger's Tragedy (1607), vengeance is thrust down from the rank of duty and forgiveness is exalted in its stand. The ghost in his play does not cry for revenge but for mercy. C.E. Vaughan writes in this connection, "It is clear that he [Tourneur] felt the theme of vengeance

to be an outworn convention".[13] But perhaps it would be more correct to say that though Tourneur was writing in the contemporary Revenge convention, there was another dramatic influence working in harmony with Tourneur's traditionalistic outlook, that of the Moralities.

In Webster's The White Devil (ca. 1610), too, revenge is not presented as a duty. It is, instead, presented as a passion. Our sympathies are not with the avengers, but cast on the side of their victims. The whole of the last act is devoted to the nemesis which falls upon the avenger. As a result, the motive of vengeance is reduced to a secondary place. Vaughan puts it metaphorically: "It [Revenge] supplies not the core of the building, but its scaffolding, or little more".[14] Ford treats of the revenge-theme in his tragedies, 'Tis Pity She's a Whore (1627), The Broken Heart (1629) and Love's Sacrifice (1630). In the first play a series of revenge is set against the story of the incestuous love between a brother and a sister and every act of revenge ends in death of or disgrace to its conceiver. In The Broken Heart, the revenge-motive is also very weak. Orgilus, as a revenger, is no Senecan protagonist nourishing his vengeance until he gets an opportunity. Revenge is relegated to a secondary place in this play. "Love's Sacrifice", to quote Bowers, "shows a softening of the revenge motive by the greater importance placed on another theme".[15] However, in this play the tragic action is kept moving by the revengeful plots of the villains.

Shirley, however, used revenge-motive as a keystone in his tragedies, The Maid's Revenge (1626), Love's Cruelty (1631), The

Traitor (1631) and The Cardinal (1641). The Traitor is in line with the earlier revenge play with its strong treatment of the motives for revenge as a legitimate source of action. The Cardinal centres upon blood-revenge for murder. Shirley's treatment of revenge, however, reminds us of Kyd's rather than of Seneca's treatment of revenge in their plays.

Revenge may not be treated highly in the Jacobean tragedies, but so far as the treatment of revenge machinery is concerned, Jacobean tragedies remind us of Senecan plays. For Christopher Ricks... "most ... Jacobean drama is crude stuff".[16] Among the Jacobean dramatists Webster has typically been charged with writing plays which were sensational and melodramatic. The issue will be dealt with in the second part of the chapter. Tourneur's The Revenger's Tragedy presents a horror of life. Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, which deals with the incestuous love between a brother and a sister, concludes on the note of horror and bloodshed. In Love's Sacrifice Fernando crawls from the tomb to drink his poison and dies over the corpse of Biancha, the lady he loves. In Fletcher's The Triumph of Death Gabriella tears out her husband's heart and throws it at his uncle's feet. In The Bloody Brother of Beaumont and Fletcher the heads of Gisbert and Hamond are brought on the stage after execution. Massinger relies for dramatic effect upon the display of physical horrors. Cunliffe writes in this connection, "Nothing could be more repulsive than the outrage done to the dead body of Marcelina in The Duke of Milan; and the theme of The Unnatural Combat is bloody and horrible enough".[17]

Some of the Jacobean dramatists make use of the supernatural to evoke horrors and shudders. In Senecan tragedies the ghost as prologue initiates the action. But in Jacobean tragedies the ghost loses its former position. Ghosts figure in several of the plays of Ford, Beaumont and Fletcher, Shirley and Massinger but only to evoke shudders. However, as Cunliffe observes, the conclusion of Massinger's The Unnatural Combat is brought about in a manner "worthy of the most devoted imitator of Seneca's ghosts and cruce horrors".[18]

In Senecan tragedies, revenge-machinery like accomplices are sometimes used to help the revenger but never to consummate revenge. In Jacobean tragedies, accomplices are used but they have more important role to play. They sometimes play the opposite role. In Shirley's The Maid's Tragedy Velasco, the accomplice, is also a revenger. Catalina, the main revenger, tricks her accomplice and endeavours to saddle him with the blame of her misdeeds. In Jacobean tragedy a major role, however, is given to the antitype, the tyrant or usurper. In character he preserves many of the original traits of the Senecan tyrant. He is the slave of passion, possessed by jealousy and fear, unable to tolerate around him any companions but flatterers and fools.

Senecan tragedies are marked by the studies of passion. Some of the Jacobean plays are also characterised by the delineation of passion mostly frustrated and immoral. Una Ellis-Fermor notes that in Tourneur's The Revenger's Tragedy, "the characters are for the most part embodied passions".[19] "In Women Beware Women

and The White Devil", Margeson observes, "passions like lust, ambition, and revenge reveal their consuming power to destroy all that stands in their way, and in the end destroy themselves".[20] Ford's 'Tis Pity She's a Whore is marked by a decadent treatment of the aberrations of love passion. Shirley wrote tragedies of dark passion.

There are reflective passages in Seneca's style and some reminiscences of his ideas are expressed in the Jacobean tragedies. Scattered comments on life are expressed in a true epigrammatic verse. Such maxims and epigrams are the expressions of the dramatists' reflection on life, on kingliness, on the fate of princes, on the nature of nobility etc. Reflective passages in the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher are numerous but in some cases the thought expressed may be interpreted as a reminiscence of Seneca. Tourneur's plays are also marked by the use of aphorisms. L.G. Salinger writes in this connection, "These popular aphorisms and tags of Seneca Englished gave ... Tourneur a large part of the new material from which ... more ambitious speeches are developed".[21]

Quite in the fashion of Seneca's plays, most of the Jacobean plays abound in high poetry. The poetry of melancholy and death dominates The Duchess of Malfi. Una Ellis Fermor's comment on the poetry in act III, sc. v. of The Revenger's Tragedy is worth quoting. She writes, "This [Scene] has the right Thyestean ring, perhaps the only scene in Jacobean drama that is true kin to Seneca's own supreme imaginative achievement. Yet it is at the same time more than this for the economy; the

irony raises it beyond Seneca's range into momentary comparison with those same qualities in Oedipus Tyrannus".[22] Jacobean tragedies are also occasionally marked by rhetorical exaggeration. Ford is occasionally fond of this tendency as in the following lines of The Broken Heart:

> "In anger;
> In anger let him part; for could his breath,
> Like the whirlwinds, toss such servile slaves as lick
> The dust foot steps print into a vapour".
>
> (The Broken Heart, Act IV, Sc. i)

The genius of Massinger was also essentially rhetorical.

A good number of characters in Jacobean tragedies give vent to the idea of stoical submission and meet death with calmness and steadfastness, which can be ascribed to the influence of Seneca. In Antonio's Revenge of John Marston Antonio is the reflective type, a scholar. He studies Seneca's philosophy. He also feings madness as a last rescue. Pondulpho is a life-long stoic. He utters the maxims of patience and endurance. However, as Una Ellis-Fermor[23] observes, in Marston, there is the pure conversion of the stoic. His battle is not precisely the Senecan one between self-possession and self-indulgence but between continence and over-expression. Ford's characters meet death with calmness. Susan in The Witch of Edmonton, the guilty lovers of 'Tis Pity She's a Whore, Ithocles, Orgilus and Calantha in The Broken Heart, Bianca, Fernando and the Duke in Love's Sacrifice — all are alike in their defiance of death. The same stoical fortitude is found in some of the

characters of Beaumont and Fletcher and of Massinger who meet death with steadfastness. Charlmont and Castabella in Tourneur's The Atheist's Tragedy and Ventice in The Revenger's Tragedy meet and accept death with calmness.

Lastly, it should be noted that the Jacobean dramatists remembered Seneca more as the moralist whose sententiae and images fixed themselves in their minds. In The Revenger's Tragedy, Tourneur is careful to emphasise the moral. Middleton's plays also close on the moral note. In Ford's tragedies the key note is certainly not retribution. Yet, the closing words of his 'Tis Pity She's a Whore are a blend of his orthodox morality.

B. Senecanism in Webster's The Duchess of Malfi

The point to consider now is how Webster has availed himself of the Senecan horror devices in The Duchess of Malfi and how does he infuse into his play the stoic morality of Senecan drama. The Duchess of Malfi is chosen for investigation because it may be taken as the most significant tragedy of the period in the sense that it shows the tragedy of blood in its most developed form; secondly, the juxtaposition of keen pathos and horror that we find in the play touch Seneca's most characteristic thought intimately; and lastly, Webster brings the stoical philosophy of Seneca to interpret the more substantial of his characters in this play.

The Duchess of Malfi has been classed as a revenge tragedy. Yet it marks a difference. The revenge-motive does not seem to be predominant at all in The Duchess of Malfi. The revenge in this drama is not revenge for murder, but for an outrage on the insensate pride of the family. The Duchess marries beneath her status and so the honour of the family is compromised, and the two brothers, the Cardinal and Ferdinand seem to be determined to vindicate the honour of the family. It is Ferdinand who fumes very much about the family brought low by the marriage of his sister, yet he has not been able to discover who her husband is, and whether he is worthy or not. He has no sure ground to go upon. The diabolical persecution of the Duchess is executed. The two brothers must revenge themselves upon their sister, but what the real motive is, seems to have been, in the mean time lost sight of. If anything, it is motiveless malignity of the Cardinal that dooms his sister to prolong persecution. Thus the revenge motive of the play is very weak. Revenge is not presented as a solemn duty. Instead of feeling sympathy for the avengers, we are sympathetic to the Duchess.

Ralph Berry thinks that revenge for Webster is bound up with justice and so he writes, "I should not care to term Webster's plays as revenge tragedies except in the sense of dramatization of Bacon's 'Revenge is a kind of wild justice' ".[24] L.G. Salinger has dealt with the issue from a different perspective. He holds, "Webster fumbled with the Revenge conventions in the effort to develop something relatively new to the stage__to excite varied or conflicting sympathies for individuals at odds with their

surroundings".[25] The fact is that The Duchess of Malfi surpasses the limitations of a revenge play. It is the character-interest in the play — and this is developed with rare psychological perception and acumen — that makes the play so different from the average revenge play modelled on Senecan drama.

But so far as the revenge-machinery is concerned, the horrors in Webster's play remind one of Senecan tragedies. In The Duchess of Malfi, as in Thyestes, revenge is seen in its ugliest form. The revengeful brothers are both villains who carry their villainy to the farthest verge of human depravity. The dramatist's pre-occupation with the morbid and macabre is seen in his fondness for scenes of bloodshed and violence. Tortures of the most horrible kind are practised; murders are frequent and the stage is literally littered with dead bodies as we frequently find in Senecan tragedies. The fourth act of the play is entirely devoted to the persecution and torture of the Duchess, and the climax is reached in the strangling of the Duchess, her children and Cariola. The machineries are all in the Senecan fashion. The presentation of a dead man's hand, the letting loose of mad men, the showing of wax figures of people, as if they are dead, the introduction of the executioner with all the apparatus of death, the strangling of innocent and helpless victims on the stage, the chorus of maniacs, the murder of Cariola, the scuffing and stabbing in the fifth act — all produce the same sensation as we experience in a Senecan tragedy.

It will not be wholly true to say that Webster introduces the elements of horror in his play only for melodramatic effect as some critics held it to be. H.J. Muller, for instance, writes, "Webster exploits the conventions for purely sensational effects. Ghosts stalk in to no purpose except to raise goose-flesh; characters go mad or play mad only to please the groundlings; dumb-shows illustrate or repeat the horror".[26] M.C. Bradbrook holds the same view : "Webster uses the ghost for a momentary effect of terror".[27] William Archer severely criticises Webster by saying that the prolonged horrors of the fourth act of the play is the work of a morbid minded school-boy. He characterises Webster's preoccupation with horror as "a grimly monstrousity".[28] L.G. Salinger is of the view that Webster's ultimate aim is to excite nervous terror. He writes, "His (Webster's) paraphernalia of revenge and torture are neither purely sensational nor emblems of poetic justice, but are presented with an effort at naturalism, and with the aim of exciting nervous horror and foreboding".[29] Ralph Berry, however, has a different and justifiable opinion : "They [the horrors] are excessive because they represent a very great quantum of human pain".[30] Later he writes, "The primary purpose of the waxworks and dead hands is not to horrify us; it is to horrify the Duchess. The fourth act is about the prolonged mental torture of the Duchess; her reactions are what constitute the drama ...; the audience is moved, less by waxworks, than by their effect on the Duchess".[31] There is no denying the fact that the horrors have a psychological importance. The Duchess who herself suffers the subtlest kind of

persecution and torture reveals her own mind, and indirectly her greatness and majesty under suffering. There is also Bosola who organises all the horrors and he, too, is affected by them, and a slow but sure change comes over him. Webster is undoubtedly more successful than the other dramatists who follow Seneca in laying bare the inner mysteries of crime, remorse and pain combined to make men miserable. It is also to be noted that while presenting scenes of horror, Webster never loses sight of pity and terror.

In The Duchess of Malfi there are none of the ghosts and objective portents of the conventional Senecan plays. There is nothing strictly supernatural except the foreboding voice of the Echo with its despondent answers to Antonio's words. For the rest the supernatural element in the play is limited to the discriminating use of omens and presentiments. Detail after detail bears its ominous comment on the trend of forture and this serves to create an ever deepening impression of tragic issues and inevitable doom. This subtle use of the supernatural is missing even in the most devoted disciple of Seneca, Kyd.

The function of the chorus is partly discharged by Antonio in the first scene. Antonio reports the reform that has been effected in the administration, which he commends. Then he launches forth into a description of the characters of the Cardinal and Ferdinand, including a sketch of the Duchess too. Webster evidently desires to give the audience all this information and Antonio plays the chorus. But this is not certainly a

good way of beginning the play when it has nothing to do with the chorus.

Evidently Webster had no intention to adhere to the unities of time and place. The action of the play spreads over several years. The events take place in Rome, Malfi and Milan. The unity of action is also not maintained. The play starts well, and then it seems to slow down, and in the later stage it moves rather too quickly and incidents come hurtling.

Webster's The Duchess of Malfi offers a vision of a meaningless universe, a context for humanity irretrievably prone to corruption and error, a situation in which the individual has no recourse but to generate his own values and to decide on his own course of action, futile though it may be. Travis Bogard's observations in this regard reflect the same idea: "In Webster's world there is no justice, no law, either of god or man, to mete out punishment for evil and reward for good... The only triumph comes when, even in the moment of defeat, an individual is roused to assert his own integrity of life".[32] F.L. Lucas, likewise, observes, "It is in the shadow of night, indeed, that scene after scene takes place: and a twilight seems to lie across the characters themselves".[33] The ultimate tragedy of Webster's world is not the death of an individual but the presence of evil and decay which drags all mankind to death. If the world is an abysmal chaos without guiding plan in which good and evil must at least be made equal by the death which comes to all, man may still create his own moral order by upholding and preserving the dignity of human life. Death may destroy the body

but it cannot destroy the spirit. The particular effect of The Duchess of Malif is in its power to generate a sense of pride in the nobility of the human spirit which enables man to survive and triumph in spite of a chaotic world. As in the Senecan world, in the world of Webster too, death is ghastly, death is fearful, yet when the universe is seen for the meaningless horror it is, death can be seen as offering a positive hope, for death is a part that does not lie within the realm of human corruption. In the final words of The Duchess of Malfi, Webster makes Delio say

> "Integrity of life is fame's best friend,
> which nobly, beyond death, shall crown the end".
>
> (The Duchess of Malfi, act v, sc. v)

In the play Webster goes on to explore the implications of this value — the integrity of life. If death may reveal an inherent nobility in human life, such nobility is real and it may be the basis of a moral order.

Webster brings the stoical philosophy of Seneca to interpret the implications of this 'integrity of life'. Stoical philosophy teaches the hero to defy fate, to endure pain and anguish, to fight against heavy odds, and sometimes to preserve the integrity of the soul. The Duchess has lived a harmless and innocent life and has a remarkable integrity of character. It is the stoical apathy and stoical fortitude which arm the Duchess against suffering and death and the worst that can happen to her dear and near ones. Not for a moment does she lose her balance

of mind or self-possession and self-possession was the virtue of a stoic. Even the villain Bosola has, too, a store of stoical apathy and fortitude and makes nothing of death. He is not unconscious of what is good in him and it seems to have been all over shadowed and perverted by the way he has to live in the world. His cynical view of life, living in a wicked world as he does, goes well with his stoical bias of mind. His subconscious homage to virtue and integrity of character in his dying words point to his original stoical up-bringing. He says,

"Let worthy minds ne'er stagger in distrust
To suffer death or shame for what is just"

(The Duchess of Malfi, act v, sc. v)

In his perverted character the stoic ideal finds its soil:

"It may be pain, but no harm, to me to die
In so good a quarrel .

(The Duchess of Malfi, act v, sc. v)

All through Webster's play there are scattered comments on life, expressed in the epigrammatic verse. Such maxims and epigrams are an expression of his reflections on life. There are reflections on kingliness and the fate of princes, upon statecraft and the nature of nobility, upon adversity and virtue, upon a hundred other aspects of man and his life. One such reflection is put in the mouth of Bosola at the end of the play:

"O this gloomy world !
In what a shadow, or deep pit of darkness,
Both womanish and fearful mankind live !"

These moral reflections are reminiscent of those in Seneca's plays.

Lastly, quite in the fashion of Seneca's plays, The Duchess of Malfi abounds in high poetry. This poetry is now wild and stormy, now tender and lyrical. It is poetry of the play which has saved the play from its crudity.

3. Addison's *Cato* and Dr. Johnson's *Irene* : Plays Constructed on the Neo-classical Model

A. Introduction

The neo-classic period in English literature is usually taken to be the hundred-odd years c. 1660- c. 1780; in other words, from Dryden's maturity to Dr. Johnson's death (1784). Neo-classicism as a literary force arose with the scholar-poets and critics of the Italian Renaissance. It is generally traced back to imperfect understanding of Aristotle and Horace, but was given its current shape by the art of Seneca.

The English neo-classic tragedy is found to be modelled on French Classical tragedy which had its origin in Senecan drama. The French dramatists, however, improved upon their models partly by learning from Euripides, partly in ways of their own. Neo-classic tragedy followed the classic model in the general nature of its subjects, and in the way in which these subjects were treated. Subjects are always aristocratic in quality. No attempt to mirror ordinary life is found in neo-classical tragedy. The treatment of the subject ensures undisturbed unity of tone.

The principle of the unity of tone in the neo-classic drama results in three important elements. The first one is the complete separation in it between tragedy and comedy. No touch of humour was ever allowed to disturb the tragic solemnity. The second important element in the construction of the neo-classic

tragedy relates to the observance of the unities of time and place. Unity of time and place are but instruments toward the principal design, which is unity of action. The tragic action proceeds with total coherence and economy. "Neo-classic drama", as a critic writes, "where it accomplishes its purpose, is immensely tight-wrought. It is art by privation; an austere, sparse, yet ceremonious structure of language and bearing leading to the solemnities of heroic death".[1] Thirdly, neo-classic tragedy depends entirely upon narrative. Everything of a violent character or sensational nature is simply reported to the audience.

Two points at which neo-classic tragedy departed from its Senecan model should be mentioned. In the substance of its plot it gave a principal place to the interest of romantic love. And secondly, it dropped the device of chorus. The choric function, to some extent, is discharged by the confidant, a very common character in neo-classical tragedy. He has little to do with the action. He plays the role of the chorus by listening to the confessions of the hero, by advising him and sympathising with him.

The neo-classic view of tragedy found partial expression in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre. Chapman and Ben Jonson sought to combine the rival conceptions of neo-classic and popular drama. In the eighteenth century, playwrights tended to write under the influence of classical rules and models. Under the Restoration regime (1660-1700), in one set of dramas, the playwrights sought to arouse the passion of pity by exhibiting

the downfall of persons of high estate; in the other, the poet appealed to the sentiment of romantic passion. The taste for French romances resulted in an attempt to disguise the absence of genial emotion by the turgid bombast of its sentiments and of the epigrammatic declaration of its rhymed verse.

The taste of the English nation having once turned into French channels, a remedy for these defects was naturally sought for from French sources. Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and his English followers, adopting the principles of the French classicists, applied them to the reformation of the English theatre. Hence arose a great revival of respect for the neo-classic doctrines, e.g. regard for the unities of time, place and action, attention to the proprieties of sentiment and diction and to the qualities like harmony, proportion, balance and restraint.

Addison wrote Cato (1713) on the neo-classic model. James Thomson (1700-1748) followed him with his Sophonisba (1730) which was classically conceived with insistence on the Unity of time and place. But it hardly makes an inspiring reading. His Agamemnon (1738) depends for its effect on translating ancient myth into naturalistic psychology. Thomson might have been influenced by Thomas Rymer (1641-1713) whose sketch for an English play, modelled on Aeschylus' Persae, to be called The Invincible Armado, illustrates at once his superficial interest in the simplicity of Greek drama, and his total unawareness of the tragic implications. Samuel Johnson (1700-84) tried to awaken the tragic spirit with his Irene (1749) which was constructed on the neo-

classic model. Thomas Godfrey's The Prince of Parthia (1765) was written in the strain of Addison's tragedy, but it is hardly of any poetical merit.

As neo-classical tragedies, both Addison's Cato and Johnson's Irene are interesting singletons and so deserve elaborate analysis.

B. Addison's Cato

The very significant thing that Addison did as a dramatist was that he overcame a certain corrupt tendency bequeathed by Restoration literature. It was the apparent aim of the low drama to make virtue ridiculous and vice attractive. Addison set himself squarely against this unworthy tendency. To strip off the mask of vice, to show its ugliness and deformity, but to reveal virtue in its own native loveliness — that was Addison's purpose.

Like most men of ability in his period, Addison's thoughts were drawn towards the stage. The thirty-ninth paper in the Spectator shows that Addison was out of sympathy with the traditions of English stage. He makes some interesting and useful remarks on tragedy mostly derived from ancient writers like Aristotle and Horace. His definition of tragedy is : "As a perfect Tragedy is the Noblest Production of Human Nature, so it is capable of giving the Mind one of the most delightful and most improving Entertainments".[2]

His conception of tragic hero is that of a virtuous man struggling with misfortune. Modern tragedies, he thinks, excel those of Greece and Rome in the intricacy and disposition of the fable, but fall short in the moral. He also notes that blank verse is more suitable than rhyme for English tragedy. Poetic justice in tragedy, in his view, is rather absurd and quite unnecessary. In The Spectator (No. 40) he writes that as the principal design of tragedy "is to raise Commiseration and Terrour in the Minds of the Audience, we shall defeat this great End, if we always make Virtue and Innocence happy and successful".[3] He is against tragi-comedy and so in his view there should be no double plots in tragedy, for in tragedy the grief of the audience does not change into another passion, while in tragi-comedies it is diverted upon another object which weakens their concern for the principal action, and breaks the tide of sorrow by throwing it into different channels. He, however, is of the opinion that there can be an under-plot in tragedy. Violent actions, deaths etc. should not be presented on the stage; such scenes should only be related to the audience. He writes that of all our methods of moving pity and terror, there is none so absurd and barbarous as the dreadful butchering of one another.

Addison worked with strict and conscious attention to his critical principles in his tragedy Cato.

Addison's tragedy deals with the last phase of the life of Marcus Porcius Cato, the republican, who is besieged in Utica by Caesar (46 B.C.). Addison's drama is one of Cato's stand for liberty

against the usurpation of Caesar. He is betrayed by Sempronius, a senator, and by Syphax, a Numidian ally, but faithfully supported by Juba, the Numidian prince and assisted by two of his sons, Marcus and Portius. Further resistance to Caesar being useless, Cato provides for the escape of his friends and takes his own life rather than surrender to the dictator. The plot is two-fold. Side by side with the study in public virtue and high politics, a drama of tender passion occupies the stage. A love interest is added to the play in the devotion of Juba to Cato's daughter Marcia. He romantically rescues her from the clutches of Sempronius in disguise and finds to his surprise that she has loved him all the time. Love-interest is also there in the rivalry of the two sons of Cato for the hand of Lucia, a rivalry resolved by the death of Marcus while bravely resisting the traitor Syphax.

But, Addison, while preparing to write the tragedy, had no intention of making a love-theme the centre of intellectual tragedy as had been the practice among his predecessors. His hero is Cato, the philosopher, a character whose nature and problems could obviously be revealed "more appropriately through the medium of rhetorical dialogue than could the nature and problem of passionate lovers and their mistresses".[4] About Addison's choice of his subject Nicoll writes, "Addison thus displayed his acumen in boldly striving to find a theme suited to the restricted sphere within which he chose to work".[5] Addison's choice was dictated by his desire "to present his classical theme according to the classical model. He was thus

following in the foot-steps of Ben Jonson instead of adopting the irregular mould of Shakespeare's Roman plays".[6]

Addison's central motive in his play is his conception that the essence of tragedy consists in the spectacle of a good man struggling with adversity. This is what Alexander Pope, in his famous Prologue, assigns to him as his chief praise:

> Here tears shall flow from a more generous cause,
> Such tears as patriot's shed for dying laws;...
> A brave man struggling in the storms of fate,
> And greatly failing with a falling state"[7]

Whatsoever be the praise of Addison in dealing with a falling state offering a tragic spectacle, the central motive of his play is but an idea that appeals to the instincts of reason, but not one that can be represented on the stage so as to move the passion of the spectrators. John Dennis in his Dennis' Remarks On Cato[8] writes that Cato's fall does not move us dramatically. The scenery of the Fifth Act, in which Cato appears upon the scene, sitting in a thoughtful posture with Plato's Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul in one hand and with a drawn sword on the table by him, seems to him (and reasonably so) improbable. He asks whether such a person as this would pass with them, who beheld him, for a great patriot, a great philosopher or a general, or some whimsical person who fancied himself all these and whether the onlookers would think that such a person had a design upon their "midrifs" or his own. After Cato gives himself the mortal wound in his bed-chamber he

is brought back into the hall to expire "partly to show his good-breeding"[9], saving his friends "the trouble of coming up to his bed-chamber".[10] All this appears incredible and shows the weakness of Addison's sense of the dramatic. Cato's fall is largely due to the usurpation of Caesar, and so, though it may give rise to the feeling of pity in us, it never evokes the feeling of terror. Dr. Johnson is right in his observation that "nothing here [in the play] excites or assuages emotion", that "here is no magical power of raising the phantastick terror or wild anxiety."[11] The events are expected without solicitude, and are remembered without joy or sorrow.

H.V. Routh criticises the play by saying, "... in the consecrated form of a Roman tragedy, the public enjoyed that grandiose, if unsubstantial projection of character which they admired in Milton, together with the sentimental chivalry of a French romance".[12] Bonamy Dobree notes the gravity of the subject in the following words, "Romanism and liberty—those are the themes that support the action, the old Romanism of heroic suicide, of baring the naked breast of the knife, of prowess in the pursuit of savage beasts, of self-immolution in the country's cause".[13] Addison is faithful to the taste of the public and to his subject, no doubt. But the characters, he has drawn, are all lifeless. Dr. Johnson's comment in this connection is worth quoting: "Of the agents we have no care; we consider not what they are doing, or what they are suffering; we wish only to know what they have to say. Cato is a being above our solicitude; a man of whom the gods take care, and whom we leave to their care with heedless

confidence. To the rest, neither gods nor men can have much attention; for there is not one amongst them that strongly attracts either affection or esteem".[14]

Notwithstanding these bits of adverse criticism, we have to admit that in Cato Addison attempts to portray a perfect exemplar of Stoic virtue, and in this, as Boas notes[15], Addison was, most possibly, influenced by George Chapman who did a similar thing in the figure of Clermont d' Ambois in his play, The Revenge of Bussy d' Ambois. A man of strict discipline, Cato is a patriot and a philosopher. Juba speaks of him as

> "the man that bears affliction,
> Great and majestic in his griefs ...
> With what strength, what steadiness of mind,
> He triumphs in the midst of all his sufferings".[16]

Addison's Cato has not only "drunk from the pure milk of Stoic doctrine"[17]; the noblest spirit of the Roman Republic dwells in him as well. Juba describes him in the following words:

> There may'st thou see
> To what god-like height,
> The Roman Virtues lift up mortal man,
> While good, and just, and anxious for his friends,
> He's still severely bent against himself
> Renouncing sleep, and rest, and food and ease;
> He strives with thrift and hunger, and toil and heat,
> And when his fortune sets before him all,
> The pomps and pleasures that his soul can wish,
> His rigid virtue will accept of none".[18]

Portius speaks of his father more eloquently:

> "His sufferings shine, and spread a glory round him;
> Greatly unfortunate, he fights the cause
> Of honor, virtue, liberty and Rome.
> His sword n'er fell, but on the guilty head;
> Oppression, tyranny, and power usurp'd".[19]

Marcus finds in Cato "an epitime of Roman greatness".[20]

The truth of this is best exemplified when Caesar's envoy, Decius arrives to greet Cato as the second of mankind. Cato retorts:

> "I know thou look'st on me, as on a wretch,
> Beset with ills, and cover'd with misfortunes;
> But by the Gods I swear millions of worlds,
> Should never buy me to be like that Caesar".[21]

When Marcus loses his life in the revolt of the Numidian troops and his body is borne in, Cato welcomes it:

> "How beautiful is death, when earn'd by virtue
> Who would not be that youth! What pity is it
> That we can die but once to serve our country!"[22]

Again he says,

> "Alas, my friends!
> Why mourn you thus? let not a private loss,
> Afflict your hearts.
> 'Tis Rome requires our tears".[23]

Dennis thinks that the way in which Cato receives the account of his son's death is unnatural. Again he says, "Cato receives the news of his son's death not only with dry eyes, but with a sort

of satisfaction; and in the same page sheds tears for the calamity of his country, and does the same thing in the next page upon the brave apprehension of the danger of his friends. .. Now does it not follow that for a man to receive the news of his son's death with dry eyes, and to weep at the same time for the calamities of his country, is a wretched affectation, and a miserable inconsistency?"[24] We should support Dennis but at the same time we should bear in mind that here the patriot in Cato is welcoming the sacrifice of his son.

Addison's Cato, like Chapman's, takes refuge from a self-sought death in a vision of immortality, though this found no part in the stoic creed.

In ultimate analysis, the character of Cato is "an abstraction round which a number of other figures are skilfully grouped for the delivery of lofty and appropriate sentiments".[25] Juba, the virtuous young prince of Numidia, is an admirer of Cato's virtues:

> "While Cato lives, Caesar will blush to see
> Mankind enslav'd, and be asham'd of empire".[26]

Almost half of his utterances in the play are in praise of Cato's virtues. Among the other characters Portius and Marcus are Cato's virtuous sons. Both of them are in love with Lucia but none appears as a sincere and deeply passionate lover with the warmth of his heart. Marcia is Cato's virtuous daughter. Juba describes her nature with some sort of acuteness:

"The virtuous Marcia tow'rs above her sex !
True, she is fair (oh how divinely fair !)
But still the lovely maid improves her charms
With inward greatness, unaffected wisdom ..."[27]

Sempronius is an unparalleled knave who is also seen to act like an egregious fool in his venture to carry off Marcia by force. "All the characters", Courthope observes, "— the distracted lovers, the good young man, Juba, and the conspirators seem to be oppressed with an uneasy consciousness that they have a character to sustain and are not confident of coming up to what is expected of them".[28] This is mostly evident in the case of Portius whose futile attempts to unite the qualities of stoical fortitude, fraternal loyalty and romantic passion make him almost a comic character.

To the modern taste the plot of the play is full of absurdities. And it is due to the undramatic bent of Addison's mind. Courthope observes that "whenever he [Addison] contrives a train of incident he manages to make it a little absurd".[29] John Dennis has pointed out some of the absurdities of the play. One of the absurdities relates to the conspiracy-bid between Sempronius and Syphax in the Governor's hall with the victims of the conspiracy close at hand. Dennis writes, "There would be no probability that they should meet there, because there would be places more private and more commodious".[30] Another of the absurdities relates to the venture of Sempronius to carry Marcia off the palace. He goes in full day in Juba's clothes, and with Juba's guards, to Cato's palace in order to pass for Juba — in

a place where they are both so well known. He meets Juba there and resolves to murder him with his own guards. Juba, instead, kills him, and takes his own army prisoners, and carries them in triumph away to Cato. Upon hearing the clash of swords, Lucia and Marcia come in. No man, not the Governor, nor even the guards or servants appear. Marcia takes Sempronius for Juba and falls a-raving owning her passion for the supposed defunct and begins to make his funeral oration. Now, Juba enters listening. Dennis, in this connection, puts an intelligent question: "how comes Juba to listen here, who had not listened before throughout the play? Or, how comes he to be the only person of his tragedy who listens, when love and treason were so often talked in so public a place as a hall?"[31] All these absurdities are the consequences of Addison's conscientious adherence to the unity of place, whereby every species of action in the play, love-making, conspiracy, debating, and fighting is made to occur in the large hall in the Governor's palace of Utica.

There ought to be nothing in a tragic action but what is necessary and probable. The quarrel and rage of Juba and Syphax in Act II, the invectives of Syphax against the Romans and Cato, the advice that he gives Juba in her father's hall to bear away Marcia by force and his brutal rage upon his refusal at a time when Cato or his guards are scarce out of sight, is a thing so far from being probable. The design of Sempronius to carry on conspiracy with Syphax against Cato, his country and his family in the Governor's hall is absurd. There would be no probability that they should meet there, because there would be places more private.

The play has many fine descriptive passages, the best part of which, perhaps, occurs in the dialogue between Syphax and Juba respecting civilised and barbarian virtues. But the play lacks in action. Courthope correctly points out, "... in all those parts of the poem where action and not ornament is demanded, we seem to perceive the work of a poet who was constantly thinking of what his characters ought to say in the situation, rather than of one who was actually living with them in the situation itself. Take Sempronius' speech to Syphax describing the horrors of the conspirator's position".[32]

About the avoidance of violent deeds and horrors on the stage, Addison observes : "I would ... recommend to my countrymen the practice of the ancient poets, who were very sparing of their public executions, and rather chose to perform them behind the scenes, if it could be done with as great an effect upon the audience. At the same time I must observe, that though the devoted persons of the tragedy were seldom slain before the audience, which has generally something ridiculous in it, their bodies were often produced after their death which has always in it something melancholy or terrifying; so that the killing on the stage does not seem to have been avoided only as an indecency, but also an improbability"[33]. True to his dictum, Addison in his tragedy, does not allow the murder of Marcus and the suicide of Cato to take place on the stage, but these violent deeds are duly reported to the audience.

The love-scenes in the play add to the romantic strain. These scenes are added to comply with the popular taste. Actually the removal of these scenes would make the play barren of incident.

So we cannot support Dr. Johnson when he remarks, "The greatest weakness of the play is in the scenes of love".[34]

Both Portius and Marcus are in love with Lucia. Lucia favours Portius. Portius knows this but Marcus is in dark about his brother's affair with Lucia. Lucia, however, is disturbed at the thought of causing a quarrel between the brothers. She fears that her union with Portius may destroy Marcus. She, therefore, bids farewell to Portius who denounces her as a cruel maid. When Marcus learns that Lucia cannot offer him love, he seeks for death to relieve him and he is soon killed in the mutiny of the Numidian guards. Thus Lucia is released from her vow and is united with Portius. In an another love-plot, Marcia is loved by Juba and she loves him in return but has to hide her feeling because

> "While Cato lives, his daughter has no right
> To love or hate, but as his choice directs".[35]

When Juba seeks to begin his suit for her, Cato bids him adieu. Syphax, the Numidian general, offers to carry her off by his swift horsemen, but Juba indignantly rejects the plan. Marcia has another wooer of a vile type in Sempronius who loses his life while trying to carry Marcia off in the guise of Juba. Marcia gives voice to her grief taking Sempronius' dead body for Juba's,

Juba listening, is enraptured:

"This this is life indeed !"[36]

Boas thinks that the love-scenes have destroyed the unity of action in the play. He writes, "Instead of concentrating the main interest on the figure of Cato, he [Addison] went near to making this subsidiary to the love-affairs of his sons and daughters".[37] There is no doubt that the critic is right in his observation.

With "a scrupulosity almost unexampled on the English stage"[38], Addison confined himself in time to a single day, and in place to rigorous unity. The play contains 'a reversal of intention' and a 'recognition'. There is also the use of a herald in Addison's play.

Cato abounds in crisp and quotable epigrams, some of which may be referred to:

(a) "The ways of Heaven are dark and intricate
Puzzled in mazes and perplexed with errors".[39]

(b) "Love is not to be reason'd down or lost
In high ambition".[40]

The play draws applause of the critics for excellent dialogue and declamation. Boas comments on the style of the play by saying, "... the limpid purity of style, though in a five-act play it tends to monotony in its cadence, has something of true classical quality".[41] Dr. Johnson writes, "The dialogue is too declamatory, of unaffecting elegance and chill philosophy".[42]

Voltaire praises Cato in the highest terms : "The first English writer who composed a regular tragedy and infused a spirit of elegance through every part of it was the illustrious Mr. Addison. His Cato is a masterpiece, both with regard to the diction and the harmony and the beauty of the numbers. The character of Cato is, in my opinion, greatly superior to that of Cornelia in the Pompey of Corneille, for Cato is great without anything fustion, and Cornelia, who, besides, is not a necessary character, tends sometimes to bombast".[43]

Looking at Cato from Voltaire's point of view, one has to admire much in the play. Cato affords a splendid exhibition of artificial and fictitious manners, and delivers just and noble sentiments, in diction easy, elevated and harmonious. But as a piece of literature, one has to admit, it cannot be compared with the great plays of the Greek dramatists or the best works of the Elizabethan English dramatists.

Cato is unquestionably the noblest production of Addison's genius. But it lacks dramatic quality. Dr. Johnson rightly observes, "... it is rather a poem in dialogue than a drama, rather a succession of just sentiments in elegant language, than a representation of natural affections, or of any state probable or possible in human life".[44] The hopes and fears of the characters of this play communicate no vibration to the heart. The composition refers us only to the writer. We pronounce the name of Cato, but we think of Addison.

Nicoll is categorical in his estimate of the play when he writes, "What could be done within the pseudo-classic form, Addison has done"[45]. Boas, however, thinks highly in terms of the play: "With its pure diction, its high purpose and its historic tradition, it might well be done of the stage classics to be given a performance in a National Theatre".[46] Bonamy Dobree's observations reflect a sound judgement: "... the language, in spite of the constriction of Addison's blank verse, has vigour; the people, you feel, mean what they say ; the dramatic tension is well maintained. Though not a great tragedy, it stands out remarkably from contemporary works in that genre. ... it is the only play in the period that is at all memorable, or has left any traces in the popular record in the form of common quotations".[47]

c. Dr. Johnson's Irene:

Addison's Cato furnishes a model to Dr. Samuel Johnson's (1709-84), Irene (1736). Johnson was a voracious reader of French literature, tragedy in particular. But his study of the Greek tragedy was very limited in range. In his essay on Milton he wrote, "... the bigotry of learning, that Milton could prefer the ancient tragedies, with their encumbrance of a chorus, to the exhibitions of the French and English stages, ..."[48] It shows that Greek tragedy did not occupy any significant place in his imagination.

Johnson, however, had a deep contact with the tragic dramas of Shakespeare, of Dryden and of his successors. His views on the

nature of tragic drama are expressed in his discussions on the drama closer to his time. He pronounces that there are three main requirements for tragedy : (1) it must be serious; (2) it must be pathetic in the sense of arousing the emotions of the audience and (3) it must be moral, instructing even as it delights.

Johnson defines tragedy in the Dictionary as a dramatic reproduction of a serious action. Tragedy, he tells us in the Preface, was not in those times (ancient times) a poem of general dignity or elevation than comedy; it required only a calamatious conclusion, with which the common criticism of that age was satisfied, whatever lighter pleasure it afforded in its progress. Johnson's observation shows that according to him, tragedy should have a heroic stature and at the same time it should be dignified, elevated and serious. Besides, it should employ elevated language and should not allow the use of excessively comic scenes. On the necessity of the Unities of Time and Place in tragedy Johnson's views are not orthodox. He thinks that the heights of empyrean poetry may despise the circumscriptions of terrestrial nature. Johnson expresses his views clearly and forcibly when he says that the Unities of Time and Place are not essential to a just drama, that though they may sometimes conduce to pleasure, they are always to be sacrificed to the nobler beauties of variety and instruction and that a play, written with nice observation of critical rules, is to be contemplated as an elaborate curiosity, as the product of superfluous and ostentatious art by which is shown, rather what is possible than what is necessary.

Neo-classical tragedy, whether French or English, assumed a certain remoteness in time and space that emphasized constant truths of human nature. Accordingly Johnson treats of a foreign subject in Irene. In it Johnson had transformed a savage story into a fable. Johnson's source was Richard Knolle's Historie of the Turkes. It is the story of Mahomet II, emperor of the Turks, a civilized and conscientious monarch; of his love for Irene, who betrays her country and her faith by the hope of becoming the empress and ultimately ruined; of Mahomet's attendants, Leontius and Demetrius who hit upon a conspiracy against him; and of the Greek captives.

The story, however, is not quite interesting to the audience. It does not unfold the sense of the tragic in human life, neither does it show Johnson's deep understanding of the tragedy in human life. In the original Mahomet is shown as an enlightened monarch whose passion provokes behaviour at variance with his refined sensiblity. But Johnson has done away with this side of Mahomet's nature and the drama, consequently, loses a powerful source of dramatic interest.

In order to sustain the interest of the audience, Johnson, however, brings in a remarkable degree of suspense in his play. The plot against Mahomet is hit upon by Leontius and Demetrius. Demetrius is distracted by love and so fails to suppress it in time. The conspirators, too, are not steady and fail to avail the opportunity. Leontius and Demetrius quarrel over who shall lead the attack, displaying the excess of their patriotic feeling. Abdalla grows jealous of Demetrius over the fair Aspasia.

Thus, their own jealousy adds to the unstable state of affairs.

It is consistent with this kind of plot, as rightly pointed out by Leopold Damrosch, that there should be little action, only "the constant threat of action".[49] And Irene lamentably lacks in action. The little action that is there is not fascinating as to draw the interest of the audience. In course of the action, the conspirators, Demetrius in the main, chafes at necessary delay. Cali, on the other hand, strives to hold everything together while "Fate lies crowded in a narrow space" (Act III, sc. VI). In the end, as so often in French neo-classical plays, "the action finally does break like a wave, and proves too powerful for either side to control".[50]

In Johnson's play, it is not the plot but the character which is of some importance. Johnson writes a kind of drama in which the essential action takes place in the mind of the characters. Here the focus is upon certain human beings who are trapped in a situation from which they try to find a honourable means of escape.

In order to bring into focus the psychology of his characters, Johnson adheres to the principle of unity of time in his play. This principle, in effect, condenses the psychological crises of a small group of characters into a single crucial moment in which their very natures are laid bare.

Irene is the central character of the play. She has left her country, her friends and her religion to become the empress.

In return she is fated by a series of mischances. Mahomet precipitates this crisis and agonises over it. He is depressed by the apprehension that Irene's conversion to his religion is not genuinely sincere. So he resolves, upon learning that he has unjustly commanded her death, "to quit the sceptre of dominion" (Act V, sc. xii) for ever. Aspasia and Demetrius analyse the morality of using dubious means to attain a desirable end, the liberation of Greece.

Irene is a tragic figure who is tormented by a sense of guilt in her conscience. She is guilty as she has tried to buy the emperor's clemency by betraying her Greek friends. She demands of Mahomet

"Who charges guilt on me?" (Act V, sc. vii)

Mahomet gives a stern reply:

"Who charges guilty?
Ask of thy heart; attend the voice of conscience
Who charges guilt ! " (Act V, sc. vii)

In so far as Irene genuinely exhibits this guilt, she is undoubtedly a tragic figure. Her soliloquy near the end of the play sounds an authentically tragic tone as she watches the happy bank that bears the Greeks to safety:

"While, I not yet familiar to my crimes,
Recoil from thought and shudder at myself"

(Act V, sc. vi)

The characters in Irene are, however, lifeless.[51] They, except intermittently, have no human existence. Their speeches vivify the action but beyond this they are not important so far as the expression of sentiment is concerned. In the prologue to Irene, Johnson declares his intention to reform the neo-classical play from the excess of heroic drama by means of simplicity in language and stage spectacles. But, in reality, Johnson retains the long speeches which are not marked by vitality and subtlety in Irene. They scarcely express emotional force. However, the speech of Aspasia describing her vision of the harem is of genuine feeling:

> "Soon shall the dire seraglio's horrid gates,
> Close like th' eternal bars of death upon thee
> Immur'd and buried in perpetual sloth
> That gloomy slumber of the stagnant soul ...
> There wear the tedious hours of life away
> Beneath each curse of unrelenting Heav'n
> Despair, and slav'ry, solitude and guilt".
> (Act III, sc. viii)

The dialogue, on the whole, is too declamatory, of unaffecting elegance and chill philosophy. One remembers the elevated language which Johnson saw as characteristic of tragedy and which pervades the tragedy of Irene.

Quite in the fashion of the neo-classical tragedies, Johnson has introduced a love-affair in his play between Mahomet and Irene. The emperor's mind is distracted by the pangs of love, but he is not a slave to passion. But love is not of Johnson's concerns in this play. He is more interested

in propagating moral ideas. His characters desist from the action demanded by the structure of the play and are found to disregard the passions which are supposed to rule them in order to expound doctrines. The speeches of the characters occasionally tend to become methodical lectures on moral issues.

Jonhson's Irene failed to draw the attention and admiration of the critics. Leopold calls it "boring", "undramatic" and "untragic".[52] Sir Paul Harvey characterises it as "a series of dialogues on moral themes".[53]

Irene certainly lacks dramatic vitality. It is not a reproduction of a serious action. The form has a dignity but the theme lacks in elevation and sublimity. It is "a kind of set exercise, a bookish and derivative work".[54] It fails because Johnson did not draw upon the deep understanding of the tragic in human life.

Conclusion

In the foregoing sections of this chapter an attempt has been made to examine the impact of Senecan drama on a few representative tragedies of the Elizabethan and Jacobean period and on two of the English neo-classical tragedies. In this concluding portion an attempt may be made to sum up the observations made on the said impact and to point out the definite contribution of Seneca to English tragedy.

The discussion shows that Seneca represented different dramatic impulses and traditions at different stages. The early English Senecan tragedies are all modelled on Seneca. But they are not academic tragedies meant for the readers. They are neither literary models issued by poets as part of a programme of literary reformation. These plays are destined solely for the stage and sumptuous performance thereon. Senecan model is chosen because it leads itself to the dignified revelry in splendid spectacular pomp. Seneca was thus important for lending theatricality to English tragedies at this stage.

Marlowe's tragedies show little specifically Senecan. However, in Tamburlaine we find the touches of the Herculean hero. Marlowe places his hero in the tradition of Renaissance Senecanism, a stance of self-sustained defiance. Tamburlaine's rhetoric also finds significant common ground with Senecan rhetoric as the language of the declarations of self-will. The self-defiance of Marlowe's heroes, however, is of a higher pitch than Seneca's protagonists. Marlowe's protagonists rebel against

orthodoxy, but they do not do so as they please. As Stephen Greenblatt[1] observes, their acts of negation not only conjure up the order they would destroy but seem at times to be themselves conjured up by that very order.

The decade between 1580 and 1590 shows a distinct revival of the Senecan influence. The most important influence of Seneca during this period is found in the popular drama of which Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy is the representative work. The Elizabethan spectator had strong nerves and demanded that they be played upon. There was hotness of blood around him and he called for it on the stage. Seneca was thus historically important for affecting the type of the plot and for encouraging the taste for the foreign, remote and exotic. In The Spanish Tragedy a thoroughly Italianate Seneca has been further developed by English adoption and naturalisation.

Shakespeare's is a rival conception of tragic form and a rival magnificence of execution if compared with Seneca. But nobody would contend that Shakespeare is not influenced by and does not give voice to the doctrines of both Aristotle and Seneca. It is certain that in treating various subjects Shakespeare followed a Senecan pattern.

Chapman's vision of human affairs was stoic. In order to get success on the popular stage he drew on the Senecan horrors and witchcraft. But he, at the same time, sought to educate the spectators to more lofty pleasures of neo-classical drama. And

the result was that no proportion was sustained.

Jonson wanted to make Seneca both classically pure and theatrically attractive to a popular audience. But his tragedies suffer from their divided purpose. They grow unwieldly under the attempt to reconcile neo-classic convention to the very different convention of Elizabethan popular drama.

Plays based on French Seneca were closet dramas written for the enjoyment of a coterie. The direct influence of Seneca's muse was retained in these plays. But they failed to combine art and diversion and so met failure.

The Jacobean and Caroline dramatists remembered Seneca not as the source of theatrical themes and tricks. But they were influenced by Seneca's thought. They were also fascinated by states of extreme suffering and by stoic virtues which they found in Seneca's tragedies.

Both Addison's Cato and Dr. Johnson's Irene share, by and large, the characteristics of a neo-classical tragedy. But these are the products of scholars' learning and not of dramatists' geniuses.

It shows that Seneca exercised a profound influence on Elizabethan tragedy. The same has been variously estimated by the critics.

J.A.K. Thomson writes, "... no scholar doubts that it [the influence] was very great.[2] There are critics, however, who minimise the

importance of Seneca in English drama, like Howard Baker in Induction to Tragedy and G.K. Hunter in 'Seneca and the Elizabethans'. The arguments are mainly directed to suggesting alternative origins in the classics or medieval tradition for theatrical conventions. Among the recent critics, Braden[3] does not think that Seneca's influence be called profound. He argues that the real case for Elizabethan Senecanism rests on a few generic features and matters of technique, a certain sense of mood and feeling, and primarily a general wash of sentiments and topoi that can be called Senecan. However, the indebtedness of the Elizabethans to Seneca cannot be thus dismissed.

Cunliffe[4] is among the first of the critics to hold that Seneca exercised a salutary and profound influence on English tragedies. He observes that what English tragedy would have been without the example of Seneca, it is hard to imagine. To Charlton[5] Seneca was important for being the great store-house of tragic material for the Elizabethans. According to him Seneca's importance lies also in the fact that he gave examples of dramatic technique and of devices of stage craft and furnished an unmatchable model of stichomythic dialogue. F.L. Lucas gives weight to Senecan influence in the matters of structure and outlook. In his words, "... in him [Seneca] they [the Elizabethans] found again ... the classic sense of form and structure, of unity; in him the tragic splendour of Human Will in the face of eyeless Destiny, the tragic terror of wild passion, the terror of madness; the terror of the world beyond the grave —— something of the grace, the greatness, and the sadness of the Greek, something of

that divine fire still quickening the Roman clay".[6] Gilbert Highet[7] believes that it was Seneca who stimulated the Elizabethan dramatists to the tremendous outbursts of pride and passion. From him they took certain characters, attitudes and devices which were new and valuable to them. Fredson Bowers in his discussion of Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy observes, "Elizabethan observers following the Senecan conception, agreed in describing scenes of violence and blood as the essentials of English tragic plot, with correspondingly blood-thirsty and vicious persons for the characters".[8] Harding Craig's[9] observation is that Seneca had taught dramatists what to say in certain serious or tragic situations and what tone or style to use. T.S. Eliot[10] contends that the Elizabethan Tragedy of Blood is very little Senecan. He, however, holds that Senecan influence on Elizabethan dramatic verse was great and that the establishment of blank verse as the vehicle of drama received considerable support from its being obviously the nearest equivalent to the solemnity and weight of Senecan iambic.

In discussing Senecan influence on early English tragedies we should bear in mind that the Elizabethans were far from occupying themselves with the formulation of ideas of tragedy on the basis of their reading in Senecan tragedies. But the re-discovery of Senecan drama during the 1560 gave to the word clear implications of theatrical form. The best way to appreciate what Seneca did for English drama at the initial stage is to think of the medieval drama which he helped so much to supersede. The medieval drama tended to be formless and the ideas it contained were few

and of an elementary simplicity. Seneca brought a change for the better. Senecan tragedies did lend a precision and form to the incoherent native drama by creating a neat five-act structure with deliberate balance and movement from act to act, by bestowing the sense of the dignity of person and loftiness of utterance, and by providing a closer attention to the portrayal of character and a telling disposition of incident. It was Seneca who stimulated the Elizabethan dramatists to the tremendous outbursts of pride and passion. Boldness and freedom of thought in Elizabethan drama was definitely a gift of Seneca's stoicism. Seneca also established a preference for an atmosphere of Ovidian romance and splendour, laden with the wonders of the Orient and the wonderful glamour of contemporary Italy, to weave round stories of thrilling sexual passion engendering horrible crime. More importantly Seneca raised the intellectual level of the drama. In point of style the influence of Seneca was also profound. He taught correctness — impeccable grammar, impeccable metre, in neither of which English native drama was found strong. Seneca's influence upon the language, too, was unquestionable. He taught the English dramatists that a tragedy must be composed in language of appropriate grandeur. The language of Elizabethan drama was enriched by quotations from Seneca. Seneca also furnished a model of the rence of words in stichmythic dialogue and of their sparkle in crystalled proverb. The essentials of the declaimed verse of the Elizabethans and their bombast can also be traced back to Seneca. Seneca's epigrammatic aphorisms had also an astonishing vogue in Elizabethan drama. Senecan influence on Elizabethan dramatic verse was also great,

and as Eliot[11] has observed, the establishment of blank verse as the vehicle of drama received considerable support from its being obviously the nearest equivalent to the solemnity and weight of Senecan iambic.

It should, however, be kept in mind that Seneca was not the only force acting upon the English drama of the time. There were many other influences simultaneously active like the morality plays, the chronicles, Lydgate, Italian 'novella' and the Mirror for Magistrates. Senecan influence, however, did not clash with the native tradition, but it fused with this tradition.

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C H A P T E R IV

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T H E A T T I C M O D E L

CHAPTER IV

English Plays on the Attic Model

1. Introduction:

The influence of Seneca on English tragedy long preceded any distinct effect produced by Greek classical tragedy. The classical stimuli acting upon English Renaissance tragedy were not the Greeks but Seneca, as we have already noted. The reasons for the neglect of Greek drama, were, first, the extreme difficulty of its thought and language; second, the superior attraction of the flashier Seneca; third, the existence of handy Latin translation.[1]

Very few English versions of Greek plays were made during the Renaissance. George Peele (1558-98) is said to have translated one of the Euripidean plays on Iphigenia but the same is lost. The only published translation was Jocasta which purports to be a rendering of the Phoenissae of Euripides, but is, in truth, a rearrangement of the Greek tragedy by the Italian Lodovico Dolce.

John Pikeryng in The History of Horestes (1567-68), Thomas Heywood in The Iron Age (about 1613) and Dekker in Orestes Furious (1599), however, treated of the Orestes story.

The last one is lost. The other two plays are badly handicapped by the authors' ignorance of the Greek originals. Thomas Goffe's academic tragedy Orestes (1623) presents the Orestes story, taken from Seneca. Goffe's play is full of horrors and bloody incidents and is devoid of the Greek spirit. The Samson Agonistes (1671) of John Milton was the first tragedy in English to be confessedly written on the model of classical Greek tragedy.

Milton believed that tragedy was, and always had been, "the gravest, moralest and most profitable of all other poems".[2] He was critical of "the modern 'tragi-comic' error of intermixing comic stuff with tragic sadness and gravity".[3] In his puritanical way he thought that the English stage had become immoral, and that Shakespeare and the other great dramatists of his generation had been wrong in not following classical models. Milton believed that the perfect drama was the Greek drama. He observes, "... Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, the three tragic poets unequalled yet by any, and the best rule to all who endeavour to write tragedy".[4] He was thinking highly of the achievement of the ancient Greeks in the field of tragedy when he wrote;

"Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of Arts ...
Thence what the lofty grave tragedians taught
In chorus or Iambic, teachers best
Of moral prudence, with delight receiv'd
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life,
High actions, and high passions, best describing".[5]

Milton was not only a serious student of Greek drama ; Gilbert Highet considers him to be the only poet in England who "knew and assimilated all the three Greek tragedians".[6] Because of his life-long saturation in Greek classics and his own artistic and religious temper he was very naturally led to write a tragedy in the Attic style.

P.B. Shelley (1792-1822) was not primarily a dramatist. But he was equally interested in Attic tragedy. During his stay in Italy (1818-1819) the Greek tragedians were his "most familiar companions".[7] Gilbert Highet observes, "Like Milton, Shelley read and re-read the classics, until phrases, images, ideas, characters, scenes, entire conceptions from them became part of his own thought".[8] Mrs. Shelley holds a similar view: "In reading Shelley's poetry we often find similar verses, resembling, but not imitating the Greek ... for, though he adopted the style, he gifted it with that originality of form and colouring which sprung from his own genius".[9] In the Preface

to Hellas Shelley wrote, "We are all Greeks. Our laws, our literature, our religion, our arts have their root in Greece".[10] His great love for Greece is also manifest in what he said in his Discourse on the Manners of the Ancients. The heritage of Greek art and thought was a spiritual reality to Shelley. Of his feelings towards the Greeks of antiguity, Shelley wrote to Peacock, "I am too jealous of the honour of the Greeks, our masters and creators, the Gods when we should worship".[11]

Shelley had a great reverence for Aeschylus. "The sublime majesty of Aeschylus filled him with wonder and delight",[12] Mrs. Shelley notes. She further observes, "... the interest on which he [Aeschylus] founds his dramas is often elevated above human vicissitudes into the mighty passions and throes of gods and demi-gods; such fascinated the abstract imagination of Shelley".[13] Shelley was also drawn by the romantic daring of Aeschylus. Being pre-classical, Aeschylus had less restraint and his passions and emotions found outlet in his dramas. In his Prometheus we have the daring of an age that has not yet been frightened. In the time of Aeschylus people were still looking forward to the powers of the human intellect, to reason and free enquiry, as the great emancipators. No wonder that the author of The Necessity of Atheism was so attracted to his daring spirit.

Shelley admired Aeschylus' eloquence — the complex rhythms of his choruses, the profound spiritual meaning underlying his tragedies, his long bravura descriptions, the skill with which he forms new words and phrases to express almost inexpressible and the grand imagination which produced vast plots and super-human characters. In The Wandering Jew, which Shelley and Medwin wrote when they were boys, the epigraph to the fourth canto was Aeschylus' the Eumenides (146f). Shelley translated Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus to Byron in 1816 and to Medwin in 1820-21.

According to Mrs. Shelley[14], Sophocles was Shelley's great master in the species of imagery. Shelley liked the Oedipus dramas, which he specially mentions in his preface to The Cenci, and Antigone, whose heroine resembles Beatrice, the heroine of The Cenci.

For Euripides, Shelley cared less, but he translated his Cyclops, the only complete satyr-play in existence.

Shelley was an enthusiastic admirer of the Attic dramatists, especially of Aeschylus, but he had no intention to naturalise Greek tragedy in English in the manner of Milton. His Hellas (1822) is modelled upon the Persae of Aeschylus, but it is, in the main, a lyrical drama and a fragment. In

Prometheus Unbound (1820) Shelley wrote his own version of what happened when Prometheus was unbound. It is Shelley's response in terms of modern revolutionary idealism to Aeschylus' grim tragedy of Prometheus in chains.

Matthew Arnold is less dogmatic than Milton but his motives are not dissimilar when he wrote Merope (1858) on the Attic model. He himself has stated why he tried to reproduce in his language the form of classical Greek tragedy : "I have long had the strongest desire ... to try to obtain through the medium of a living, familiar language a fuller and more intense feeling of that beauty, which, even when apprehended through the medium of a dead language, so powerfully affected me".[15] In his essay, 'The choice of subjects in Poetry', Arnold points out why he gives greater value to Greek art: "With them [The Greek Poets] the poetical character of action in itself was the first consideration; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images ... They regarded the whole; we regard the parts. With them the action predominates over the expression of it; with us, the expression predominates over the action... They are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the grand style; but their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence; because it is so simple and subordinated; because it draws its force directly from the

pregnancy of the matter which it conveys".[16] In his Preface to 1853 Volume of Poems Arnold boldly asserted the importance of the Greek heritage. Shelley and Keats, he felt, were mere style and form seekers. Both of them had exuberance of expression, the charm, the richness of images, which, in his opinion, did not constitute great poetry. He, therefore, developed a pattern, a passion for the architectonics. He affirmed 'the all-depends-upon-the subject' theory.

As the Preface to Merope shows Arnold desired to try how much of the effectiveness of the form of the Greek tragedies he could retain in an English poem constructed under the conditions of that form. He knew fully well that what he aspired to reproduce derived its characteristics and drew its inspiration and nutrient from a past world which could not be recalled, yet he believed in the permanence of the Beautiful, whether expressing itself in form or in idea.

A.C. Swinburne wrote two plays on the Greek model, Atalanta in Calydon (1865) and Erechtheus (1876). In his case the reasons for imitating Greek tragedies were something different from those working behind Arnold. In them he admired "a loveliness and a dignity"[17] which were less common in contemporary life. In these works of "noble gestures and

princely words"[18], he felt at home and from them he derived much that was best in his poetry. He sought " an essential poetry, an indefinable essence"[19]. Swinburne had a profound knowledge of the Greek stage, and the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles. He liked the Greeks as a people; he loved their civilisation and accepted ancient Greece as his true spiritual home.

Swinburne had an unbounded admiration particularly for Aeschylus and knew most of his plays by heart. He thought the Oresteia, on the whole, to be "the greatest spiritual work of men"[20]. With his intense and profuse gusto for the Greek classics, he was deeply immersed in the poetry of the ancients. In a letter to W. M. Rossetti on August 21, 1875, Swinburne wrote that all Greek subjects, historic and mythical, national or spiritual were of universal and lasting import in a sense and to a degree in which this could be said of no others, ancient or modern.

In the tragic plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles, Swinburne found the greatest truths about life and the world, about man's fate and the nature of the gods and the universe, summed up once for all. He adored the way in which the defiant and dauntless heroes of the Aeschylean drama fought and met glorious death by accepting the tyrannical decrees of gods or fate with unfailing pride.

Swinburne was professedly Aeschylean and his admiration for Sophocles was hardly less great. But he disliked the Sophist Euripides, detesting his stoicism and scepticism as well as his realism. He wrote to a friend, "... it is easier to overtop Euripides by the head and shoulder than to come up to the waist of Sophocles or to the knee of Aeschylus"[21]. Yet he knew his plays well and liked parts of them. He also shared his ethical outlook.

Swinburne himself stated that his plan was to do something original in English which might in some degree reproduce for the English readers the likeness of a Greek tragedy with something of its true poetic life and charm. Swinburne did not think high of Arnold's Merope. In a letter to Lady Trevelyan on March 15, 1865, he wrote, "Shelley's Prometheus is magnificent and unrivalled, spoilt too, in my mind, by the infusion of philanthropic doctrinaire views and 'progress of the species'. As for Professor Arnold's Merope, the clothes are well enough but where has the body gone? So I thought, and still think, the field was clear for me".[22]

2. Samson Agonistes — Milton's Indebtedness to Greek tragedy.

A. Introduction:

Of all the English poets, John Milton (1608-1674) is one with steadfast will and purpose, of action and contemplation, of moral earnestness and defiant spirit. He is a poet who lived and thought consciously in a sublime atmosphere. Christian and Humanist, Protestant, patriot and heir to the golden ages of Greece and Rome, he faced what appeared to him to be the birth-pangs of a new and regenerate England with high excitement and idealistic optimism in the rule of Cromwell.

But the Restoration of Charles II to the throne of England in 1660 crushed Milton's vision of a reformed and regenerate England. All his labours and sacrifices for humanity were apparently wasted, as the first act of this very monarch was to set his foot upon his people's neck. The repudiation by the English people of their priceless chance to achieve national regeneration was for him a tragedy dark enough to overshadow all his later life, which saw the publication of his sole tragedy, Samson Agonistes (1671).

Samson Agonistes also expresses Milton's state of mind at the time of writing. Between 1664 and 1674 the story of Milton's life is highly tragic. During this period Milton not only wrote a tragedy, but also lived it. The suffering of more than one kind was in the store for him — political, domestic, physical and on top of that the anguish of his spirit. Totally blind and absolutely frustrated,

Milton faced the Restoration which only added to his sufferings. After 1660, he had the feeling of being surrounded on all sides by his erstwhile enemies, the Royalists, now in powers, crowing over his helplessness, abusing him and spreading in a very mean manner calumny about him. His domestic life was equally miserable. The attending ailments of age simply grew with the passing of years and added to his mental agonies. The poverty that overtook him after the Restoration and clung to him till his death was another of his burdens. He had during the period a certain amount of friction too with his daughters by his first wife, at whose mercy he was when he was blind.

There is a close parallel between the careers of Samson and Milton. Milton's blindness, his life of temperance and abstemiousness, characteristics of a Puritan, his unhappy marriage, his championship of the Puritan cause, his hopes crushed and his faculties drooping — all are referred to in the character of Samson. Such resemblances, at times, heighten the poignancy of the drama. Milton's choice of the tragic form was, therefore, deliberate. "The writing of a tragedy", observes R.B. Sewall, "is the artist's way of taking action, of defying destiny, and this is why in the great tragedies there is a sense of the artist's own involvement, and immediacy".[1] Milton as a classicist tries to write objectively, but he is revealed even to a superficial observer. Nevertheless, Milton's play far transcends personal and particular facts. Its living power is in its direct and searching treatment of human

experience, the hard struggle of humility, integrity and faith against pride, sin, misery and despair.

The last works of Milton show a greater fusion of the Hellenic and the Hebraic and the Renaissance and Reformation elements. It was the presence of the Hellenic element that made him the very opposite of the narrow-minded Puritan fanatics of his day. Milton's poetry, which is marked by sublimity of thought and of style, has justly been said to be the best substitute in English for the masterpieces of classical poetry. He alone, among the English poets, has the perfect art and the classical spirit of the ancient Greek masters. His very egoism takes a high classical turn. In his blindness he compares himself with

> "Blind Thamyris and blind Maeonides
> And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old"
>
> (Paradise Lost, Bk.iii, Ll35-36)

Milton's classical bent is evident in (1) his choice of classical and semi-classical forms — such as the epic, the Greek tragedy, and the pastoral; (2) the elaborate descriptions and enormous similes in Paradise Lost; (3) the fondness for classical allusions which runs riot through all the poetry; (4) the dignity of style, and its precision and care.

Milton's Comus does not profess to be a tragedy or to follow any Greek model. It is a 'Mask'. But it is the work of one, deeply versed in Greek drama, especially in the Hippolytus of Euripides. Milton was very much drawn to the stichomythia of

Greek tragedy — the sequence of single lines exchanged between speakers. This is imitated in Comus, as in the following lines:

> "Comus. What chance good Lady hath bereft you thus?
> Lady. Dim darkness, and this leavy Labyrinth.
> Comus. Could that divide you from near-ushering guides?
> Lady. They left me weary on a grassie terf".[2]

Critics mostly agree on the point that Samson Agonistes is a pure re-creation of Greek tragedy. Milton shows complete mastery of form made possible by the firmness of his tragic design and the perfect assimilation of the matter of The Book of Judges.

B. Milton's Subject: How far Hellenic?

In the title of his drama, Milton follows Greek examples, such as those of Aeschylus in his Prometheus Vinctus and of Sophocles in Oedipus at Colonus. Samson Agonistes, in particular, recalls these two plays in so far as the hero is concerned. In both Samson Agonistes and Oedipus at Colonus, the heroes are blind, remain seated against a leafy background, and leave the stage to meet their end. Samson's torture and immense woe suggest Prometheus Vinctus by Aeschylus. The weakness that impairs Samson through a woman parallels the experience of Heracles in the Trachiniae of Sophocles.

As for the theme, Milton took his story from the great religious tradition of his race. The plot of Samson Agonistes, in outline, is this:

Samson, in the prison at Gaza, is visited by friends of his tribe, who form the chorus, and seek to comfort him; then by his old father, Manoa, who holds out the hope of securing his release, then by his wife Dalila, who seeks pardon and reconciliation, but being repudiated shows herself a manifest serpent in the end; then by Harapha, a strong man of Gath, who taunts Samson. He is finally summoned to provide amusement by feats of strength for the Philistine Lords who are celebrating a feast to Dagon. He goes, and presently a messenger brings news of their destruction and the death of Samson, by his pulling down of the pillars supporting the roof of the palace wherein they were.

The incidents of Milton's drama are based upon the 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th chapters of the Book of Judges. The story of Samson, as told in Judges, is consistent with the tone of the Greek Tragedy. W.R. Parker says that Samson has an 'Athenian stamp'[3]; his behaviour reminds us at times of Hercules or the aged Oedipus but his background is 'Jewish'.[4] R.C. Jebb, in unambiguous terms, comments that Samson Agonistes has the form of a Greek tragedy, but its inspiration, like its subject, is "far more Hebraic than Hellenic".[5] He indicates that as Milton was, by temperament, a puritan of the higher type, the Hellenic cannot be said to have determined the pervading spirit of his work; that is rather Hebraic, or when it is not Hebraic, Latin.[6] J.A.K. Thomson also comments that though the style of Samson Agonistes is truly Greek, it should be distinguished from the spirit or sentiment of the play, which is often Hebraic and still more often simply Miltonic.[7]

It is to be noted that in Samson Agonistes, the Biblical story is taken in a truly Hellenic way. Parker, however, admits that it is difficult to say what the Hebraic spirit or the Hellenic spirit is. In analysing the tonal values of Greek tragedy Parker[8] mentions the more important marks which are seriousness, thoughtfulness, didactic quality and sublimity or elevation. He argues that these characteristics are present in Samson Agonistes, and therefore its Hellenism cannot be questioned.

Parker[9] further argues that even the Attic poets used to create really dramatic situation by spiritualising the old legend. Milton does not allow anything irrelevant to the central issue. He omits the details about Samson's birth. Another notable omission is the detail of Dalila's three attempts upon Samson's strength as it is ridiculous for a tragic hero. The Bible shows a Samson praying for strength, for revenge, but Milton makes him pray in silence keeping in mind the spiritual development of the protagonist. But the major change Milton works out in Samson is in the final act of the drama. Here Samson is God's champion — not a private individual to seek revenge. Aristotle leaves one in no doubt as to his preference for hamartia over mochtheria. But, by the very nature of the Biblical legend, Samson's tragedy is due to mochtheria rather than hamartia. Keenly aware of this inherent difficulty, Milton sets out, deliberately and consciously, to scale down Samson's moral failings and treat them as if his tragedy is due to a failure of judgement on his part in marrying the Philistine

women. The change in the Hebraic matter may better be explained in terms of Hellenic principles than personal poetic emotions as his self-identification with the hero plays a part in the ennobling of the hero.

Milton is true to the manner of Greek tragedy in beginning the play at a late stage in the history of Samson's life, when the temptation to pride and blame God has already been overcome. The plot, Parker very justifiably observes, is "Aeschylean in its freedom from elaboration, in its comparative paucity of action".[10]

William Brewer[11] in an article on Samson Agonistes goes so far as to say that Milton took his plot almost entirely from the Prometheus Bound of Aeschylus, and the Oedipus at Colonus of Sophocles. He argues that in composing Samson Agonistes, Milton took from the Bible only his chief characters and his catastrophe;

> the events which Milton presents before and after his catastrophe do not appear in the Bible, and none of them follow necessarily from anything narrated there. However, the fact is that though Milton took his story from the great religious tradition of his race, he allowed, in deference to the needs of Hellenic tragedy, his Puritanism to be tempered by his classical scholarship and taste.

C. The Hero and the Catharsis

Samson possesses the essential characteristics of the hero of a tragedy, as laid down by Aristotle. He is a good man but not

perfectly virtuous. Neither is he deliberately vicious. But while possessing heroic virtues, he is, at the same time, subject to human frailty (his yielding to Dalila). The hamartia or tragic flaw in his character is pride as well as uxoriousness. Presented to us in a fallen state, blinded, enslaved, in chains, ragged, unwashed, unshorn, his physical sufferings awaken the same kind of poetry that we feel for Philoctetes, when he appears in front of his cave in the wilderness, banished from society, suffering from an incurable wound, in which condition he has dragged a solitary existence for ten long years. Samson may not have an exalted rank and position but his spiritual loftiness makes him exalted and exceptional. He has been a Nazarite from birth, the consecrated deliverer of his people, a judge in Israel for twenty years, and single-handed, the scourge and terror of the hosts of Philistines. Samson also resembles Sophocles' Oedipus not only in character, but also in fate.

The many references to the hero's glorious past that we find in Milton's play are means to provoke our pity, and most of the last portion of the play is a conscious attempt to arouse fear. The chorus goes through these two emotions, and since the chorus approximates to our point of view as readers, we are further prompted to pity and fear. That Milton is later striving for a purgation of these emotions which he tried to stimulate is apparent from the two closing speeches. Manoa speaks of 'what may quiet us in a death so noble'. Then the final chorus rounds off with 'calm

of mind all passion spent'. These lines are more than expressions of the very doctrine of Catharsis; they are the very instruments of it. Dramatically appropriate in their context, they produce a calming effect. If we have been stirred by what has preceded, these two speeches, coming after the long narrative of the messenger and the choral ode of triumph, beautifully and quietly bring us down to earth. This kind of ending is characteristic of Milton. In most of the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, there is a similar relaxing of the tension. We leave the play with our minds in repose. The passions which had been aroused by the action of the play are turned down and a mood of quiet acceptance and resignation is induced. The play is truly cathartic; it soothes, consoles and strengthens in the tradition of the noblest Greek tragedy.

We pass through the storm of tragedy only to escape at the end into a sense of soothing serenity. The rest, we feel, is silence and peace. Milton who in the preface of his drama gives an accurate exposition of Aristotle's notion of catharsis sums it down neatly and beautifully in the last two lines of the play:

> "With peace and consolation hath dismist
> And calm of mind all passion spent ..."[12]

D. <u>The Formal Mould</u>:

<u>Samson Agonistes</u> can be analysed in a way which corresponds closely to Greek precedents:

Lines 1-114 constitute the Prologs. As in a Greek tragedy, this portion, in Milton's drama, is a part of the action of the play.

Lines 115-175 constitute the Parodos (or the first ode) sung by the chorus as they enter, and advance towards the orchestra.

Lines 176-292 are the first Epeisodion which consists of dialogue between two choral odes.

Lines 293-325 are the first Stasimon, sung by the chorus standing in its proper place in the orchestra.

Lines 326-651 are the second Epeisodion, of which Ll 326-331 announce, according to the custom of Greek tragedy, the approach of a personage on the scene.

Lines 652-709 are the second stasimon.

Lines 710-1009 are the third Epeisodion, of which Ll 710-731 announce a personage.

Lines 1010-1060 constitute the third stasimon.

Lines 1061-1267 are the fourth Epeisodion in which Ll 1061-1075 announce a personage.

Lines 1268-1300 constitute the fourth Stasimon.

Lines 1301-1426 are the fifth Epeisodion in which Ll 1301-1307 announce a personage.

Lines 1427-1440 constitute the fifth stasimon. Lines 1441 to the end constitute the Exodus or that part which has no choral ode after it, and which includes the Kommos (Ll 1660-1707) or the General Lamentation of the Chorus and the actors together.

Milton, therefore, in concluding the Exodus with a choral ode (Ll 1445 sq), and confining the dirge to the chorus, follows the example of Greek Tragedy.

Although Milton's Samson Agonistes has not the marvellous construction and subtle symmetry of Oedipus Tyrannus, the action of Milton's play, as shown by K.R.S. Iyengar[13], runs parallel to that of Sophocles' play.

The action in a Greek tragedy is complete in itself with a distinct beginning, middle and end. Dr. Johnson could not appreciate the action of Samson Agonistes as it seemed to him to be defective in as much as it had a beginning and an end but wanted a middle, since nothing passes between the first act and the last, that either hastens or delays the death of Samson (The Rambler, iii, 139). The reply to this criticism was furnished by Cumberland, (The Observer, iv, iii) who pointed out three passages (Ll 434-437; 468-71; 1250-52) that supply the requisite 'middle' — the first by announcing the festival in honour of Dagon, the second by prophesying the impending overthrow of this idol, and the confusion of his warriors, and the third by supplying an immediate motive for the catastophe in Harapha's malice. Thus the drama develops an 'entire' action.

W.P. Ker in his essay on Samson Agonistes says that the action of the drama between the beginning and the end is the passion of Samson. The action is in the changes of mind leading

on to the final victory. Ellis-Fermor, who deals with the Aristotelian middle of this play in greater detail in her The Frontiers of Drama, finds the action of the play in a profound psychological content.

But both the critics seem to miss the full significance of the 'middle'. The middle is the tension of a conflict caused by Dalila and Harapha. The conflict is, by no means, merely psychological; it gives rise to a tension of suspense on the external plane of action, for we feel that the insolence of Samson will not go unpunished. It is, in a sense, an allegory of temptation and purification, and its impact on the drama is tremendous. Both Dalila and Harapha are a mockery of Samson's unwise past; both of them are temptations to lure him back to his old weakness. Both the temptations are on the plane of the senses, and the conquest, which is purification, makes him fit for the last great fight for the cause of God.

Greek tragedy insists on the symmetry of action and frugality of expression. Some critics hold that in Samson Agoniestes, the third Epeisodion — Samson meeting with Dalila — is a violation of the principle of Greek tragedy. But this view is not correct. It materially contributes to the action of the drama. It reveals another Samson — a Samson, who is not going to be charmed by a woman's physical allurements. In fact, this is one of the most important episodes in the play as it awakens Samson from lethargy and prepares him for the final catastrophe. Besides, Milton laid

stress on the unity of action by subordinating characters to the central character. Concentration upon a single figure is, as Parker points out, thoroughly Aeschylean.[14]

The remarkable symmetry of the plot, as pointed out by Percival[15], is noticeable in the very Argument which falls into four parts : Samson as the sufferer bemoaning his lot : visits from friends (the Chorus and Manoah) who comfort him, and towards whom his manner and words are full of self-accusation and penitence: then visits from foes (Dalila and Harapha), who come to tempt and to insult him, and towards whom his manner changes into anger and defiance; lastly, Samson, as Agonistes, triumphing over his foes and dying.

The action of Samson Agonistes is great in a two-fold sense. The physical greatness of the action, i.e. the performance of deeds, is apparent in the action of the play. The moral greatness in the action consists in the sacrifice of one's own self for the sake of others. This ranks the drama with the action of Aeschylus' Prometheus Vinctus. In the case of Samson, the sacrifice is that of life itself, for the sake of God and country — religion and patriotism; in the case of Prometheus, it consists in the endurance of unutterable torment for the sake of the whole human race, universal philanthropy.

Percival[16] points out that the action of Samson Agonistes is probable. The deeds of Samson were recorded in scripture. Beside this absolute probability, there is relative probability

which requires that the action should be such as the circumstances of the case, and the characters of the chief personages would lead us to expect. The development of the plot in Samson Agonistes shows how well this requirement has been met.

Dr. Johnson points out (Rambler, iii, 139) that there is little action in Samson Agonistes, and action, as Aristotle insists, is the very soul of a drama. Action and progression there is, and in plenty, but the action is internal and not external, spiritual and not physical. It consists in Samson's conquest of various kinds of temptations which are offered to him, in his gradual movement towards regeneration and redemption through suffering. The interior action moves onward from Samson's fall through pride and temptation, to his consequent spiritual suffering and anguish, which ultimately results in his spiritual regeneration as shown by his absolute submission to the will of God.

In Samson Agonistes, the outer conflict is not so much in evidence as the inner conflict. As long as Samson doubts, as long as he questions, as long as he is out of harmony with God's will, he is not a fitting instrument of God's purpose. The spiritual conflict starts with the 23rd line of the prologue, and it is not over — until his calm dignified speech to the Philistine officer (Ll 1413-26); but his last in the play. Then his doubt is overcome; his arrogance and anger are past.

'Freedom within and Necessity without' are the two governing principles in the action of a Greek tragedy. They operate in

Samson Agonistes also. In the unconquerable spirit of Samson we recognise the freedom of the mind while the Necessity or Fate operates with inexorable uniformity upon God as upon the wicked.

Following in the foot-steps of the Greek masters, Milton has substituted the actual representation of the catastrophe by the narration of the messenger. Milton has avoided the actual representation of the catastrophe not only because the Greeks had done so, but because verisimilitude, dignity and the desire to focus attention not on the sensational event but on its dramatic significance, demanded it.

As for the unity of time and unity of place, Milton refers to the unity of time in his preface which beers an explanation and defence of the Greek tragedy by him. In Samson Agonistes, all the events occur within a day, i.e. a single circuit of the sun, as Aristotle insists. Though Aristotle does not mention the unity of place in The Poetics, it is strictly observed in Milton's drama, every scene being placed before the prison at Gaza; the catastrophe takes place outside in conformity with the principle of Greek tragedy that the enactment of violent deeds on the stage is prohibited.

The true conformity also lies in Milton's use of the chorus in Samson Agonistes. And, indeed, Milton was the first to introduce the true spirit of the classical Greek chorus in English literature.

As only the last phase of Samson's career is chosen for tragic treatment, the chorus in Milton's drama is used for

explaining the past, commenting on the present and speculating on the future course of action. The chorus, again, is a device for interpreting character and for conveying the feelings and ideas of an entire community. The chorus in Milton's drama is also a way of providing a running commentary on the drama itself quite in the Greek fashion. Serving as a link between the characters and the audience, it appears in the role of 'the idealised spectator', helping others in understanding the wisdom of the play. Then again, the chorus becomes the voice of the dramatist and sometimes generalizes the idea or emotion, indicated in a given situation. It also functions in different ways for facilitating the projection of the dramatist's vision of life on the play and in presenting the play itself on the stage.

In the Pardos, the chorus comments on Samson's state and contrasts it with his previous heroic exploits for his people:

"Can this be he,
That Heroic, that Renowned
Irresistible Samson?"[17]

When Samson, in the bitterness of his mind, almost suggests that it is God's fault for having endowed him with more strength than wisdom, the chorus then plays the part of the reproving superior, admonishing him:

"Tax not divine disposal".[18]

In the first stasimon, the Chorus breaks into its well-known vindication of God's justice:

"Just are the ways of God,
And justifiable to men".[19]

Here the chorus speaks as the impersonal mouthpiece of some of the general moral ideas in the play. This double function of the Chorus is common enough in Greek drama.

When Samson refuses the proposals of ransom made by Manoa, the Chorus seeks to cheer him and consoles him by pointing out that the hand of God has often rested heavily upon the chosen instruments of his glory.

In the fourth Stasimon, the Chorus hails Samson's reviving spirit, depicts him as the triumphant deliverer of the oppressed, and notes that Samson is one of those whom patience finally must crown.

When the officer comes to demand Samson's presence at the feast of Dagon, the Chorus tries to persuade Samson to obey the civil power. When, at last, Samson departs, its fervent prayer for his safety accompanies him:

"Go, and the Holy one
of Israel be thy guide ..."[20]

When the catastrophe is announced, the chorus points out that Samson at his death has fulfilled the task to which his life had been consecrated and shows how unexpectedly this fulfilment has been brought about. The play concludes with the chorus echoing the moral in the following lines:

"All is best, though we oft doubt
What the unsearchable dispose
Of Highest wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close".[21]

Thus, the Chorus in Samson Agonistes, serves the purpose at once of interpreting the emotions appropriate to the successive moments in the action, of classifying the larger significance of the whole, and of rounding off the story by an illusion to Samson's part. Like the Greek chorus, it voices, indeed, the poet's commentary upon the tragic happenings of the stage. It acts as the delegate of the poet, and the mouthpiece of his philosophy of life.

In one respect, however, the chorus in Milton does not appear to be above criticism. In the Ode (L 1010-1060), the chorus utters a series of invectives against women, reminiscent of Euripides. The sentiments of misogyny are put not in the mouth of the injured Samson alone, but in that of the chorus as well, whose utterances are expected to be the expression of dispassionate judgement. That is why an Indian critic, Brijraj Singh, in his book, Milton : An Introduction, has noted how the play, Samson Agonistes, contains not only the education of Samson, but the education of the Chorus as well. He says, "I do not hold with those who believe that the chorus in Samson is like the chorus in some Greek tragedies, where it knows the truth and responds to the situations rightly from the start".[22]

It is also to be noted that in Samson Agonistes, Milton leaves out the traditional threefold division of the chorus into

the strophe, the anti-strophe, and the epode. This division has no meaning unless the chorus is sung and danced. As Milton did not write for the stage, he found it pointless to maintain the division.

Critics have also noted that for the chorus Milton's inspiration was not wholly Greek; it was Italian to a great extent. In his Preface to the play, Milton writes, "In the modelling therefore of this poem, with good reason, the Ancients and Italians are rather followed, as of much more authority and fame".[23] Taking the obvious hint in this statement by Milton himself, recent scholars have taken pains to compare the choruses of Samson with those of a great number of Italian plays, and discovered that Milton's great quarry of examples for his rhythms was in Italy.

The construction of Milton's play is also sustained by an effective use of the Peripeteia or reversal of fortune. The essence of the [illegible]t is that all the actions lead where they are not expected to lead. Thus, Samson's rejection of his father's offer of ransom, his rejection of Dalila's offers, his fierce defiance of Harapha, his defiance of the Philistine lords through their messenger, all presage further ignominy for Samson, but contrary to expectation they lead to his final triumph. Similarly, there is peripeteia in the case of the Philistines as well. They have expected to complete the process of Samson's ignominy and their glory by calling him to the feast of Dagon, but the result is contrary to their expectations. It leads to their destruction and the final triumph of Samson.

As in a Sophoclean drama, in Milton's drama too, there is an abundant use of the dramatic ironies. K.R.S. Iyenger[24] explains the use of dramatic ironies in Samson Agonistes by saying that actions and words are edged, as well as double edged: words *mean something other than what they are intended to mean: men* accomplish precisely the opposite of what they set out to do. Manoa comes to ransom his son, Samson, but in the end, he can only fetch the dead body hence to the parental house. The dialogue between Samson and Manoa is an effective piece of a dramatic irony. Trying to cozen Samson, Dalila only succeeds in infuriating Samson. Harapha's insolent words, instead of snubbing or humiliating Samson, open *his eyes to his new* found strength and urgency of mission. However, in the creation of dramatic irony, Milton differs from Sophocles in one respect. Tragic irony arises in Sophocles from the characters' ignorance of the protagonist's fate; it arises in Milton from an ignorance or misunderstanding of the rationally comprehensible ways of God.

The pattern of dialogue in Samson Agonistes is also very largely reminiscent of the Greek tragedies. Milton employs, though sparingly, 'stichomythia' and he makes use of the riddling question and answer, characteristic of the Greek tragic dialogue. In the substitution between the portions of the play in iambic pentameter and those in lyric measures, he is also in accord with the classic usage. The bitter reflection on the errors brought on mankind by woman are Euripidean. So also is the formula "all

is best" at the close . The great utterings in which Samson and the chorus recite the tale of human suffering are repetition with strong accent of individuality of similar generalisations which pervade Greek drama.

Samson Agonistes resembles rather the earlier Greek tragedies where the lyrical element predominates, while the plot and the persons who act its story play a comparatively subordinate part. In lyrical flow, it is more like Aeschylus' Persians and and Prometheus Bound than Sophocles' Oresteian trilogy. Besides, Milton's language seems to draw after it the attendant powers of music and the dance. In certain passages the fusion is as complete as it must have been in the choral lyrics of Aeschylus.

E. The Spirit

The Greek spirit in Samson Agonistes is seen in the poet's constant brooding over the folly of man and the uncertainty and sadness of human life. The drama can strike home to energetic thoughtful and patient readers who will face, what George Steiner[25] in The Death of Tragedy calls, "a terrible, stark insight into human life". The play is uniformly serious; thoughtful in a speculative and philosophical fashion. In fact, because of its profound and earnest thoughtfulness the play may be called Milton's philosophical testament. A sense of the dark mystery of existence pervades the drama. The Chorus says, "Tax not divine disposal"[26] and Samson says, "Appoint not heavenly disposal".[27] The choral ode

beginning with "Many are the sayings of the wise", suggests to a dark interrogation of divine justice, found only in the Greek tragedy. The message of Samson is that God works in mysterious ways, always overcoming evil with good. The play closes in the manner of a Greek tragedy with a brief choral song extolling the nigh wisdom of God and obedience to His Will. It is also like the Greek tragedies in the solemn music of its utterance, in its deep sense of the gravity of the issues on which human life hangs. The plot is marked by "a seriousness which is related to the point of view of the Attic dramatists".[28] With its magnificent concentration upon a single figure, its comparative freedom from the spectacular, its bare dramatic conflict, scarcity of characters, the plot sweeping forward to a conclusion and the action moving in one unswerving and impressive course, Samson Agonistes reminds us of Greek tragedy. The prophetic fervour, the passion for the righteousness, the loftiness of pathos, the opening soliloquy, the pervasive strain of philosophic ratiocination and the characterization of Dalila remind us of Euripides. In that lower order of pathos that physical suffering excites, as in its tone of bitter misogyny, it brings to mind similar traits in Euripides. But in the conduct of his chorus, and in the justness of their remarks eminently suited to their character and to the occasion, Milton is superior to Euripides whose choruses indulge in sententious maxims and wordy declamation, too often irrelevant. In exquisite art and symmetry of construction, in complexity of plot, in skilful disposition of incidents, so as to lead up to the catastrophe, in

skilful concealment of this arrangement till the very last, in the constant use of dramatic irony, in the treatment of the chorus and the denouement and in the subjecting of the hero's will to a series of tests, Milton's drama bears a close resemblance to the dramas of Sophocles. The dignity, the sanity, the just subordination of detail, the due adaptation of means to ends, the high respect of the craftsman for his craft and for himself, which ennoble Virgil and the Great Greeks, are all to be found in Milton.

So far about the form but what is about the spirit? Samson Agonistes may be called a drama of temptation and its conquest. F.T. Prince has observed in this connection, "In Samson Agonistes the hero's life and death include both Fall and Redemption; and recemption comes, as in Paradise Regained, through temptations overcome".[29] The said temptation is of two kinds: (a) Pride and the consequent temptation to blame God for his blindness and slavery; and (b) temptation provided by the sensual charms of Dalila. The first temptation has been thoroughly overcome by the time the action of the play begins. In the opening soliloquy Samson tells us, "Let me not rashly call in doubt Divine Prediction"[30]; it might have been fulfilled but for his own fault. With the entrance of Manoa, Samson is again faced with the temptation to blaspheme God. In Samson's eyes, God is to be blamed for (1) he married under divine impulsion, but the marriage is unfortunate; (ii) God should not have permitted such abject humiliation and dishonour, for the sake of his former glories; (iii) man is frail, and God should not have chosen such a frail creature as His

instrument; and (iv) now that he has fallen so low he is to be disgraced further by being called upon to appear at the feast of Dagon. But Samson is now proof to all such temptations; he blames only himself. (c) Further temptation is offered in the form of a comfortable life at home, affectionately watched over by his father. A hope of recovery of eye-sight is then held out, but Samson bravely prefers the life of drudgery and humiliation, he is leading and says:

> "My race of glory run, and race of shame,
> And I shall shortly be with them that rest".[31]

Dalila is introduced to arouse Samson from his dejection, to tempt him with her sensual charms, with offers of love and comforts of home in exchange for the prison. But Samson prefers life in prison to a life of dependence on her at home.

Samson not only conquers price and sensuality, he also overcomes despair. In the Fourth Act his responses to the taunts of the Philistine giant record a new and fearless confidence born of inward victory and peace.

Samson, thus, attains self-knowledge, self-control, spiritual illumination and regeneration. He is a different man altogether. He suffered heroically for his sin, but in the end his regeneration is complete.

As the phoenix renews itself, Samson is also renewed by the grace of God and finally fulfils his mission as God's champion.

In the very significant speech of the chorus, we learn that though God's purposes may not be immediately obvious, they are just and can be rationally comprehended. Samson seemed at the outset to have betrayed God's trust and thus to be forsaken by Him. But in actual fact, his sufferings, which he brought upon himself through disobedience, were the necessary purgatory that he had to go through before he could fulfil God's will. Thus, God turned Samson's very disobedience into an instrument for his greatest triumph.

Thus, it is "the moral triumph, the survival of faith which is the true subject of Samson".[32] F.T. Prince[33] asserts that the religion of the Old Testament moves powerfully throughout the poem. The Book of Job had been present to Milton's mind in writing Paradise Regained; but the story of Samson, as Milton interprets it, is even closer to Job's trials and affirmations. Milton's mind is steeped not only in the faith of the Old Testament but in the Jewish history and archaelogy. He feels intensely the fierce austerity of Hebrew religion, its hatred of the idolatrous cults which surround it. In Samson Agonistes we find the Hebraic element in various ways. The fierce Hebraic spirit is seen in Manoa's cool gloating over the destruction of the Philistines. There is not a word of grief, but joy at the thought that they have been avenged over their enemies and Samson's death has brought immortal glory to his house. The Hebraic spirit is again seen in an assured faith in the Divine Providence and Divine Deliverance in place of malignant Greek Fate driving the hero to its doom. These religious

implications mean that, while Milton looked to Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides for the form of the drama, he did not try to write a tragedy of human life as the Greeks saw it. F.T. Prince comes to the conclusion that "Milton had plainly asserted the superiority of Christian and Hebrew religion over Greek thought in Paradise Regained, and he believed, of course, that his own religion must give him an advantage even when he sought to follow the Greek poetic achievements".[34] In support of his contention, the critic quotes Milton. Milton wrote in 1641 of his hope that "what the greatest and choycest wits of Athens... did for their country, I in my proportion with this over and above of being a Christian, might doe for mine".[35] R.C. Jebb is also of the opinion that its [the drama's] inspiration, like its subject, is "far more Hebraic than Hellenic".[36] To Jebb, Milton's drama, although its form is Greek, is hardly Greek in spirit. To Jebb, again the most important characteristic of Hellenic tragedy is an ideal grandeur of agony depending on a real grandeur of contrast between man and fate, between free will and destiny. He thinks that Samson Agonistes is a great poem; it is also a noble drama. But neither as poem nor as drama, it is Hellenic in spirit. Nicholas Jose, however, writes, "Milton adapted a Greek style to a Hebraic story".[37]

Some critics are of the view that a Greek tragedy imparts imaginative pleasure by producing a sense of the heroic in man, and on the other hand, of a superhuman controlling power, against whom the hero struggles hopelessly and is utterly destroyed.

Relentless, merciless Fate broods over the hero and drives him to doom, despite all his heroism and nobility. He is shown throughout as a subject to a malignant Fate, never acting as a free man, a man more capable of free will and free action.

Critics assert that this is not at all the case with Samson Agonistes. Samson is throughout a free man, and his misfortunes are the result of his own folly. God is still on his side and his death is a patriotic triumph, and not the final proof of the malignity of Fate.

There are others who hold that it is difficult to see how a writer of tragedy be a Christian, since if there is redemption at the end, there can be no tragedy. For tragedy, in their view, at least since the Renaissance, is a vision not of divine justice, but of divine injustice. It is a cry of protest.

In this sense, Samson Agonistes is not a tragedy. Its hero recovers and does God's work. That he dies in the process cannot be tragic to a Christian who believes that a noble death as that of Samson is but a prelude to greater and eternal glory. The moral law remains above all characters, firm and clear. There is no disproportion between sin and punishment, no temporary dislocation of the universal order, no sense of waste. Tragedy involves a certain element of injustice, of disproportion of slight defect, hamartia, turning everything to corruption until a whole cycle of human woe has been completed. But where God, all just powerful and merciful,

is in control, no injustice and disproportion can exist.

But one should not forget to note that the fact that Samson is free and that his God is his friend does not prevent his feeling just in the Greek way — that God's ways are inscrutable, past man's finding out, and far above out of the reach of his control. It does not prevent his being helpless, as well as heroic, fully conscious that all his strength leaves him still a weak child at the absolute disposal of incomprehensible omnipotence, so that the whole atmosphere of the play, as well as its formal mould will always recall the Greek tragedies.

The fact is that there are two planes of experience in Samson Agonistes. The religious experience appears on the plane of the community, the tragic experience is confined mainly to the plane of the individual. As an individual, Samson has suffered; as the champion of communit, he has triumphed. The suffering of Samson is a tragic experience that raises pity and fear and the tragic purgation is stimulated by the religious experience. It is difficult to agree with Ellis-Fermor when she says (in The Frontiers of Drama) that by justifying the ways of God to men, Milton leaves no room for tragic ecstasy. The death of Samson serves as the means of integrating the two planes of experience, for it is death, so noble, and it is followed by calm of mind, all passion spent. A truly tragic impression is analogous to a religious experience, and it is possible to combine and integrate the two in the sense of the mystery of life.

It is not that death only can make a play tragic. Sophocles' Electra ends in a note of triumph and fulfilment. Technically the end of Samson Agonistes is similar to that of the Eumenides in which the issue is made clear when the design comes to be completed. The past is kept very much alive in the tragic pattern of the play and Samson's recollections form an agony which makes the hero so movingly tragic.

According to Goethe, "Samson Agonistes has more of the antique spirit than any production of any other modern poet".[38] To the modern critic, Parker, this spirit is the truly Greek spirit. He says very justifiably, "The simple truth is that by much study of the great Greek masters, Milton so caught the spirit beninc the rule that he leaves us almost unaware of his true conformity".[39] Ellis-Fermor is of opinion that Samson Agonistes is a truly classical drama in English. It is a drama of inward struggle giving us "a steady psychological progression from despair through heroic conflicts upwards to exultations and the final assumption into beautitude".[40] Douglas Bush holds that though Samson Agonistes could not be purely Greek, ... we still feel ourselves in the atmosphere of ancient rather than of modern romantic tragedy. For the catharsis is attained not only through the triumph of character ever circumstance; there is also, as in Aeschylus and Sophocles, a vindication of divine law and justice.[41] Even J.A.K. Thomson, in whose opinion, Samson Agonistes fails as a drama, says, the dying fall is exactly Greek .[42] Apart from the interest of its subject and treatment, one may obtain from this drama a better

idea of what great tragedy was among the Greeks than from any other work in English:

> "Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
> Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,
> Dispraise or blame; nothing but well and fair,
> And what may quiet us in a death so noble".[43]

George Steiner has the same thing to say when he writes, "It is through Swinburne's Atalanta, more readily perhaps than through archaeology and classical scholarship that we glimpse the lost totality of Greek drama".[44]

3. Shelley's Response to Greek Tragic Myth and Dramatic Form: Prometheus Unbound and Hellas.

A. Introduction:

It is generally assumed that Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was little interested in dramatic representations. And there are perhaps reasons to argue that his romantic spirit was too subtle, too inward, too subjective, too idealistic and too lyrical to find a complete, or even a satisfactory expression through the most objective literary form of drama. And yet the period between 1819 and 1822 saw the publication of six of his dramatic writings : The Cenci (1819), Prometheus Unbound (1820), Oedipus Tyrannus, or, Swell-foot the Tyrant (1820), Hellas (1822), Charles the First (1822) and Fragments of an Unfinished Drama (1822). Among the six, the first and the last two have nothing to do with the Greek myth and the Greek dramatic form.

The Cenci is the only stage-play Shelley wrote. The plot is based on an Italian tale in which a terrific clash of wills is shown between the psychotic Count Francesco and his daughter, Beatrice. In order to dominate his family the Count violates the modesty of his daughter. The gentle girl is driven to desperation, conspires with her brother and step-mother to kill the Count. For this deed they are condemned to death by the Count's friend, the Pope. Shelley's skill as a dramatist

and his insight into the workings of human soul are best illustrated in the success he achieved in unfolding the spiritual history of Beatrice through the frame-work of some dramatic incidents.

Desmond King-Hele is of the opinion that Shelley "was eking out the little he knew of theatrical technique by borrowing from the Elizabethan dramatists, and sometimes from the Greek dramatists".[1] Shelley had, however, borrowed nothing significant from the Greek drama. Long speeches and few characters on stage which are the marks of the Aeschylean drama are found in Shelley's play. Shelley excludes some of the bolder horrors of the original plot. He also uses irony to give the facts more bite. Some of the actions are reported in The Cenci. Cardinal Camillo performs the function of the Greek chorus in the last act by doing what any decent man would do in the circumstances and by mediating between the prisoners and the Pope. The action of the play is mostly internal and psychological the sordid realistic backdrops, not withstanding. This is due to the influence of Aeschylus' early plays. Lastly, the play swerves as little from its main action and has as little of what is called comic relief and in this sense it has some affinity with the Greek classical tragedy.

The last impression, that the play leaves, is not that of the Greek fatalism; instead, we have the sense that the mind is above the fate. Beatrice, when she is led off to die, has somehow an advantage over death.

In Oedipus Tyrannus or Swell-foot the Tyrant (1820) we have a dramatic satire modelled on the satiric comedies of Aristophanes whose Frogs it recalls by its chorus of Pigs. As a dramatist Shelley fails to be strictly objective in his play. The play abounds in extravagant speeches, outrageous characters and revolting setting. In Charles the First Shelley "has risen to a modern view of tragedy".[2] Its depiction of misery is living and realistic. With the Fragments of An Unfinished Drama, Shelley seems to go back to the idealistic and romantic setting of Prometheus Unbound.

B. Prometheus Unbound: Shelley's Response to Prometheus Bound

(i) Introduction:

Shelley wrote in a note to Queen Mab in 1813 : "The story of Prometheus is one, likewise which, although universally admitted to be allegorical, has never been satisfactorily explained .... Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and

applied fire to the culinary purposes".[3] By 1819 Shelley was a fluent reader of Greek and the plays of Aeschylus began to be felt as "a major stimulant to Shelley's literary imagination".[4] The next year saw the publication of Shelley's Prometheus Unbound.

Prometheus Unbound is not an attempt to naturalise Greek tragedy in English. It was rather written in "an unspoken challenge".[5] Aeschylus wrote two plays on the Prometheus-theme, namely, Prometheus Bound and Prometheus Unbound, and possibly a third, Prometheus the Fire Giver. Of these, the first one is the extant. The second exists only in fragments. Shelley was not only well acquainted with the first play, he appears to have been influenced by the fragment of the opening scene of Prometheus Unbound, in which the Aeschylean hero reaches a compromise with Zeus — the idea which was repugnent to Shelley. And he wrote his own version of what happened when Prometheus was unbound.

(ii) The Myth of Prometheus: Aeschylus and Shelley

In the pages of Aeschylus, Prometheus appeared as a humanist. He defied the order of Zeus and gave man fire, taught them how to make tools, helped them build houses, taught them arithmetic and language, gave them the power of understanding

and reason and supplied many other things. He knew full well that the defiance of Zeus' order would bring him untold suffering. Still he was determined to help man. It is very natural that the myth of Prometheus would appeal to the romantic rebel and reformer in Shelley especially when he expresses his intention in the Preface : "I have ... 'a passion for reforming the world' "[6], and as, to the utmost depth of his heart, he was against tyranny in any form. The Promethean myth, no doubt, offered a typically Shelleyan situation — an ideal hero confronting a tyrant with limitless personality of man. In the myth of Prometheus, Shelley, therefore, found a poetic symbol that could be typical and yet cosmic and universal. The real attraction of the myth of Prometheus for Shelley lay in finding in Prometheus, what John Bailey pointed out, "a sort of a saviour of mankind ... [who] represents love as opposed to tyranny, hope substituted for fear, all the arts and abundance of life taking the place of ignorance, poverty and misery".[7] Shelley's study of Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound convinced him of the comprehensive significance to which the myth of Prometheus could be put. For Shelley Prometheus was one of those "poetical abstractions"[8] which are "beautiful and new".[9] Shelley describes him also as "the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends".[10]

Shelley's Prometheus Unbound is, in the form of a single poetic drama, a compressed trilogy on a new Promethean myth — a myth that depicts the fall of tyranny and the triumph of the spirit of progress. In Prometheus Bound Zeus is shown as a tyrant, but it is emphasised that his rule is new. Prometheus is a noble rebel, but he is also presented as rash and proud. The confrontation is thus not between good and evil. In Prometheus Unbound Aeschylus presented the case of Zeus and, evidently in the third play of the Prometheia, Zeus abandoned force and won the friendship of Prometheus. Shelley rejects the Aeschylean formula of reconciliation, which is based on a synthesis of power and wisdom in the interest of security and justice in the universe. To Shelley, who wanted to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence, the catastrophe of the play seemed absurd. And so he writes in the preface, "... in truth I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the champion with the Oppressor of Mankind".[11]

As Shelley changes the concluding part of the theme to suit his own taste and purpose, only Act I of Prometheus Unbound can bear direct comparison with the existing play of Aeschylus. The service that Prometheus rendered to man, Zeus' revenge, the fore-knowledge of Prometheus about the future of

Zeus, the temptation of Prometheus by Mercury, Prometheus' invocation of the elements, the catastrophic effects, wrought on the natural world by Prometheus' defiance, the struggle between Zeus and Prometheus, that we find in Aeschylus, we find in Shelley too. In Act I of Shelley's drama, the topography comes straight from Prometheus Bound. The conversation between Prometheus and Mercury in Shelley's drama closely follows the Greek model. In Aeschylus' drama Prometheus himself describes his own doings and sufferings. In Shelley's drama, Asia gives Demogorgon a long list of the gifts of Prometheus to mankind. Again, the wanderings of Io and her questioning of Prometheus, as we find in the Greek play, may have influenced Shelley while describing the wanderings of Asia and her questioning of Demogorgon.

But Shelley brought some changes, modifications and additions in the Prometheus myth, as used by Aeschylus. Carlos Baker[12] finds three major and meaningful changes.

First, Shelley conforms to the Aeschylean plan in making Jupiter the successor to his father Saturn. Shelley's Prometheus is said to give wisdom which is strength to Jupiter. There is no justification in Aeschylus for this assertion.

Shelley's second change, as we have already noted, is an explicit rejection of the denouement of the *Prometheia*. In the last play of the trilogy, *Prometheus Unbound*, Zeus and Prometheus were, in effect, reconciled and Prometheus set free. It is the symbolic reconciliation of the two virtues of justice and compassion. For Shelley, however, Jupiter represents a force making for evil, as Prometheus represents a force making for good. Carlos Baker, therefore, comes to the easy conclusion: "Where Aeschylus was seeking some means of reconciling two cardinal virtues, Shelley was seeking to avoid the reconciliation of a cardinal virtue with a cardinal vice. Thus the whole device is precisely the contrary of that of his Greek source".[13]

Thirdly, Shelley invented a catastrophe in a new connection. In Aeschylean version Prometheus warned Jupiter not to consummate his marriage with Thetis, because out of that union a son would be born who would destroy the father. Jupiter, accordingly, married Thetis to Peleus and rewarded Prometheus by having Hercules release him from the rock. Shelley retains the Jupiter-Thetis marriage motif. Otherwise follow the Aeschylean pattern. In Act III, the marriage and the consummation both have taken place, and Jupiter supposes that the son, he has begotten upon Thetis, will utterly destroy the defiance of Prometheus, and thus enslave him for ever. He also hopes that the son (Demogorgon) will trample out the unextinguished

fire which originates in man. But instead of doing that, Demogorgon casts Jupiter into the abyss saying,

"We must dwell together
Henceforth in darkness"[14]

The general conformity to the Aeschylean scheme is, no doubt, what led J.A.-S. Thomson to remark that Shelley's Demogorgon, in this particular connection, is "imaginatively right".[15] Shelley may have been trying to suggest that evil contains the seeds of its own destruction.

It is, therefore, evident that Shelley has completely reoriented the myth as he derived it from Aeschylus. He not only gives it a moral twist quite foreign to Aeschylus, but also introduces from Boccaccio the figure of Demogorgon, substitutes that figure for the fateful son of Jupiter, avoids the reconciliation of Jupiter and Prometheus by causing the 'son' to overthrow Jupiter, leaving Prometheus, gentle, just and dreadless as the monarch of the world.

There are some minor changes or modifications effected by Shelley.[16] Occasionally it is found that Shelley reassigns an Aeschylean passage. For example, Hephaestus explains to Aeschylus' Prometheus that each relief from pain will be but another torment in an endless cycle. Shelley reassigns this

speech to Prometheus so that what in the Greek play is simply a threat to the Titan of endless pain, becomes the Titan's own triumphant stoic defiance of pain through faith in the inevitable workings of necessity. Again, whereas Aeschylus' play deals with the original binding of Prometheus, Shelley adapts all the events of the myth to a much later moment in time so as to apply them to Prometheus' eventful unbinding.

(iii) Prometheus and the other characters: Shelley's indebtedness to Aeschylus.

The very character of Prometheus in Shelley's play, in spite of certain major changes, truly resembles Aeschylean hero. Equally great in his imagination, fortitude and defiance, he towers over his own misfortune.

But one major change in Shelley's Prometheus is that his hatred has been displaced by pity. Aeschylus' Prometheus growls that all the gods he hates, who, being themselves in bliss, torture him. To Shelley, Prometheus is "exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement".[17] He, as a critic says, "stands for the desire in human soul to create harmony through reason and love".[18]

The Prometheus of Shelley pities Jupiter, repents his own curse, and "wishes no living thing to suffer pain".[19] He declares,

> " ... for I hate no more
> As then ere misery made me wise".[20]

There is a certain inflexibility of purpose in Shelley's Prometheus; as Jupiter is Evil, he must go. This we vainly search for in Aeschylus. Prometheus, in the Greek play, wavers between his desire to see Jupiter punished and his hankering after personal freedom.

For Aeschylus, Prometheus' sin was not only defiance of Zeus' sovereignty but also an excessive love of mankind that led him to transfer powers beyond their due. Shelley, with his modern outlook, finds no fault in Prometheus. That which was his (Prometheus') crime to the hierarchy of Aeschylus, was to Shelley glory.

In Aeschylus, Prometheus is eventually delivered because he reveals a secret, known to him alone. Shelley disdains the idea that Prometheus should ever come to terms with Jupiter and ingeniously makes Prometheus refuse to divulge his secret. He does not allow Prometheus to be humble to Jupiter. In making this change, Shelley gives a new shape and meaning to his myth consonant with his own moral ideas.

There is another distinct sign of development in Shelley's Prometheus. He is not the Prometheus of Aeschylus gloating over the picture of Jupiter's fall. He does not feel joy to think of the day when he will be in a position to trample down Jupiter. Rather he pities him when he thinks that Jupiter's soul will suffer hellish torture. This sense of pity in Prometheus makes him a mightier personality than Aeschylus' hero who only sustains himself with the idea of Zeus' expected fall. Shelley's Prometheus has purged his system of the hatred for Jupiter and the other young gods which Aeschylus' Prometheus is unable to do.

Shelley's Prometheus, however, is a more poetic character, losing the ferocity of pride of the earlier type. The moment he has the chance, he starts enjoying life as an ordinary mortal. All the time he is suffering. He has a nostalgia for the romantic cave. It is his pride and self-love and not his ideology and love for man that has been sustaining him against Jupiter. Aeschylus would have spurned the idea. In Shelley and the Unromantics (pp.197-202) C.M. Campbell describes Shelley's Prometheus as a mellowed and ennobled development from the Aeschylean Titan, the giant of resentment, impatience and contempt. What the critic suggests is that Shelley is more humanein his treatment of the Titan. Critics, by and large, have identified Shelley's Prometheus with human

life. Prometheus is "the Mind of Man"[21], according to W.M. Rossetti. To John Cochunter, he is "the genius of Humanity".[22] Miss Vida Scudder calls him "Humanity".[23] H.S. Salt identifies him with the "Human Mind".[24] Allen K. Denham makes the Titan represent the "Soul of Man".[25] Even Newman I. White, who objects to the allegorical interpretation of the poem, recognises that the drama represents "the struggle of humanity against repression".[26] One should remember in this connection that Shelley's Prometheus, unlike Aeschylus', is not a real person —— but symbolises a great abstract idea.

Shelley has taken care to chart the gradual purgation of the mind of Prometheus. The process of purgation is found to be complete when Prometheus says,

"I wish no living thing to suffer pain".[27]

Prometheus begins to repent the curse because the same was the climax of hatred and vengeance. He has also recanted pride and is on the path of self-enlightenment which, while enduring all the tortures, gains a triumphant victory over the self. Instead of hate, he has love; instead of pride, he has humanity; and, instead of disdain, he has sympathy.

An indifferent judge of Mankind, Shelley has shown a total absence of the sense of understanding, an inherent

incongruity in the central figure. His Prometheus, a great sufferer, full of uncompromising fighting spirit, is transformed into ease-loving Prometheus of the bower, a projection of the lover in Shelley.

In Aeschylus' drama Zeus appears as a harsh and unjust tyrant but we are told that he is expected to soften. In Shelley's drama Jupiter represents the brutal forces in human nature which obstruct and prosecute its noble desires. Miss Scudder's reading of this character in her edition of Prometheus Unbound shows that he stands for all those institutions, civil and religious, which were once the truest expression of the will of men, but which, as the centuries have passed, are still powerful with an innate tendency to repress progress. Shelley believed that "mankind had only to will that there should be no evil and there would be none".[28] So Jupiter is a mere shadow waiting to be booed away.

The Mercury of Shelley apparently differs from his original. Mercury in Aeschylus' drama jokes cruelly at the expense of Prometheus hopelessly bound to the rock. Shelley's Mercury is not the taunting, cruel messenger of Jupiter. He comes to Prometheus most unwilling to execute a doom of new revenge. He wishes that he were spared the unhappy part of inflicting pain on Prometheus. This difference is there because

Shelley has blended Aeschylus' Oceanus and Hephaistos with his Mercury. Shelley's Mercury checking the Furies reminds us of Apollo checking the Furies in Aeschylus' The Eumenides, while they are haunting down Orestes.

Hephaistos also truly regrets the part he has to play in shackling the great Titan to the rock. This part is played by Oceanus in Aeschylus. Oceanus tries to persuade Prometheus to adopt a compromising spirit. Mercury's talk in Shelley's drama reminds us of the same dialogue but, of course, Mercury here is sincere and the underlying spirit is widely different. However, when we take Shelley's Mercury as also representing these two characters, the apparent difference disappears.

The son who overthrows Jupiter in Shelley's Prometheus Unbound is Demogorgon. This character is alien to the Greek myth. He may be thought of as the principle of Reason or the spirit of Life, as Maurice Bowra[29] recognises it. Thetis represents the pomp of false glory. Asia is the spirit of divine love. She is the wife of Prometheus in the original myth. Shelley has sublimated her and she represents, in Shelley's version, the Intellectual Beauty.

less solidly drawn than their Greek prototypes, the characters in Prometheus Unbound are replicas of pagan gods, cosmic characters aesthetically contemplated not as objects of hatred, fear or worship as the Greeks did, but as symbols that evoke imagination.

(iv) The Chorus and the Furies in Shelley's Play

In Aeschylus' drama, Prometheus Bound, the chorus of ocean-nymphs comforts Prometheus. Throughout the play the chorus remains unshaken in their loyalty towards Zeus. But the suffering of Prometheus has aroused their pity and love. In Shelley's Prometheus Unbound the oceanides, Asia, Panthea and Love with all their grace, loveliness, sympathy and devotion derive their being from the Aeschylean chorus. The Earth, the Sun and Moon, the spirits of Thought and Time, Ocean and Apollo and the Echoes can do no more than comfort Prometheus in Shelley's version as in the Greek play. The chorus of the gentle guides and guardians of mankind, with its measures gradually prolonged and solemnised, shows a command of lyrical orchestration. Instead of a whole group of oceanides, we see only two, Panthea and Ione. The musical part has been allotted to others, spirits of different type. Sympathisings and comments have been reserved for Panthea and Ione. They can do nothing more just as the chorus in Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound cannot.

In the Jupiter-Demogorgon episode, gods and goddesses can be regarded as another form of chorus, though they are without any choric song. The chorus changes with the change of scenes in Prometheus Unbound. This jettisoning of old Greek convention of unchanging chorus made it possible for Shelley to shift the venue of different scenes.

Ione and Panthea comment on the action like a Greek chorus in Act III. In Act IV Ione and Panthea continue as commentators.

Shelley has used the Furies in his play. We do not find the Furies in Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound, but in Choephoroe and The Eumenides, they play a very important role. In Prometheus Unbound, Shelley's hell-hounds who feel such a fierce joy in torturing the victim, suggest the Greek conception of Erinyes with snaky locks. Shelley's Furies possibly cannot impart the feeling of horror. Shelley has taken the Erinyes in the literal sense of the word, 'the fury of the mind'. Prometheus on the rock is mentally tortured by the Furies. The spiritual sufferings inflicted by them are transposed into vivid organic imagery:

> "What we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
> And foul desire round thine astonished heart,
> And blood within thy labyrinthine veins
> Crawling like agony?"[30]

The Furies which represent, both in Aeschylus and to a great extent in Shelley, wild, mad and tormenting thoughts, are followed by thoughts of hope, high prophecies and deep imagining, "the subtle and fair spirits".[31]

(v) The Unities in Shelley's Play

In Prometheus Unbound Aeschylus took the task of turning a long series of events into drama without the help of action. Kitto writes in this connection, "Aeschylus in fact dramatizes the emotions and not the events".[32] Further he writes, "it cannot be drama except in the spirit of lyrical drama, whose essence is not movement and action but dramatic emotion and intensification. The real dramatic movement here is one which takes place in the mind of the immovable Prometheus".[33] There is little action in Shelley's Prometheus Unbound too. Of course, as Oliver Elton observes[34], more happens in Prometheus Unbound than in Prometheus Bound. "The Greek sufferer", in the critic's opinion, "merely defies, listens, and is stricken down, the true action being kept for the sequel which is lost to us".[35] That is not exactly the case with Shelley's Prometheus. Whatever action is there in Shelley's drama is outside Prometheus and the hero has nothing to do with it except for the fact that he enjoys the result. Admittedly, Shelley fails to exploit the terrific conflict between Prometheus and Jupiter. The dramatic action only consists in the suffering of Prometheus.

The main action comes in the last part of the Act II and in Act III of the play when Asia penetrates into the den of Demogorgon followed by Jupiter with happiness restored everywhere.

There are descriptions, sometimes obscure, of natural scenes which are the products of Shelley's lofty and unrestrained poetic flight and can only be imagined, and not to be shown. The cumulative effects of the drama, it should be admitted, does not come from the action but from the emotion while the characters and the plot are a mere machinery for expression.

Originally Shelley planned the first three acts of his drama representing the Aristotelian idea of beginning, middle and end. But the development of action in the play is, by no means, convincing. Act IV of the drama has little dramatic necessity. But it is not a superfluity. It is the fulfilment of the artistic and spiritual unity of the play.

Indeed Prometheus Unbound is so much a drama of ideas that it has no very great place for action. It presents 'a vision', not real events or concrete facts as the Greeks thought them to be.

In Prometheus Unbound Shelley cared not ing for the unities of time and place. There is a peculiar sense of eternity clinging to the entire design so that the unity of time is hardly of any importance. The unity of time, however, is followed by Shelley as the duration of the action is from a little before dawn to sunrise. Shelley could have observed the unity of place making his poetry a little more compact and dramatic. But he cared more for the variety of the changing scenes.

(vi) The Style and Spirit — how far Greek?

In spite of his habitual reading of Greek tragedy, Shelley shows little sense of drama in the mechanism of Prometheus Unbound. It has only the bare external features of drama and is completely devoid of dramatic excitement. There is no plot in the conventional sense of the term and the spoken parts are too lyrical. It is about three times as long as a normal Greek tragedy.

Shelley calls Prometheus Unbound "a lyrical drama"[36], and, indeed, the lyrical part in it predominates. So it does in Aeschylus' drama. But as Thomson observes, "... the lyrical parts in Shelley's drama overflow their bounds and may almost be said to drown the whole poem in eddying song.."[37] This is contrary to the spirit and tradition of classical art which

would, on no account, permit one kind of writing to encroach upon another. Shelley's lyrical abandon is also contradictory to the very spirit of the classical Greek drama, i.e. severity, calm, repose and sublimity. Again, we seldom find colour in Greek poetry, but there is too much of it in Shelley's play. The very plain iron chains of the Greek drama are transformed into vast and glittering glaciers which bind the Titan to the rock in Shelley's. In Shelley's drama we also experience a kaleidoscopic change of scenery which is foreign to Greek drama.

In certain respects, however, Shelley follows Aeschylus. If we count Panthea and Ione as parts of the chorus, we do not find more than two persons on the stage in Shelley's drama, a convention which Aeschylus followed. Only once we have more than two characters together; it is when Hercules releases Prometheus in the presence of Asia.

Although Prometheus Unbound has its affinity with the Aeschylean model, its ideas are, by no means, Aeschylean. The whole spirit of Shelley's play has been modernised. Certain things like the unchangeable gods and the gross and purely physical character of the punishments that we find in Aeschylus cannot be appreciated by the modern world. They are equally unacceptable to Shelley. Shelley's modern instinct has led him

to make most material alterations in the old fable, not only by increasing the old list of physical torments with a number that are purely spiritual but also by defying in the character of Prometheus and the catastrophe of the play with that enormous motive of forgiveness which seems to be the largest outcome of the developed personality. Truly when Shelley's Prometheus describes his own suffering, he lays more stress on solitude, scorn and despair than Aeschylus' hero does. Another modern note, noticeable in Shelley's play, is the very idea of the bond between the soul of man and the spirit of Nature. The sublime doctrines of love, that we find in Shelley's play, were foreign to Aeschylus. They are largely Platonic. In the Preface Shelley remarks, "Let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Aeschylus rather than Plato as my model".[38]

Shelley's representation of fatalism in Prometheus Unbound is not in the Greek way. Shelley believes in the unconquerable nature of love and so makes the salvation of Prometheus come through a revolution, the destruction of the tyrant. Man with the help of love and determination is able to control his destiny. He is necessarily a rebel against tyrannous authority. Aeschylus could only hint at the rebellion but was not ready to go to the logical length. The idea that evil is self-doomed is not to be found in Aeschylus.

Of course Shelley has his own idea of fatalism, which runs in the choral lyric in Act II, Sc. ii (ll. 41-63) of the play. Man believes that his wills move him, whereas it is Demogorgon's Law which actually moves him. Unlike Aeschylus' arbitrary foreclooming Necessity which is superior to Zeus and is determined by the Fates and Furies (ll. 514-18) Shelley has substituted the inherent necessity whereby an effect follows regularly from a given cause.

The love for grandeur in Nature, we find in Aeschylus as well as in Shelley. Aeschylus animated Nature. In Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, the landscape described in Act II reminds us of the Greek version. So does the rock on which Prometheus is bound. The great heights of the desolate crag on the unneighboured hill of Aeschylus is 'this wall of eagle baffling mountain, black wintry, dead, unmeasured'[39] in Shelley. The storm-rent chasms, earth-quake fiends, whirlwind in Prometheus' first speech are all reminiscent of Aeschylus. In the first speech, there is an invocation to the Earth, and to the Heaven, asking the ii Mountains Sun and Sea have not heard his agony. It is almost a literal translation of lines 89-92 of Aeschylus' drama. There are parallel passages in Prometheus Unbound in plenty and images and ideas have also been used, perhaps unconsciously by the romantic poet. T.J. Hughes[40], in his edition of Shelley's poem, has shown the parallel passages in details.

C. Shelley's Response to Greek Dramatic Form : Hellas

(i) Introduction:

By the end of October, 1821, Shelley finished the drama, "if drama it must be called"[41], of Hellas, and he dedicated it to Prince Alexander Mavrocordato and took part in the contemporary Greek war of liberation which inspired Shelley to write Hellas and afforded him a parallel to Aeschylus' play, Persae. But the limitation of the event could not permit it to follow its model completely. Shelley himself explains his limitation in the preface : "The Persae of Aeschylus afforded me the first model of my conception although the decision of the glorious contest now waging in Greece being yet suspended forbids a catastrophe parallel to the return of Xerxes and the desolation of the Persians. I have, therefore, contented myself with exhibiting a series of lyric pictures, and with having wrought upon the curtain of futurity, which falls upon the unfinished scene, such figures of indistinct and visionary delineation as suggest the final triumph of the Greek cause as a portion of the cause of the civilisation and social improvement".[42] Shelley's objective in this play was "to weave songs of Greece's ancient glories into the fabric of current events — a fabric which failed to materialize, because the war had not really started and news of it was sporadic and garbled".[43] However, critics like Amiah Cowie think that it is "a serious lyrical play"[44]

and "has much more of the form of a Greek tragedy than the Prometheus".[45]

(ii) The Action:

With an eye on the model, Shelley duly sets his scene in Constantinople. But Shelley's problem is to describe in detail battles yet untought. As a result there is little action in the plot. The play begins with the description of the Turkish Sultan Mahmud asleep, oblivious of the subversive choruses being chanted by Greek slave women. Then Mahmud wakes from a troubled dream, and his servant Hassan tells him that if he wants it explained he should consult an old Jew, who knows the secrets of the present and the past and the future. The Jew is Ahasuerus. After arranging for an encounter with him, Hassan gives his master a detailed history of the war against the Greeks. Four messengers bring worse news. Ahasuerus delivers a strange prophetic discourse and hypnotizes Mahmud so that he can relieve his dream. In his trance Mahmud sees the phantom of Mahomet the second who predicts the end of the Empire he created. Shouts off-stage break his trance and scare away the phantom. The shouting signals a Turkish victory but Mahmud now knows victories are hollow:

> "Weak lightning before dark men: poor faint smile
> of dying Islam".[46]

The action ends here.

Shelley wrote to one of his friends, "Hellas was a sort of imitation of the Persae of Aeschylus".[47] Aeschylus' Persae is distinguished by splendid descriptions of battle; it also offers opportunities for effective pageantry. And it is what a critic calls a "symphony".[48] Shelley's drama is nothing of the kind. However, the imitation is perceptible in a number of scenes. The excessive gloom of Mahmud derives in part from the consistently gloomy moods of Atossa, Xerxes' mother, of the chorus and at the end, of Xerxes himself. Secondly, the announcement in Hellas of the routing of the Turks on land and sea has a parallel in the Persian messenger's account of the Greek victory at Salamis and the consequent Persian defeat on land in Aeschylus' drama. And finally, the calling up of the spirit of Mahomet resembles the calling up of the spirit of Darius, who gave a similarly gloomy message.

It is alleged by the critics that Hellas has no unifying theme and no dramatic form. Gerald Mc. Niece, for example, calls it "a Greek poem".[49] Desmond King-Hele observes, "Hellas is an imperfect monument of Shelley's intense sympathy for the Greek cause. Marks of hurry are written all over it. Very little happens and that little is enfeebled by being reported .... Shelley too often relies on the atmospheric imagery, he handles so deftly, or on mere enthusiasm, to carry the verse through patches where the material is woefully

thin ... The poem is too episodic to deserve the name of drama. It lacks dramatic tension and lacks too the chronicle-play's saving grace of factual interest".[50] Shelley himself says in the Preface to Hellas that he has contented himself with exhibiting a series of lyric pictures.

(iii) The Structure:

But it should not be thought that Hellas has no dramatic structure. The structure bases itself on the central purpose, namely rallying the English public opinion behind the Greeks and the announcements of the betrayals by the great powers. However, it is on a small scale and the subject has not the finality of events. But it is a genuine compound of choral lyric and drama, a peculiar product of the Greek theatre. In its representation of events and people, it conforms to Aristotelian definition of tragedy. With its stricter form, Hellas is as amenable to the Attic stage as the Persae. Shelley set himself the limit of Aeschylean form of drama and faithfully reproduced its effect on two or three characters interacting with the chorus.

The finest part of Hellas is the chorus which punctuates the action. In Aeschylus' drama, Persae, the chorus is the main figure. The drama is named after them and the dramatist is primarily concerned with them. The chorus in Aeschylus'

drama is made up of the surviving manhood of Persia and the Persian women. Shelley's chorus in Hellas consists of the captive Greek women. In his note on the chorus Shelley explains that his chorus has been allowed to represent "the popular notions of Christianity ... as true in their relation to the worship they superseded [Greek polytheism] and that which in all probability they will supersede [Islam], without considering their merit in a relation more universal".[51] The choruses, as Mrs. Shelley[52] notes, are singularly imaginative, and melodious in their versification.

The first and the third of the choruses recall the great days of Greece. The second chorus is specifically Christian. The human soul travels in a chariot through the dust and light of life from birth to death.

These choruses lead up to the well-known finale expressing the spirit of the poem. The finale combines Shelley's hopes for Greece's and men's future:

> "The World's great age begins anew,
> The golden years return,
> The earth doth like a snake renew
> Her winter weeds outworn:"[53]

In Persae there is but one of the few who escapes from the disaster and successively unfolds the greatness of the catastrophe, but, Shelley, in addition to Aeschylus, brings messengers, one after another, each announcing fresh disaster. Each messenger is a fresh fulfilment of the Sultan's foreboding. Ahasuerus also brings the visionaries and this is, no doubt, influenced by the phantom in Persae.

The characters in Hellas are not well-drawn. The only character worth the name is Mahmud, the gloomy Turk, who is, at times, as hesitant as Hamlet and as eager for supernatural solicitings as Macbeth. The other figures are all puppets.

(iv) The Spirit:

Hellas is the last of Shelley's major political poems. Its aims are three. The first is fundamentally political : to celebrate the Greek war against the Turks as a portion of the cause of civilisation and moral improvement. The second is ethical : to hold up, as an example for the modern world, the wonderful achievement of Athens in the fifth century B.C. and to describe a new Athens symbolising liberty and dedicated to the spread of brotherly love. The third is metaphysical : to assert that thought is the sole reality and that all else in the world is a shadow and a dream.

Whatever may be the aim of the poem, it has an abstract appeal. As has been pointed out by Cameron, "... the vision of Hellas revolves ... around the passing of the 'winter of the world', and the coming of the 'Spring' of a new society. It anticipates 'a period of regeneration and happiness" [54] In the new society, equality and human brotherhood (love) will rule, for it constitutes a finer basis for morality and philosophy than either Christianity, or the religion of Greece or other religions. Such abstract vision is not found in the Greek drama. As Shelley heralds the emergence of an ideal era, he departs from his model. The message of the Sultan in his meeting with Ahasuerus has nothing to do with Hellenic ideas:

> "Sultan ! talk no more
> Of thee and me, the future and the past
> But look on that which cannot change
> ——— the one,
> The unborn and the undying".[55]

This thought is absolutely Shelleyan. To Shelley that which has true life is not subject to destruction and the fragment of Greece will "build themselves again impregnably in a divine clime".[56]

Shelley's drama, unlike the Persae, is a prophecy (upon the title page of Hellas is written : "I am prophet of

conflicts and shall be crowned with victory").[57] The drama has more affinity with the literature of Revelation than with Hellenism. This has prompted critics like Rutland to comment that the book is near the author of "The Second Isaiah".[58] But Shelley's vision must not be misinterpreted as religious spirit. He depicts the rise of liberty and the fall of tyranny, rise of Greece, and fall of Islam, but he depicts it with the truly Hellenic love of liberty.

4. **Merope** : Arnold's Tragedy on the Attic model.

A. **Introduction:**

Temperamentally Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was a Greek in Victorian England. Opposed to all sorts of romantic vagaries and extravagances Arnold sought to bring about radical reforms. His design was to tone down what was excessive and to supply what was deficit. In Arnold's age the spasmodists like Bailey, Dobell and Alexander Smith had their vogue. Arnold broke into the Victorian stronghold of romanticism. Not a believer in unbridled imagination and emotional exuberance, he chose to trust intellect and a critical spirit. Like Benjamin Jonson (1572-1637) his mind was deeply impregnated with all the teaching of ancient art. Under the direct influence of Hellenism, he formed an ideal of sober and pure simplicity, and made it the constant model of his style. He became a staunch champion of proportion, lucidity, restraint and balance.

We note in the first volume of poems 1849 the predominantly Greek inspiration of its contents, both in matter and in style. The poem, The Strayed Reveller, is itself Greek in both subject and form, its rhymeless and irregular metre being an attempt to reproduce the effect of the choric odes of Attic tragedy. The subject of Sohrab and Rustum appeals, like the themes of classical tragedy, to the great primary human affections which are independent of time. The end of the poem leads us to the sublime acquiescence in

the course of fate. The subject is treated with a clearness and sustained elevation of style so closely approximating the Greek manner. The Frgment of Antigone, Mycerinus, The New Sirens, The Sick King in Bokhara are all Greek either in subject or in source, or in the manner of treatment. His Preface to 1853 Volume of Poems was the manifesto of classicism in an age of subjectivism and individualism in poetry. In the advertisement to the Second Edition of his Poems, in the inaugural lecture at Oxford entitled, The Modern Element in Literature, in To A Friend and in many of his poems, he paid glowing tribute to Homer and Sophocles. His dramatic poem, Empedocles on Etna is a verse drama on a classical theme. But here Arnold has not modelled his play on the ancient Greek tragedies. The songs of Callicles, a young harp-player in the play, have, however, all the calm grace of Greek poetry. The play is one of Arnold's most ambitious efforts to represent 'situations' after the manner of ancient Greek tragedians.

Arnold felt that in England there was "a wide though an ill-informed curiosity on the subject of the so-called classical school".[1] Partly to satisfy that curiosity, partly also "to enrich with what, in the forms of the most perfectly-formed literature in the world, is most perfect, our noble English literature"[2], Arnold wrote Merope and published it in 1858. Arnold's Note-Book[3] shows how strenuously he had devoted most of his time to the study of classical literature so that his proposed work might be artistically faultless.

B. Preface to Merope : Arnold's Apologia for his Tragedy

In his preface to Merope Arnold observes that to read Greek is best, but that in his own times a large literate class does not care to read Greek and that accordingly for this class he writes this play.

Arnold felt the deficiency of his predecessors who made experiments in classical drama. He attempted to write a play and retain the severest and most definite expression, and make an exact reproduction of a Sophoclean tragedy. Arnold wanted to write a drama that would be classical in structure, form, theme, sentiment and style. Churton Collins understands that in this drama Matthew Arnold has had the courage to reproduce without the smallest modification the exact counterpart of Attic tragedy in its most perfect shape, — in the shape, that is to say, which it assumed in the maturest work of Sophocles. The critic maintains, "Knowing well that what he [Arnold] aspired to reproduce derived its characteristics and drew its inspiration and nutrient from a world which had long passed away and which could not be recalled, he yet believed in the effectiveness and permanence of the Beautiful, whether expressing itself in form or in conception".[4]

As the Preface to Merope shows, Arnold was powerfully affected by the effectiveness of the form and the intense feeling of the beauty of the Greek tragedies. In his words, "I have long had the strongest desire to attempt... to come to closer quarters with the form which produces such grand effects in the hands of the Greek masters; to try to obtain, through the medium of a living

familiar language, a fuller and more intense feeling of that beauty, which when apprehended through the medium of a dead language, so powerfully affected me .... I desired to try, therefore, how much of the effectiveness of the Greek poetical forms I could retain in an English poem constructed under the conditions of those forms; of those forms, too, in their severest and most definite expression, in their application to dramatic poetry".[5]

Arnold first thought of obtaining the feeling of the beauty of the Greek tragedy in English by a translation of one of the great works of Aeschylus or Sophocles. But he abandoned the idea because "a translation is a work inferior to the original by the whole difference of talent between the first composer and his translator".[6]

He then thought of treating some subject independently, on which there is extant work by one of the great Greek masters. But, as he says, "their treatment by the ancient masters is so overwhelmingly great and powerful that one can henceforth conceive them only as they are treated; an independent conception of them has become impossible for us".[7] So he gave up the idea, too.

It now remained for him "to select a subject from among those which had been considered to possess the true requisites of good tragic subjects, on which great works had been composed, but had not survived to chill emulation by their grandeur. Of such subjects, there is fortunately no lack".[8]

Arnold continues, "Among these subjects, presented in the collection of Hyginus — there is one which has long attracted

my interest, from the testimony of the ancients to its excellence, and from the results which that testimony has called forth from the emulation of the moderns. The subject is the story of Merope".[9]

The story of Merope was celebrated in tragedy by more than one poet. However, the story is untold in any extant Greek play, though used by Maffeei and Alfieri in Italian, by Voltaire and several others in French, and by Jeffreys and Aaron Hill in English. A tragedy upon it produced by Euripides existed in antiquity.

As Arnold observes, "a mistake, a grave mistake in the treatment of their subject is common to .... Voltaire and Alfieri. They have abandoned the tradition where they better have followed it; they have followed it where they better have abandoned it".[10]

Arnold has criticized the treatment of the story by his predecessors with much insight and acumen. He has been successful in showing as well as illustrating in his own treatment of it how much more effectively it could be treated by a closer adherence to Greek tradition.

Arnold's intention was to give his readers "a specimen of the world created by the Greek imagination"[11], in Merope. In a letter to his sister on February 3, 1858 (Letters, vol. I, pp. 68-69) Arnold spoke highly of the power, grandeur and dignity of the Greek imagination and stated how it is hard for us to appreciate, even to understand it.

In his apologia for his tragedy, Arnold is quite bare-faced; it aims to present a tragedy which might conceivably be "a long-

lost work recovered by a happy chance and transposed into English".[12] The work is to have the composite face of a Greek tragedy as a whole, to be after neither Aeschylus, nor Sophocles, nor Euripides, but essentially and wholly Greek. But as Anniah Gowda writes, "Arnold's own sensibilities place him nearest to Sophocles, since he is equally lacking in Aeschylus' impassioned fire and Euripides' psychological and caustical subtlety, but at least approaches the gravity, tenderness and serenity of the ripest of the ancient dramatists".[13] Churton Collins speaks highly of Arnold's success in his experiment : "... he has produced a poem which is not only the nearest approach possible in any modern language to Sophoclean tragedy, but he has illustrated, as effectively as Sophocles himself could have done, had he written in English, all that can be achieved in impression by dramatic art working under the conditions imposed on it by the Greeks".[14]

C. The Subject of Merope

Arnold modelled Merope very closely on Sophocles' Electra. In both the tragedies, the action is of a son's return in disguise to exact vengeance for a father's death many years earlier.

The action of Merope opens at the day break on the morning of the twentieth anniversary of the murder of Cresphontes. Aepytus and his uncle Laias, Merope's brother, have just arrived in disguise from Arcadia at Stenyclaros, the purpose of Aepytus being to make his way into the royal palace that he may announce his own death, while Laias is to mingle with the people and ascertain whether any

of them still remember their old king lovingly and are hostile to the present king who murdered him and occupies his place. Twenty years have passed since Aepytus, then a baby, had been rescued from the fate of his father and two brothers, and placed by a faithful servant, Arcas, under the protection of his maternal grand-father Cypselus, the reigning king of Arcadia. There he had grown up to manhood. With his mother, Merope, he kept up a regular communication through Arcas, who visited her every year at Stenyclaros. She would pine for her son's return and restoration to his father's throne. Aepytus, on the other hand, is bent on taking revenge.

Polyphontes, the present king, belongs to the family of Hercules. He establishes himself as a good ruler. He has for his wife Merope against her will. He explains his bloody and unconstitutional act as just because Cresphontes' liberal views were hampering the public good. He thinks he has saved the realm.

But Merope thinks otherwise. She argues that the wisdom of her husband's desire to unite conqueror and conquered "into one puissant folk"[15] is the only practical way to a safe supremacy. Polyphontes can be fearfully convincing:

> "Dizzy the path and perilous the way
> Which in a deed like mine a just man treads,
> But it is sometimes trodden, oh, believe it.
> Yet how canst thou believe it? therefore thou
> Hast all impunity..."[16]

Merope has meanwhile been moved by Polyphontes' kindness and consideration. She tells her son of his serious statecraft and calm rule. But her son is committed to his father and cannot understand her.

Aeptyus' identity is kept secret. He reports to the king that the prince is dead. The king orders him to be hospitably entertained, intending to enquire further of him. He, being very tired, goes to sleep.

Polyphontes implores Merope to marry him and forget the past since he thinks, all possibility of revenge has now gone. Merope cannot divulge her son's plot. She only urges Polyphontes to fly : "Cut short thy triumph, seeming at its height".[17] He thinks she must be mad.

Arcas, acting as a channel between the mother and the son, now arrives in tears. He brings the news that Merope's son has disappeared from his protector's house and is slain. Hearing this Merope suspects the sleeping stranger to be the murderer of her son and comes into the guest-chamber with an axe and is about to kill her own son unknowingly. Arcas recognises him, and prevents Merope from killing him. Polyphontes, delighting at the supposed death of Aepytus, celebrates a sacrifice, Aepytus, being the guest, pretends to strike the sacrificial victim, kills the king and gets back his father's kingdom.

The choric interludes have been steadily rising, reinforcing the dramatic power, and at the approach of the climax, they reach a climax of triumph. Polyphontes' body is brought in, Merope meditates on the 'inscrutable' face still bearing its aspect of majestic care' :

"What meantest thou, O Polyphontes what
Desired'st thou, what truly spurr'd thee on?"[18]

Is it a policy of state or merely an ambition in Polyphontes? Merope can neither triumph nor mourn over one who had in him both 'worth' and 'badness'. No man has a fixed condition; a two-fold colour rings in all. All she can do is to pray that her son may make 'the one-colour' prevail.

The best kind of plot, according to Aristotle, is the complex plot, where both 'recognition' and 'reversal' accompany the turn of fortune simultaneously. In Sophocles' Electra, we have the combination of the two in the scene where Electra recognizes Orestes. In Merope also we have an excellent example of the complex plot. In the scene in which Merope comes to know the true identity of her son, we have in combination 'the turn of fortune', for she passes from fortune to good, from misery to contentment; recognition, for there is a change from ignorance to knowledge, from hatred to love; reversal, for the very opposite effect to the effect anticipated and intended is the result.

Arnold follows Sophocles also in his treatment of Destiny in this play. In the Electra Destiny and the Destiny-element are

kept altogether in the background. In Merope they are, likewise, scarcely perceptible and in no way operative. Sophocles has minimised their powers as agents. In the Electra retribution comes as the moral result of crime deliberately done and aggravated. In Merope, Aepytus is, indeed, the Destiny-led stranger, but the Destiny which leads him is little more than the impersonation of the moral law.

D. The Text: Adaptation of Speeches

Arnold has an appropriate classical story, untold in any extant Greek play. He borrows from a large number of classical plays, never allowing his indebtedness, however, to become so obvious as to become offensive. Critics[19] have pointed out how some of the speeches in Arnold's play are adaptations of those in Greek plays. In the opening scene, the speech of Laias, as well as that of Aepytus (Ll 1-75), is modelled on the speech of Sophocles' Electra (Ll 1-85), with Aepytus and Laias in place of Orestes and his servant. The speech of Aepytus (Ll 51-8) is an adaptation of Aeschylus' Choephoroe (Ll 10-18). Some of the lines in the play have striking resemblances to lines in Aeschylus' and Sophocles' plays. The whole of the Kommos (Ll 385-544) in Arnold's play is modelled closely on that in Sophocles' Electra between Electra and the Chorus (Electra 121-250). The speech of the Chorus in lines 389-91 in Merope is suggested by Aeschylus' Choephoroe. The first line of Merope's speech (Ll 477-486) is an echo of Sophocles' Antigone (L 858). The speech of Merope (Ll 478-

86) is suggested by Aeschylus' Choephoroe (Ll 345-53). The choral ode (Ll 478-91) is suggested by the description of Agamemnon's death in Electra (Ll 193-6). Lines 526-27 of Merope

"But Zeus, who accounteth thy quarrel his own,
Still rules, still watches, and numb'reth the hours" [20]

are adopted from lines 173-5 of Sophocles' Electra,

"Courage, O daughter, courage : still
High Zeus in heaven is king.
Who sees and governs all". [21]

The speech of Merope (Ll 571-8) is an adaptation of Sophocles' Ajax (Ll 895-9). Lines 589-90 of Merope is another echo from the Ajax (Ll 550-1). Line 857 of Merope,

'So dies the last shoot of our royal tree! ' [22]

is echoed in Lines 598-99 of Sophocles' Antigone,

"Even now a smiling light
was spreading to our sight
O'er one last fibre of a blasted tree-" [23]

The stasimon in lines 890-913 of Merope resembles the stasima introduced by Sophocles just before calamity and ruin is about to fall as in lines 692-717 of Ajax, 1086-1109 of Oedipus Rex and 205-24 of Trachiniae. It was also suggested by and borrowed from, as Arnold himself indicates in the Preface, by the choral address to Peace in a surviving fragment of Euripides' Cresphontes. In the following lines (Ll 1054-55) of Merope,

"No, something must be dared, and great, as erst
Our dastard patience, be our daring now!"[24]

we get an echo of Electra's determination to have vengeance in her own hands when she hears of the reported death of Orestes in Sophocles' Electra (L 947 ff). Lines 1102-52 of Merope constitute a Kommos closely on the model of those in the Electra. Merope's speech in lines 1251-52

"From the first-wrought vengeance is born
A long succession of crimes".[25]

may be compared with lines 758-60 of Aeschylus' Agamemnon which may be translated thus : "A deed of impiety begetteth many others like unto their family". With the messenger's account of the murder of Polyphontes may be compared the account given of that of Neoptolemus in Euripides' Andromache (Ll 1085-1165), on which it may have been modelled.

Apart from these adaptations and resemblances, there are some commonplaces, borrowed from Greek tragedies in Merope. The Chorus consoles Merope by saying,

"Not to thee only hath come
Sorrow, O Queen, of mankind".[26]

It is a stock commonplace in Greek tragedy and imitated directly from Sophocles' Electra :

"To thee, thee single in the world,
Daughter, no grief has come".[27]

In line 585 of Arnold's play Hermes is invoked

"My Hermes, herald of the dead, convey
My words below to thee, and make thee hear"[28]

An invocation to Hermes opens the Choephoroe, too.

Bad news is generally conveyed in a brief way in Sophoclean drama. In Merope Aepytus himself, in disguise, reports his fictitious death to Polyphontes in a sentence,

"Aepytus, the Messenian prince, is dead".[29]

This is an imitation of the way, in which the death of Orestes in Electra, of Jocasta in Oedipus Rex, of Oedipus in Oedipus at Colonous and of Antigone and Haeman in Antigone are announced.

The fictitious account of the death of Aepytus (Ll 721-856) corresponds to the fictitious account of Orestes' death in Sophocles' Electra (Ll 680-763). These fictitious narratives are vifid, detailed and elaborate and they form a distinct and peculiar feature in Greek tragedy.

E. Characters — How far Hellenic?

Most of the characters of the play are drawn with bold strokes but there is doubt how many of them have the genuine Hellenic stamp on them. The characters are, however, not wooden, as many adverse critics have suggested. They are neither lifeless ghosts nor merely puppets, wire-pulled by the author, but aglow with human passion. The characterisation is thoroughly Grecian in spirit. It indicates "a range of mental power in the author far

above the average".[30]

In a Greek tragedy the sufferer is neither a perfectly good, nor a perfectly bad man but an intermediate personage, like ourselves. What involves him in ruin must not be deliberate and repulsive wickedness, but some great error; he must be a person who is highly renowned and, if faulty and frail, with eminent virtues. All these characteristics are illustrated in the character of Polyphontes. He belongs to the family of Hercules. A man of illustrious lineage, he had played a great part in the history of Messenia. His crime was a terrible one, but it had been prompted by no mean motive. He had led the rival faction to that which supported Cresphontes, and which was in deadly feud with him. With the help of that faction, i.e., the Dorian, he had murdered Cresphontes and ascended the throne. Though he had forced Merope, the murdered king's widow, to marry him, he had been her husband only in name, and has behaved with her with the utmost respect and delicacy, as she herself gratefully acknowledges. Standing over his corpse she says,

"... I triumph not
Over thy corpse — triumph not, neither mourn, —
For I find worth in thee, and baseness, too".[31]

In Sophocles' Electra, the subject is the character of Electra. In this play (Electra) Kitto writes, "... the heroine is on the stage continuously always at the centre of things, placed in sharp juxtaposition with some other character, and in situations

that are constantly changing".[32] T.B.L. Webster, likewise, holds, "The whole arrangement of the plot ... is designed to give Electra's motives the greatest possible scope, so that we can see her in turn, gloomy, scornful, elated, desperate, purposeful, sorrowful, joyful and triumphant".[33] Jebb is of the same opinion: "The interest depends primarily on the portraiture of human character".[34] Such is not the scope and purpose of Arnold in Merope. Arnold's heroine has a Christian outlook in an age of paganism. Merope, being a little introspective, has a touch of modernism about her. She cannot forgive Polyphontes for the murder of her husband. She strongly believes in the policy of her dead husband to unite the conqueror and the conquered. But she is not guided by the spirit of revenge. She is not blind to the goodness of Polyphontes. She is moved by Polyphontes' kindness and consideration. She tells her son of his serious statecraft and calm rule. When Polyphontes is murdered by her son, she can neither triumph nor mourn over one who had in him both 'worth' and 'badness'.

In Sophocles' Electra, the heroine, from the beginning, is a harsh and unlovely woman. Being under the impact of her brother's death, she is determined to avenge the death of her father. Later Orestes, her brother, reveals himself and kills his mother. As Electra hears the cries of her dying mother, she is not moved to pity. She is, on the other hand, in a mood of exultation.

Now, Electra's behaviour is not only grotesque but also repulsive to the modern mind. What to Orestes and Electra, to Aepytus and Merope was the most sacred of duties, to the modern

mind is a crime, shocking and reprehensible. In the following lines Churton Collins makes an analysis of the contrasting feelings: "To Electra the heart of an ancient Greek would go out in admiring an unmingled sympathy, for he would see in her loathing and contempt for her mother and in her tense tenacity to her murderous purpose all that a father's loving and dutiful daughter ought to be. But how mangled are the feelings which she excites in us, how painful the impression left on us as we leave her exulting in her ghostly triumph".[35] Arnold is well aware of the repulsion created in our times by the spectacle of a woman tempered like Electra. In depicting his heroine, Arnold has made his one concession to modern sentiment. Averse to bloodshed, Merope has no desire to take the life of the murderer of her husband and two of her children. She does all in her power to save him. She would limit her vengeance to his deposition and the restoration of her son.

All the characters of Arnold's play act with the chaste decorum which marks the characters of Attic tragedies. Indeed the decorum proved a little too much for some critics. Merope's exclamation when she comes to murder a young man with an axe appears to be that of an Oxford woman. It can be safely said that as a dramatic personoe neither Merope nor Polyphontes nor Aepytus excites our interest. In his Preface to Merope, Arnold argues against the handling of Polyphontes by Maffei and Voltaire, saying that they did not make Polyphontes tragic and his relationship with Merope intelligible. But in his own case, Polyphontes and the

situation centred on him are refracted through an entirely un-Greek modern sensibility which is concerned with the movements of a modern moral consciousness and the battle between absolutism and pragmatism.

F. The Formal Mould:

The structure of Merope follows a Greek pattern. It is as follows:

Prologos, Lines 1-384

Kommos, Lines 385-544

Epeisodion I Lines 545-621

Stasimon I Lines 622-702

Epeisodion II Lines 703-889

Stasimon II Lines 890-913

Epeisodion III Lines 914-1595

Stasimon III Lines 1596-1683

Epeisodion IV Lines 1684-1793

Stasimon IV Lines 1794-1882

Exodus Lines 1883 to the end.

In Merope, the choruses are remarkably Greek in tone and cadence. Arnold follows Sophocles in his use of the Chorus. In Sophocles the Chorus associates itself with the action of the drama but in no way controls or affects the action. It stands as the symbol of sympathetic and reflective humanity. It gives lyrical expressions to the sufferings and offers consolations. Arnold himself notes, "To combine, to harmonize, to deepen for the spectator the feelings, naturally excited in him by the sight of what was

passing upon the stage — this is the one grand effect produced by the Chorus in the Greek tragedy".[36] Again he writes, "After tragic situations of the greatest intensity, a desire for relief and relaxation is, no doubt, natural both to the poet and to the spectator, but the finer feeling of the Greeks found this relief, not in buffoonery but in lyrical song".[37]

In Merope, the chorus consists of a group of Messenian women, "sad-chanting maidens clad in mourning robes, with pitchers in their hands and fresh pull'd flowers".[38] They accompany Merope most of the time. They make their first appearance in line 384 of the play.

The chorus appears as a symbol of reflective and sympathetic humanity. It shares the feelings of Merope. Merope acknowledges, "Thou touchest the worst of my ills".[39] With Merope, the chorus pays tribute to the memory of the murdered king,

"A king, a king was he while he lived",[40]

Later it consoles Merope by saying

"Not to thee only hath come
Sorrow, O Queen, of mankind.
Had not Electra to haunt
A palace defiled by a death unavenged,
For years, in silence, devouring her heart?"[41]

And then it rises to spiritual speculation:

"Give not thy heart to despair.
No lamentation can loose
Prisoners of death from the grave;

But Zeus, who accounteth thy quarrel his own,
Still rules, still watches and numb'reth the hours
Till the sinner, the vengeance, be ripe".[42]

When Merope seeks peace and gives up the thought of revenge, the chorus at once feels at one with her:

"O Queen, for an avenger to appear,
Thinking that so I pray'd aright, I pray'd;
If I pray'd wrongly, I revoke the prayer".[43]

In the first choral ode (ll 622-702) the chorus gives vent to a universal thought:

"But more than all unplumb'd,
Unscaled, untrodden, is the heart of man
More than all secrets hid, the way it keeps".[44]

The heart of man is obscure and motives are many. It is perhaps right that the best man should carve his way by force provided that it is really done for the public good; and yet who can never claim with assurance to be the elect of God? The chorus comes to the conclusion that Zeus condemns a self-asserting violence in the guise of "Heaven's destined arm".[45]

When Polyphontes hears the news of the supposed death of Aepytus, he exclaims,

"A private loss here founds a nation's peace".[46]

The protagonist's feelings are echoed by the chorus:

"Peace, who tarriest too long;
Peace, with delight in thy train;
Come, come back to our prayer!"[47].

The chorus thus associates itself with the action. It also helps the movement of the action. When Merope hears of the supposed death of her son and mourns her lot, the chorus directs her attention to the young guest who brings the sad news to the palace and expresses its suspicion:

"He in the guest-chamber now,
Faithlessly murder'd his friend".[48]

Merope decides to kill the young guest, the supposed murderer of her son. The chorus then participates in the action by bringing the axe. The choric interludes thus reinforce the dramatic power.

The choric interlude (Ll 1596-1683) is highly significant. Both in substance and style this is one of the most successful of Arnold's imitations of a Greek choric song. Its parallelism is almost perfect.

The play ends with the speech of the chorus which ushers in a feeling of repose and rest:

"Son of Cresphontes, past what perils
Com'st thou, guided safe, to thy home!
What things daring! what enduring!
And all this by the will of the Gods".[49]

The choral songs are chosen with great happiness and they produce in English verse perhaps as nearly as possible the same effect on the ears and feelings as the rhythms of Greek choir poetry. The chorus that tells of Arcas and Callisto was characterised as "a model of noble form and colour".[50] Arnold himself claimed the superiority of the lyrical element of the choruses to

the buffoonery of Shakespeare. Resenting this piece of iconoclasm, the reviewer of Athenaeum, January, 1858, characterised Arnold's choruses as "pages of interjections, or strophes of prosaic and most moral grief".[51] He also criticised the tediousness of the choruses. A.H. Clough held the same view. To Lowell he wrote; "The Choruses seem to me indiscreetly long and tedious even to the classical amateur".[53] However, the views of these critics cannot be entertained. Arnold manages the chorus with considerable judgement.

Sophocles was careful to secure the unity and symmetry of his plays as a whole by corresponding unity and symmetry in the structure of the chorus, so that each chorus, each choric expression of the lyrical element, produces in itself the same harmonious effect as the drama in totality produces. Thus by the systematic employment of 'strophe', 'anti-strophe' and 'epode', "a regular correspondence of part with part, a balanced antithesis of thought to thought, of emotion to emotion, is effected while in an independent final stanza — 'the epode' — the balance of the whole is struck".[53] Arnold follows in the footsteps of Sophocles in this respect. We can cite an example of how strophes and anti-strophes are arranged by Arnold in the Kommos in lines 385-544 of the play:

The Chorus : Ll 385-391 Strophe

The Chorus : Ll 392-399 anti-Strophe

The Speech of Merope : Ll 400-407 Strophe 1

The Chorus : Ll 408-416 Strophe 2

The Speech of Merope : Ll 417-424 anti-strophe 1

The Chorus : Ll 425-433 anti-strophe 2

The Speech of Merope : Ll 434-453 Strophe 3

The Speech of Merope : Ll 454-468 anti-strophe 3

The Chorus : Ll 469-476 Strophe 4

The Speech of Merope : Ll 477-486 Strophe 5

The Chorus : Ll 487-494 anti-strophe 4

The Speech of Merope : Ll 495-504 anti-strophe 5

The Chorus : LL 505-515 Strophe 6

The Speech of Merope : LL 516-522 Strophe 7

The Chorus : Ll 523-533 anti-strophe 6

The Speech of Merope : LL 534-540 anti-strophe 7

The Chorus : L 541 Strophe 8

The Speech of Merope : L 542 Strophe 9

The Chorus : L 543 anti-strophe 8

The Speech of Merope : L 544 anti-strophe 9

The poetry of Arnold's drama is unmistakable. Never attaining Miltonic grandeur or Shelleyan strains, the poetic element of Merope has an appeal of its own. As regards the style and diction of the play, Thomson writes, "Merope is well written in a subdued and low-toned way designed to reproduce the quiet concentration of the pure Attic style".[54] There are, undoubtedly, passages full of great beauty and of considerable force but it is to be admitted that in a work like Merope, Arnold's poetic faculty could not be thrown into full play. Arnold's passion for the classical model, no doubt, hinders the poetical flow. It is rightly pointed out that Arnold had to face insuperable difficulty while conforming to certain hide-bound rules; his poetry could not be the spontaneous

overflow of powerful feelings. There are some critics who hold a different view. Roscoe, for example, thought that Arnold was rich in poetic instincts while writing this play.[55] The reviewer of March, 1858,
The Dublin University Magazine, in an article "Poetry — Matthew Arnold and MacCarthy" agreed that Arnold's work belonged to a higher class of poetry than that of MacCarthy.[56] The reviewer characterised the description of the hunt of Aepytus as a grand and stirring piece of writing almost reminiscent of Homer. The January, 1868 as for
reviewer of The Christian Remembrance, in an article, entitled, "The Neo-classical Drama", put on record his high appreciation of the poetry in Arnold's drama in the following words, "... its language and poetry ... are sustained and noble".[57] However, we must admit that as in a Greek tragedy, imagery and lyricism have been subordinated to action in Arnold's play.

The beauty and simplicity of the language of Merope drew high applause from the critics. And indeed, Arnold's diction apart from his rhythm — for his rhythm is Sophoclean — recalls much more nearly the ordinary diction of Euripides. The forcible and clear style is unmistakably Greek. In many of the lines admirable terseness is in evidence. However, one takes exception to the recurrence of antique ejaculations like 'Ah !''Ah me !', and the frequent use of unnecessary expletives. Thomson's observation[58] on the style of Merope is worth mentioning. The critic holds, as for the style of Merope, it does make an attempt, by no means, entirely unsuccessful, to recapture the severe beauty of Attic verse. But even here, Arnold is attempting the impossible. The English language,

is so full of colourless mono-syllables and out-worn metaphors that we simply cannot afford to sacrifice the advantages derived from the pictorial imagination in which the English poets have been so strong. The difference between English poetry and the Greek is like the difference between English painting and sculpture, as he says. He then elaborates his view-point by saying that the sculptor gets his best efforts by mere purity of form; the painter cannot depend on that alone. One reason why Arnold succeeds better in his lyrics than in the blank verse of Merope is that the odes of Greek tragedy have a much more figurative and coloured diction than the iambics used in dramatic conversation, and such a diction is natural to an English poet. And in the Greek tragic poets, even the non-lyrical passages are effective poetically in proportion as they are effective dramatically. For dramatic poetry, according to the critic, is meant to be spoken, and unless it has the qualities of spoken poetry, it will not make itself felt on the stage. Neither Tennyson, nor Browning, neither Arnold, nor Swinburne, in his view, seems to have appreciated this.

Sophoclean tragedy is rich in tragic irony. In Electra, as in other of his tragedies, irony reveals itself in circumstance as well as in speech. We have the irony of circumstance when Electra mourns her lot with the supposed ashes of her brother in her hands. In Arnold's play, we have an irony of circumstance in the scene where Merope is bending over her sleeping son, thinking that he is the murderer of that son, and when Polyphontes, with his hand upon the steer whose blood is, so he imagines, to cement the bond of

peace and security, is about, by the shedding of his own blood, to secure peace in a very different sense than the sense intended by him. Of irony of speech, when unconscious, we have examples in Polyphontes' speeches (Ll 868-883 and 885-889) just after he has heard the report of the prince's death, as well as in the chorus which follows. Of irony of speech, when conscious, we have examples in the last dialogue between Merope and Polyphontes (Ll 1793-1837). The irony of speech is very strong in Merope. Here, its centre is Polyphontes' pining desire for 'peace', a peace which is to be brought about, though he little knows it, by his own death.

Polyphontes implores Merope to become reconciled to him by saying, "Peace, peace is what I seek, and public calm".[59]

When he hears the news of the supposed death of Aepytus, he exclaims:

"A private loss here founds a nation's peace".[60]

(L 889)

His last words, just before the axe crashes into his skull, are: "And grant henceforth to the Messenians peace ! "[61] The fine irony of the scene (Ll 1758-79) may be compared with that scene in Oedipus Rex (Ll 945-1075) in which Oedipus is pushing his inquiry with Jocasta standing by, the secret now known to her.

The unities of time and place are also observed in Arnold's play. In Sophocles' Electra the scene of action never changes from the precincts of the palace of the Pelopidae. In Merope the place of action also never changes from the precincts of the palace at

Stenyclaros. The action of Electra takes place between the early morning and noon of the same day and the action of Merope occupies exactly the same time.

Thus, minutely antique in form, Merope is characterised as much by the simplicity of structure as by the simplicity of diction. Roscoe dallied on through pages on Arnold's sense of the beauty of form and finish of execution and harmony of proportion. In a well-written review on Arnold's tragedy, Merope, Roscoe dwelt at length on Arnold's "exquisite taste", "nice sense of fitness and proportion", and in all that goes "to furnish beauty and finish of execution".[62]

The conclusion of Arnold's play is also characteristic of the Greek tragedies. Sophocles' and Euripides' plays end flatly and abruptly with or without a moral tag. When the play is over, there is an impression that the last words are of no consequence. Arnold's conclusion is plainly imitated from the conclusion of Sophocles' Electra, but the last line is almost identical with the conclusion of the Trachiniae. The end, no doubt, evokes the feeling of rest and repose. J.H. Shorthouse is of the opinion that "the feeling of repose and rest which comes over the mind after reading Arnold's Merope... is delicious. The freshness and simplicity of the allusions and descriptions, the fewness of the incidents and the intensity of feeling produced by the few strongly defined passions on which the drama depends, all lead to an admirably calm and quiet frame of mind".[63]

G. Merope : The Effectiveness of the Form

Critics are not all in agreement in their views about Arnold's success as a dramatist. Douglas Bush holds Merope to be "the most complete reproduction in English of the form and conventions of Sophoclean tragedy".[64] Anniah Gowda writes, "In almost every important respect his [Arnold's] play conforms with some usage of classical tragedy".[65] In his view no earlier neo-classical play in English presumably comes so close to the Greek originals. The reviewer of The Leader, January, 1858, complimented Arnold as one, who without any modification or compromise, had tried to reproduce the Greek form "in all its niceties and characteristics".[66] Coventry Patmore unhesitatingly declared in his article, "Modern British Drama" in his Courage in Politics that "with the exception of Sampson [sic] Agonistes, it [Merope] is by far the most faithful, poetical and learned revival of the Greek drama of which the English language can boast".[67] But, side by side, there were critics who could not greet Arnold's innovation of a drama on the Attic model. The reviewer of The Christian Remembrance, January, 1868, in a twenty-two-page long article called "The Neo-Classical Drama" said, "... as a result of slavish imitation, the play was a school-exercise, a copy made to order".[68] W.P. Ker said that Merope "falls into the cold empty space, where nothing lives, but vacuity, the pithless phantoms of mere form".[69]

So far as the dramatic interest is concerned, critics all agree that Arnold's drama fails to move us. Swinburne, as is already noted, wrote to Lady Trevelyan on March 15, 1865 :"As for Professor Arnold's

Merope, the clothes are well enough, but where has the body gone?"[70] Anniah Gowda, likewise, observes, "As a poet Arnold obviously lacks the higher order of inspiration. He is blest with the form rather than with the view; the spirit descends upon him with a mantle, not a flame".[71] J.A.K. Thomson holds an identical view when he writes, "Much indeed can be said in commendation of Merope. But what is the use of a drama, if it is totally undramatic?"[72] Most of the critics hold that the thought of the play is not Greek. In the sober reserve of its ethical judgements the play becomes astonishingly British. G. Wilson Knight's opinion in this regard is worth quoting. He writes, "[In Merope] the form is classic, ... the tone and spirit of Greek drama were never better revivified; but the thought is modern".[73]

In his Preface Arnold praises Sophocles by saying, "Sophocles does not produce the sentiment of repose, of acquiescence by inculcating it, by avoiding agitating circumstances; he produces it by exhibiting to us the most agitating matter under conditions of the severest form".[74] But in Arnold's own case the picture is different. Its matter is not the most agitating. It has neither philosophical nor emotional weight. It is admitted on all hands that Arnold's subject completely fails to thrill us. Arnold is unable to construct situations either out of external action or psychological penetration so as to rouse high emotional pulsations. J.A.K. Thomson observes in this connection, "He [Arnold] had not learned perhaps, he had not even studied, the dramatic technique in which the general voice of antiquity declared Euripides to be

supreme. It is not a little extraordinary that a man who believed that in poetry 'all depends on the subject', should not have thought it necessary to add 'and on how the dramatist uses that subject'. A subject will not act itself. Perhaps Arnold's choice was not so happy as he thought. The modern reader is not familiar with the story of Merope, and so the modern poet cannot use the method of tragic irony in the Greek way".[75] He is right. Indeed, the story hangs upon a mother's failure to recognise a long-absent son so largely that it appears almost trivial. And there is melodramatic theatricality in the action of the mother's just-prevented murder of the youth. "Despite the sanction of Euripides, Maffei, Voltaire, and Alfieri, despite Aristotle and Lessing", Trilling observes, "the story of Merope is one of incident merely, and of rather pointless incident at that. From so inferior a fable no profound emotion can issue, inevitably after admiring Arnold's exposition of severest form, one recalls Roy Campbell's couplet:

> 'They use the bridle, and the bit all right
> But where's the bloody horse?'

One cannot make a school-horse into a stallion by bridle and bit; the attempt is bound to be ridiculous, as Merope is ridiculous with its paraphernalia of classical tragedy — the long and complicated geneological history of which the audience needs to be reminded by carefully casual references, but which, in this case, it could know only by memorizing the author's long synopsis".[76] Roscoe felt that Arnold was "deficient in the higher power of conception"[77] which accounts for great poetry. Pure in language

and clear in verse, Merope tends to be a melodrama. It has no unity of action and of interest. Aristotle in his Poetics insists on a single unhappy issue. Arnold, after the recognition scene, protracted the play, and in this case, the quality of interest is a blemish. After developing the crisis with great dramatic skill, Arnold climbed down and dealt with the fate of Polyphontes, with the inevitable result that the interest of the audience must flag.

It is also to be admitted that the slavish adherence to rules has been the bane of Merope. At times, it is distinctly mechanical. Especially in the earlier sections, "a certain deliberate, doctrinaire and highly artificial dryness prevails".[78] The animating spirit that should inform the whole, the passion that is the soul of Greek tragedy is lamentably lacking. Besides, Arnold makes no attempt to imitate the subtle elaboration of Sophocles' style, his studied artificiality of expression, the pregnant suggestiveness with which by a nice discrimination in the use of words and by delicacies of collocation, Sophocles conveys so much more than he formally and definitely presents.

5. Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon and Erechtheus : "Likeness of a Greek tragedy".

A. Introduction:

Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909), of all the nineteenth century poets, set himself to dramatic writing with the greatest seriousness of purpose, profoundest zeal and amplest application. He had an extremely resilient mind, and was susceptible to various influences. At the initial stage, he was very much drawn to the Pre-Raphaelite Movement. Always interested in the past, he listened to the enchanting whisperings of the sentiments of the Middle Ages. But soon he outgrew this influence and turned to the ancient Greek tragedians, the Bible and the Elizabethans.

While at Oxford, Swinburne was literally enraptured, feasted and fed in classical lore. And yet, he did not seem to be a Hellenist. In Undergraduate Papers (December, 1857), he wrote an article, 'Modern Hellenism' to criticise Matthew Arnold for his Hellenic bias and to champion the cause of the Elizabethan drama. But his anti-Hellenic spirit did not long persist. Swinburne came under the influence of Benjamin Jowett, a Greek scholar at Oxford, and became a "nineteenth century Hellene"[1], as A.R. Rutland called him in the title of his book on Swinburne.

Both at Eton and Oxford, Swinburne got himself familiar with Greek literature. His Atalanta in Calydon, modelled on Greek tragedy, was published in 1865. Erechtheus was also written on the

Greek model and was published in 1876. Like the Greek masters, Swinburne managed to give his tragedies a religious and serious character and was not prevented from uttering the clearest truths about man's predicament in the mysterious universe.

Apart from the tragedies, Swinburne wrote poems, like Itylus, which are unmistakably inspired by Greek subjects.

To the reading public, Atalanta in Calydon's success was immediate. The Athenaeum for April 1, 1865, wrote : "Atalanta in Calydon *is the work of a poet ... Let our readers say whether they* can often meet with pictures lovelier in themselves or more truly Greek than those in the ... invocation to Artemis".[2] The reviewer in The Spectator for 15 April, 1865, waxed eloquent about Swinburne's play: "The passion of Althea is much the finest part of the play. The naturalism of maternal instinct struggling with the feeling of what is due to the shade of her mother and her brothers, goes far beyond the struggle in Antigone or Orestes".[3] The Reader for 22 April, 1865, wrote : "The choruses are so good that it is difficult to praise them enough ... Mr. Swinburne has lived with the great Athenian dramatists till his tone of thought has somewhat assimilated to theirs".[4] The Saturday Review[5] for 6 May, 1865, wrote in a discerning article that Swinburne is original in the sense that the matter is thrown with great cleverness into a mould which almost leads us to forget the present author and to imagine that we are listening to one of the great contemporaries of Euripides. There were critics and reviewers, however, who wrote on the failure of

all attempts to reproduce the classical style in Atalanta in Calydon. John Morley in an article in The Saturday Review for 4 August, 1866, wrote, "Their [of the Greeks] most remarkable distinction is their scrupulous moderation and sobriety in colour. Mr. Swinburne riots in the profusion of colour of the most garish and heated kind".[6] The Saturday Review for 30 May, 1868, wrote : "Swinburne's attempt to recreate a Greek play ... lacks complete success only because the incompatibility of the modern temper with antique forms and attitudes makes any such success impossible".[7] Swinburne, however, was confident of his success in Atalanta in Calydon. He wrote, "I think it is pure Greek and the first poem of the sort in modern times, combining lyric and dramatic work on the old principle".[8]

Erechtheus is one of the maturest plays of Swinburne. He considered it to be his best play. In the year 1875 Swinburne visited Benjamin Jowett, Professor of Greek at the University of Oxford, at Pitlochry and under his instruction made an intensive study of Aeschylus so that the Greek dramatist's manner was thoroughly absorbed and digested. He paid another visit to Jowett at West Malvern when he sketched the plot of Erechtheus. He finished the play in November, 1875, and issued it on the New year's Day, 1876. Swinburne wrote a long letter to his friend, William Rossetti, on August 21, 1875, in which he recorded the working of his mind at the time of writing this drama : "I am now on a three weeks' visit to Jowett and at work on a companion poem to Atalanta which I hope will turn out a more perfect original example of Greek tragedy than

that was. It is very simple in structure, and deals only with two elementary passions — that of child and parent, and that of patriotism. I wish to make (the lyrical part) conform rigidly to the musical rule of Greek tragedy, which I know I certainly neglected when writing Atalanta but which I now see to be perfectly in harmony with the natural genius of the English language, and capable (in right hands) of the finest and fewest effects in lyric verse. Jowett approves my scheme highly, and has helped me with some valuable hints from the classical or scholarly point of view. Arnold's Merope, as Jowett says with perfect justice, is too much a direct imitation of extant Greek examples to be a genuine poetic reproduction of the Greek type. Now I mean my Praxithea to be equally impeccable, while by avoiding any imitation of any Greek play or dramatist now existing ... I hope to keep my work quite as fresh and free, in appearance as well as in fact, as ... I am trying to infuse throughout a broader undernote of general and world-wide interest based on the immortality of Greece..."[9]

Swinburne held a higher view of Erechtheus than Atalanta. He wrote, "I am now writing a Greek tragedy which I mean to be more purely Hellenic and perhaps more universal in its relation to human thought and emotion than was Atalanta".[10]

Let us now see how far these two plays conform to the form and capture the spirit of Greek tragedy.

B. Atalanta in Calydon

(i) The Meleager Legend : Swinburne's handling:

Swinburne had a wide acquaintance with classical literature. He drew substantially upon various sources of Greek and Roman legends and mythology, while writing Atalanta in Calydon. Phrynichus (512-476 B.C.) was the first among the Greek poets who dramatised the Meleager legend in The Pleuronian Women. Aeschylus has referred to the Meleager legend in Choephoroi. Both Sophocles and Euripides had a play each called Meleager. The plays of Phrynichus and Sophocles on the subject are non-extant. Euripides wrote of Atalanta in details in his play. Only a small fragment of the play exists. Euripides gave prominence to the love-episode of Meleager and Atalanta, as the record shows.

Swinburne came across a book containing the fragment of Euripides' Meleager. He needed also to read the chorus of Choephoroi, in which there was a distinct reference to Atalanta in Calydon.

Thus the story of the Calydonian boar-hunt and the doom of Meleager was a splendid choice for Swinburne's tragedy. It was not hampered by the Greek writers' treatment of it. However, Swinburne was indebted at least to three for his ideas. C.M. Bowra has noted Swinburne's indebtedness to the Greek masters in the following lines : "He [Swinburne] derived his ideas from a few lines in the Libation-Bearers of Aeschylus, from the speech of Phoenix in Book IX of the Iliad, and ... from some three hundred lines in Book VIII of the Metamorphoses

[of Ovid][11] Swinburne, however, adds, alters and expands and in writing his tragedy he passes beyond the Roman adaptation to something like a Greek original.

The dramatic story of Atalanta in Calydon may be summarised in a few words. Artemis in her rage against Calydon, sends Atalanta, the virgin of Arcadia, to participate in the tragic boar hunt. Meleager, the king's son, falls in love with Atalanta, quarrels on her account with his mother's brothers and kills them. Althea, Meleager's mother, honours her love for her brothers by placing upon the fire the magic brand on which Meleager's life depends. As it is consumed, so Meleager dies.

An analysis of the plot of Atalanta in Calydon shows that it (the plot) is tragic in the Sophoclean sense. Artemis, insulted by Oeneus' neglect of her, sends the Calydonian boar to ravage his lands; to hunt the boar comes Atalanta and Meleager falls in love with her. So the tragic situation rises with its elements of conflict and infatuation. Meleager kills his uncles when they affront Atalanta and from this comes the tragic choice. Althea has to choose between her love for her son and her love for her brothers. In such a choice any decision brings disaster. Althea decides to kill her son and this means not only his death but her own, since after his death, she cannot endure to live.

The choice Althea makes reminds us of the similar situation, Deianeira, in The Women of Trachis, faces when she has to choose between accepting a rival in her home and using illicit magic to

win back her husband. She chooses the second and kills both him and herself. The plot of Swinburne's play is equally final, equally tragic. Again, in The Women of Trachis, Heracles' love for Iole leads to a hideous disaster. Likewise, in Atalanta in Calydon Meleager's love for Atalanta breaks the harmony of life and leads to his doom. Like the Greeks Swinburne regards love as a dangerous power that often breaks the harmony and order of life.

The subject of Swinburne's play is one and entire and that satisfies the condition laid down by Aristotle. But it is to be admitted that the subject is not great. The tragic crisis turns on the jealousy of Meleager's shadowy uncles over the honours of the chase, and on the clash of the sisterly and maternal feelings in Althea. But the story is none the greater for the poet's enormous cascade of glittering and rushing language. Again, according to Aristotle, a tragedy should occur between the nearest and the dearest. In Swinburne's play the tragedy occurs between the mother and the son, and no relation can be closer.

The nature of the plot of Atalanta in Calydon is such that it requires neither peripeteia nor anagnorisis. The play, by its very nature, is a 'calamity play'. The primary object of the play is to arouse pity and fear and this Atalanta in Calydon has succeeded in achieving in a large measure. The emotions of the reader stirred and loosened culminate in acute tension between the impulse of pity and impulse of terror. With the solution of the crisis through the co-ordinating poet's imagination comes intense emotional relief or catharsis.

(ii) The Formal Mould:

Aristotle has not set store by characters. With him plot is the soul of a tragedy. Greek tragedy was not primarily concerned with characters. Atalanta in Calydon is also not concerned with characters.

Meleager is the hero of the play. eminently good and noble, he kills his uncles not only for self-defence but also for the vindication of the honour of his beloved. He has neither 'hamartia' nor 'mochtheria'. He is never betrayed by his passions or what is false within him. He becomes a helpless victim of Fate and accepts the destiny with passive fatalism.

In the Aristotelian sense, Meleager is, therefore, not a truly tragic character. Althea better answers that description. She dominates the stage. Swinburne has taken infinite pains to represent her as a devoted, almost a doting mother, religiously observant of law and order. She is also extremely devoted to her brothers whose death, at the hands of her own son, plunges her into a frenzy of grief. Her early speeches prelude the tragedy, which the later scenes confirm. Mistrustful of the gods, and of Atalanta, above all, distrustful of love, her one aim centres in the maternal love and her desire to protect her son from passion and from divine vengeance. She, however, displays greater love for the brothers than for her son. She is, no doubt, torn in a bitter conflict, and ultimately the loyalty to the brothers is triumphant. After all this is said, we must agree that Althea is not an

active agent. Once she begins to kindle the fatal brand and so to bring death to her son, she sees the full horror of her action. But she does not relent. She is the victim of doom. The Fates have worked their will on her.

Atalanta is an unwomanly woman by Greek standards. "Her cult of virginity", writes C.M. Bowra, "her lack of common ties and affections, her avoidance of wedlock and of motherhood, and her participation in activities properly reserved to men, put her outside the ordinary ranks of women and suggest that she is consumed by a reckless pride".[12] "In Swinburne's tragic scheme", the same critic maintains, "Atalanta is the instrument of doom because she pursues her own will against the rules of men".[13] Mario Pratz in Romantic Agony confirms this view and describes Atalanta as a frigid virgin — a kind of fatal woman. She is, no doubt, a bright and lovely creation of Greek legend but she reminds us of some heroines of medieval romances.

Swinburne did not adhere to the form of Greek tragedy with any servile pedantry. He did follow the old masters in respect of the stichomythia and in the use of the Messenger's speeches. All the three unities are, however, rightly observed. The unity of action has been secured by the scrupulous avoidance of all digressions, while the unity of impression has been brought about by maintaining throughout a note of gravity and seriousness. The unity of place has been observed by representing the entire action in one particular place. The action takes place in Calydon in some open place,

before the palace of King Oeneus. The unity of time has also been rigidly observed.

So far as the construction of the play is concerned Swinburne follows the Greek model as rigidly as possible. Atalanta in Calydon conforms to the Aristotelian guideline in the following way:

The Huntsman's Prologue - Lines 1-64
Parode - Lines 65-120
The First Episode — Lines 121-313
The First Stasimon - Lines 314-361
The Second Episode — Lines 362-718
The Second Stasimon — Lines 719-806
The Third Episode — Lines 867-1037
The Third Stasimon — Lines 1038-1204
The Fourth Episode — Lines 1205-1373
The Fourth Stasimon — Lines 1374-1468
The Fifth Episode — Lines 1469-1518
The Fifth Stasimon — Lines 1519-1865
The Six Episode — Lines 1866-1957
Commos Lines 1958-2191
The Exodos - Lines 2192-2317

The opening speech of the huntsman resembles the usually less poetical Euripidean prologue and reminds us of more realistic watchman at the beginning of Agamemnon. The play, however, is

half as long again as the longest Greek play. Swinburne's exuberance needed a wider scope than an ancient tragedian was allowed, and he rightly took it. It should also be noted at the same time that though the play is of a greater length than a normal Greek tragedy, it sustains the interest of the readers and spectators. Swinburne, however, made some significant departures from the Greek masters so far as some of the devices and conventions of Greek tragedy are concerned. Towards the close of the tragedy, Swinburne, in contravention of the Greek practice, allowed four characters and the chorus on the stage for lamenting the death of Meleager. And, secondly, in his use and construction of the chorus, he did not always follow the Greek practice.

In a typical Greek tragedy the chorus is an idealised spectator. In Atalanta in Calydon, the choral songs are not always the expressions of the idealised spectator. At times they state the dramatist's views. The chorus in Greek tragedy is mostly impersonal, but in Atalanta in Calydon, it is degraded to the personal plane. And yet the choric songs are an imitation of those of Aeschylus.

The first chorus, consisting of the fifteen Aetolian virgins, advance after the invocation to Aurora by the chief huntsman. It is a rapturous paean — an expression of intense joy at the invigorating force of Nature. The second chorus begins with the words, 'Before the beginning of years'. The theme of the song

is the greatness and littleness of man. The third chorus beginning with the words, "We have seen thee, O Love", is a hymn to Aphrodite. Althea tries to warn her son against the unsexed Arcadian virgin. Meleager is mentally very much disturbed. The chorus breaks out into their curse of Venus at this psychological moment. The chorus anticipates that the love of Meleager and Atalanta will not be consummated. Atalanta enters and greets Artemis, her protector. Meleager's intervention in her favour causes the uncles' resentment. It is then the fourth chorus begins a fulmination against Fate and God. Such invectives seem incongruous in the mouth of a group of girls. Besides, this invective is out of keeping with the traditional role of the chorus and it bears no relation to what any of the participants would have actually been feeling. At the end the chorus have deeply pessimistic reflections on the Gods and Fate:

"Who shall contend with his lords
Or cross them or do them wrong?[14]

All the choruses are antitheistic but the third and fourth choruses are foam bubbling with gall and rancour in their vitriolic denunciation of God. The third chorus denounces God as evil:

"All we are against thee, against thee, O God most high".[15]

In the fourth chorus there is the more resounding denunciation. "Yea, with thine hate, O God, thou hast covered us".[16]

Greek tragedy provices no justification for such outbursts from the impersonal chorus. Swinburne has used the chorus to state views which are his own and not justified by Greek example. However, these outbursts are few in the play and they have no real relation to the plan of the poem.

The most vulnerable point which many critics find in respect of the form of Atalanta in Calycon, is the structure of its chorus. Swinburne himself refers to this issue in the Dedicatory Epistle to the collected edition of his poems. "Atalanta", he says, "was perhaps too exuberant and effusive, in its dialogue, as it certainly was too irregular in the licence of its choral verse to accomplish the design or achieve the success which its author aimed at".[17] Of course these choruses are not built upon the triple structure of the choruses of Aeschylus and Sophocles. If we take the most rigid formal standpoint, justification of a monostrophic chorus is to be found in Euripides. It is this authority which Milton invoked to justify the choruses in his Samson Agonistes. The vital point is whether the choruses are altogether formless or whether they possess any kind of internal structure that may reasonably claim to have a form of their own. We think that the choruses of Atalanta in Calydon have a form of their own and are appropriate to the genius of English language. These choruses play the part which their counterparts do in Aeschylus and Sophocles, and which Aristotle says to be the only correct one. In Atalanta in Calycon, they fully enter the dialogue, as for example, in episodes 5 and 6 where they

play much the same part as the chorus, in, say, the Oedipus Rex. But, it was, of course, more from Aeschylus that Swinburne derived his conception of choral drama than from Euripides.

It cannot be gainsaid that the success and popularity of Atalanta in Calydon were due to its choruses. Unlike Milton and Arnold, Swinburne adopted rhyme and introduced a new music into English poetry. Through the use of rhyme Swinburne conveys some of the variety and sprightliness which are possible in Greek quantitative verse. The Greek chorus was certainly a venicle of lyric poetry, and Swinburne utilized the scope of the formal element to the maximum extent.

In Greek tragedy there is an imaginative unity effected by a perfect blending of idea with the whole texture of the work. This imaginative unity is also found in Atalanta in Calydon. There is also the interweaving of the lyric pattern as in the Greek dramas which are lyrical in manner. The unity in Aeschylean drama may be said to be akin to the unity of the lyric stanzas. And Swinburne, a master lyricist, gives a superb lyric unity to his stanzas. His lyric vision atains an expression, most suited to embody its richness and intensity of idea in a great design. The lyrics unite the thought and idea of the play and bring into cohesion the chain of events into a unifying imaginative whole.

(iii) The Spirit

Swinburne had so absorbed the Greek outlook that he was able to reproduce the spirit of Greek tragedy in Atalanta in Calydon. In Sophocles' Antigone, Antigone recognises that she would have broken the existing law not for a son or a husband but for a brother. This denotes that the Greeks the identity of blood through common parents was a closer bond than marriage or motherhood. Swinburne made an appropriate use of this in displaying Althea's anguish and her choice. Her decision in preferring her brothers to her son is Greek in spirit. Secondly, the Greek poets often dwell on the incalculable, reckless and pitiless power of love. Swinburne is found to agree with them. Althea speaks of it to the chorus and warns Meleager of its consequences. Meleager is infatuated by his love for Atalanta. Just as in the Women of Trachis, Heracles' love for Iole leads to a hideous disaster, so in Swinburne's play Meleager's love for Atalanta breaks the harmony of life and leads to his doom. Thirdly, the spirit and purpose of the great lamentations that come towards the close of the play are undeniably Greek. They create a musical effect like that at the end of The Persians or The Eumenides. Fourthly, Althea lays down the rules when she tells Meleager that if man obeys the laws of the gods, all will be as well as can be expected in this life:

"Be man at one with equal minded gods".[18]

But the observance of the law is violated both by Atalanta and Meleager. Hence arises the tragic crisis. At the close end the chorus says,

"The gods guard over us
With sword and with rod;
Weaving shadow to cover us,
Heaping the rod,
That law may fulfil herself wholly, to darken man's face before God".[19]

The idea of the gods guarding over us is a perfectly Greek idea. Added to these is Swinburne's sense of Fatalism which unmistakably echoes that of the ancient Greeks. In the epilogue of Swinburne's play the chorus emphasises the dominance of destiny which is the characteristic feature of the Greek tragedy. The deepeneing and lengthening shadow of Fate pervades the whole play. In Atalanta in Calydon the expression of Fatalism surpasses even that of Aeschylus' . There is a complete negation of free will. Even the gods find it difficult to cope with inexorable destiny. The choral virgins sing of the hopelessness of all struggle and exult over vain defiance. There is no equity and no method in the fate of the mortals:

"The Gods love not justice more than fate
And smite the righteous and the violent mouth".[20]

As we know, Greek tragedy raises some questions about man's relation with the gods and gods are active in the action. In Atalanta in Calydon Gods c st their shadows on the action. There are moments in Greek tragedy when the characters break into denunciation of divine indifference. In Swinburne's play, Althea, after proclaiming the need of obedience to the gods, show no very high o inion of their morality:

"But the gods love not justice more than fate,
And smite the righteous and the violent mouth,
And mix with insolent blood the reverent man's
And bruise the holier as the lying lips".[21]

This is no more than what some characters in Euripides say, and not much more than what Sophocles' Jocasta and Philoctetes say in the hours of agony or anguish. But Swinburne goes one step further. He uses the chorus to state views which are undoubtedly his own.

Critics like A.R. Rutland[22] think Atalanta in Calydon has probably more affinities with Euri ides than with Aeschylus in the ethical outlook. A dominant spirit of Euripides is found to pervade the play especially in the part that shows the emotional reaction to human suffering. The chorus moralising on Althea:

"Hard things have fallen upon us from harsh gods,
Whom let worse hap rebuke we not for these".[23]

is not far from the chorus that laments over Hecu a. Throughout Swinburne's play, there is an anti-religion and rebellious spirit,

which is unmistakably Euripidean. There is a striking similarity between Euripides' Hippolytus and Swinburne's play. The dying hero in that play of Euripides is carried like Meleager, and forgives his father, as Meleager forgives his mother.

The spirit of Euripides is also perceptible in the real tragic action which consists not in the slaying of the Boar and the evaporation of Meleager, but precisely in the struggle with theological tyranny which drives his chorus to lift its voices in despair and revolt. The Euripidean traits in Atalanta in Calydon may have impelled contemporary criticism[24] in its appreciation of the drama to recall Euripides. Indeed Swinburne is closer to Euripides than to any other Greek dramatist in his ethical outlook.

Swinburne's analysis of human helplessness, as outlined in his play, is the same as enunciated in Greek tragedy. Mark Siegchrist's observation in this connection is worth quoting. He writes, 'As is usually the case in Greek tragedies, the disaster which unfolds as the play progresses is out of all reasonable proportion to the original human error or transgression which in this case was Oeneus's having "forgotten" to honor Artemis in his sacrifices. ... The master-storke of Artemis's revenge is simply to have arranged the presence of Atalanta in Calydon —— all that follows, impelled by the destructiveness of love, unrolls with the inevitability of Greek tragedy'.[25]

Swinburne agreed with Aeschylus on the tragic contrast between human aspiration and divine law. But he refused to share with Aeschylus his passionate search for the principles of righteousness working behind the sorry spectacle of man's martyrdom to divine malevolence. He did not follow Aeschylus' groping towards a compromise between the absolute, inner and inexorable external necessity. He presents the tragic qualm in the blackest possible form arising as ideas from the discrepancy between our sense of fate, as illustrated in the incidents of a tragic life, and our conceptions of justice and right reason without bothering in the least, like Aeschylus, to palliate the situation by offering some material solution. Nevertheless, the influence of Aeschylus was dominant on him.

(iv) The Style:

Structurally Atalanta in Calydon is Hellenic, but the style is not. J.A.K. Thomson[26] is right to say that the extraordinary vehemence and self propagating character of his inspiration, carried Swinburne too often beyond the bounds of a justly proportioned and duly concentrated work of art. As he says, Swinburne's sense of form never leaves him, nor his purity of diction, and so far he is classical. But his inability to control his inspiration is the very oposite of classical.

There is, besides, an apparent incongruity in the combinations in tion of the conceptions of the ancient and the modern sensibili-/

Atalanta in Calydon. Althea thinks of her own son, the great hero Meleager, as a child and remembers not his present prowess but his childhood days (Ll 667-70). She also recollects what her brothers did for her when she was a child (Ll 1564-72). These sentiments about childhood are modern, domestic sensibilities. T.E. Welby[27] finds in Althea's exceptional tenderness of memory Swinburne's dramatic ability to conquer the apparent difficulty of the tragedy, the reconciliation of Althea's love of her son with her horrible vengeance on him as the slayer of her brothers. Althea's speech is full of eloquence when she, torn between love of her son and of her brothers, stricken at heart by agonised regrets, says,

> "O my son,
> O child, for thine head's sake, mine eyes wax thick
> Turning toward thee, so goodly a weaponed man,
> So glorious; and for love of thine own eyes
> They are darkened, and tears burn them, fierce as fire"[28]

The great lamentations which come towards the close of the play, when four characters and the chorus are on the stage together, do not conform to the Greek canon which allows no more than three characters on the stage.

Some critics say that Atalanta in Calydon has the Greek body while the heart is modern. Ifor Evans, for example, says that the play assumes "the likeness of Greek tragedy but combines with it a romantic profession of lyrical verse, and from that combination creates a new form".[29] Indeed, Swinburne, being predominantly a romantic poet, could not exercise restraint upon his heart and could not hold the rein of inordinate lyrical flight. This is why,

despite himself, his drama, though structurally classical, has a modern spirit. Swinburne adopted one of the most romantic stories of late Homeric Greece, making improvements, in his choral drama, but keeping very close to the outlines of the old tale. In the Greek version, Meleager has a wife named Cleopatra. But Swinburne makes Meleager the wild hunter of the woods, who has never yielded to the charm of the woman till he is smitten by the eyes and hair of Atalanta. That this new episode of Meleager's love for Atalanta and the main outline of the drama comes from Ovid has been shown by Maurice Bowra.[30]

Sophocles throws his full imaginative power into the creation of Ajax who defies Athene. Swinburne also does his best to make his characters enjoy all the poetry which he can give them. The deep call of Althea's blood while preferring her brothers to her son is presented in noble and beautiful words. Bowra gives a higher place to this poetry in Swinburne than his admiration for the Greeks in the following words: "The poetry of Atalanta is as good as it is because the story appealed to something deeper in Swinburne than his admiration for the Greek tragedians. That is why Atalanta is not an imitation but stands in its own right as a true work of art".[31]

Swinburne had to cope with the stiff conventions of Greek tragedy. To give a full poetry to the stiffness of the conventions, he had to keep his language unusually lively and exhilarating. His language provokes unexpected shocks. Swinburne means us to startle, to make us look with fresh eyes. The huntsman thus addresses the dawn:

"O fair-faced sun, killing the stars and dews
And dreams and desolation of the night".[32]

Stars, dews, dreams and desolation do not belong to a single order of things, and their combination is startling.

Swinburne had a lively fancy and profusion of expression which accorded ill with the solemn and severe stateliness of Attic tragedy. He had an intense sympathy with the Greek dramatists and a full perception of their grandeur and purity as well as of the exquisite finish of their workmanship. He had, besides, a strong sense of beauty. And yet his mind was cast not like the Greeks. His metaphors, images and allusions are heaped upon one another in a wide prodigal way, which reminds us of Shelley and Browning more than of ancient poets. He lays on strokes after strokes of colour till the last obliterates the first, and the readers are bewildered among thick-coming sensations. His profusion of expression becomes at times prolixity. His lyrical exuberance has also been criticised. J.A.K. Thomson, for example, writes, "The poet's lyrical impulse carries everything before it, so that even the spoken parts are not much more than lyrics in blank verse. And he has even less than Shelley the power of presenting or controlling a dramatic situation".[33]

Swinburne was unsparing in the use of the most violent colours and the most intoxicated ideas and images. The music in Atalanta in Calydon is, in fact, a trick of words and letters. There is hardly any artistic moderation. The Greek poets, even in

their most impetuous moods, never allowed themselves to be carried on by the swing of words. In short, Swinburne displayed lavishly his bountifulness of imagination, mastery of the music of verse, but at the same time thinness of contemplation and poverty of genuinely impassioned thought. One of the unclassical things of the play relates to the five choral song upon the dealings of the gods with men, the pious or impious parts of which would have been equally impossible for a Greek dramatist.

But in spite of all that is said we have to admit that in Atalanta in Calydon, we have to deal, not with a Greek imitation, but with a Greek imagination. The fullest and most ardent poetic expression shows itself compatible with the antique majesty.

C. Erechtheus

(i) Swinburne's handling of the Plot:

The dramatic emotion of Erechtheus, as Swinburne himself has said, is built upon "the two elementary passions — that of child and parent and that of patriotism".[34] The first elementary passion, that of child and parent, is woven with the second to rouse pity and terror as we experience in an Aeschylean drama. The dramatic story of Erechtheus may be summarised as follows. Erechtheus was the son of Pandion I, King of Athens. He had three sons — Cecrops II, Merion and Pandorus, and four daughters — Creusa, Orithya, Procris, and Othonia or Chthonia. Athens is attacked by the Thracians. The king and his queen Praxithea fear the destruction of the city. The oracle says that the city will be saved if their daughter is sacrified. The next movement of the drama is largely the study of the minds of Praxithea and her daughter, Chthonia, once faced with the tragic doom. Chthonia accepts her doom:

> "This my doom that seals me deathless till the springs of time run dry".[35]

and considers the sacrifice of her life as a privilege:

> "That I may give this poor girl's blood of mine
> Scarce yet sun warmed with summer, this thin life
> Still green with flowerless growth of seedling days
> To build again my city ..."[36]

Chthonia dies, and there is the announcement of the herald of Athens' triumph. Erechtheus also dies. Praxithea is left alone at the close, who, in spite of the terrible tragedy into which the Gods have plunged her, does not lose the nobility of her soul by blaming the gods.

This sacrifice of the maiden Chthonia which reminds one of the sacrifices of the Virgin Iphigenia of Euripides,[37] led a contemporary reviewer to remark that Erechtheus was a translation from Euripides. This remark raised Swinburne's anger which he expressed in a letter to a friend (January 2, 1876) in the following words: "Translations from Euripides indeed : why, a fourth form boy can perceive that, as far as Erechtheus can be said to be framed after anybody, it is modelled throughout on the earlier style of Aeschylus ...".[38]

Of course, Swinburne in this letter refers to Euripides' fragment. But nothing of the Greek dramatist was incorporated. As it is evident from one of his letters, Swinburne knew the speech of Praxithea, one of the few extant fragments of Euripides' Erechtheus. The story of Erechtheus was told by the Greek orator Lycurgus, the source to which Swinburne was indebted.

It might be that Swinburne had Aeschylus' Seven Against Thebes in mind while writing this play. In Seven Against Thebes as in Erechtheus the readers are in a beleaguered city; our hearts flutter with the emotions of its inhabitants; we share in the tumult of its defence, and we hear it after the angry tide of war that comes

rushing towards the gates. The openings of the two plays have much in common. Both present to us the solitary heroic figure of the captain who must take his vassal through the gathering storm.

Erechtheus, as a play on the Greek model, is more regular than Atalanta in Calydon and, indeed, the theme of the drama is more Hellenic than that of Atalanta in Calydon. It combines a tender and thrilling treatment of emotion with an appeal to civic patriotism in the truest sense of antiquity. Edmund Gosse considers it to be "the most Greek of all the compositions of Swinburne"[39], because "it follows with the great success, closely, yet vividly, the exact classical models".[40] Better to say, Erechtheus is passionately Athenian and Athens is considered the living symbol of the virtue of citizenship. Swinburne wrote to William Michael Rossetti in a letter[41] that he was trying to unfuse throughout a broader undernote of general and world-wide interest based on the immortality of Greece as the everlasting and universal mother country of thought, art and acting the exemplar, to all times and nations for all patriots and poets.

Harold Nicolson is of the opinion that there "is the lack of concentration in the dramatic interest of the story; it is never wholly clear whether Athens is to be destroyed by the Thracians or by the sea; it is never wholly clear whether the central theme is the sacrifice of Chthonia or the heroism of her mother; and the final holocaust of Erechtheus and his remaining daughter is treated

in a manner wholly unconvincing and almost incidental". This criticism does not hold good while we remember that the theme of play is patriotism. The fact is that Athens is going to be destroyed and it is immaterial if it is not clear whether it is to be destroyed by the Thracians or by the sea, so long as we know that to save this Athens in danger, Chthonia, out of her noble patriotic fervour, sacrifices her life. The other deaths in this drama are meant to raise the passion of patriotism. The play should be regarded as an evocation of the ideal Republic. Carrying Nicolson's argument a little further, we may say that Erechtheus stirs our modern sensibility by its appeal to deep patriotic emotion.

(ii) Pattern of Construction:

One of the blemishes of Erechtheus is its insufficient individualisation of character. It is said that there is no single character with red-blood corpuscle which can draw our attention. Swinburne has been unable to delineate a character on the scale of Antigone, nor has he been successful in producing that subtle interplay of different characters which enables Euripides to retain our interest in the less exalted atmosphere of the Iphigenia. But this criticism overlooks the fact that Swinburne's Erechtheus is built upon the model of the early plays of Aeschylus. In the three early plays of Aeschylus, which Swinburne had in his mind while composing his play, there is little or no action and no real conflict involved in the presentation of the character. Similarly

in Erechtheus, Swinburne is not intent upon character-delineation; he is concerned, like the early Aeschylus, with the majestic conception of his dramatic emotion and idea, and investing the bare plot that there is, with a treatment full of grandeur.

The entirely Greek form of the play gives, on analysis, the following parts of its construction:

Prologue : The prayer of Erechtheus

(1st chorus) Parode : "Sun that has lightened and loosed the night..."

(Strophe I of chorus I) Stasimon: "A noise that has arisen against us of water ..."

Episode I : Erechtheus, Praxithea and chorus

(2nd chorus) Stasimon 2: "He hath uttered too purely his worth not obscurely ..."

Episode 2 : Chthonia, Praxithea and chorus

(3rd chorus) Stasimon 3 : "Out of the north wind grief came forth .. "

Episode 3 : Herald of Eumolpus, chorus and Erechtheus.

(4th chorus) Stasimon 4 : "Who shall put a bridle in the mourner's lips to chasten them ...."

First Commos : Chthonia, Praxithea and chorus.

Episode 4 : Chthonia, Praxithea and chorus

Second Commos : Chthonia and chorus

(5th chorus) Stasimon 5 : "Many loves of many a mood and may a king".

Episode 5 : Messenger — choral interlude, Messenger.

Stasimon 6 : "Ill thoughts breed fear, and fear ill words..."

Episode 6 : Athenian Herald, chorus and Praxithea

Stasimon 7 : "From the cup of my heart
I pour through my lips along ..."

Episode 7 : Athenia and Praxithea.

Exode : "From the depth of the springs of my spirit ..."

The play's most interesting structural feature is the construction of its choruses. Swinburne adopted the antiphonal form used in chorus by the Greek tragic writers and in non-dramatic poetry notably by Pindar and Bacchylide. The choruses of Erechtheus are English poems showing what can be done in this language by the adoption o the Greek antiphonal structure. As Swinburne himself says in the Deidicatory Epistle[43] that the Greek form with its regular arrangement of turn is not to be imitated because it is Greek, but to be adopted, because it is the best, the very best as a rule, that could be imagined for lyrical expression of the thing conceived, lyrical aspiration towards the aim imagined. To the criticism that Erechtheus is "colder and more specialized and less inspired",[44] we can say that Swinburne, the lyricist, was able to produce in the English speech a music that fully rosembles the might harmonies of Aeschylus; it is a music different from the romantic ehtereal verse.

We may compare the choruses of Erechtheus with those of Seven Against Thebes. The choruses in the former are the striving

songs of men, while those in the latter are the frightened cries of women. Both come as interludes in the stresses of epic conflict. The heroes in both the dramas share the same unconquerable spirit. Edmund Gosse has very rightly said that the choruses of Erechtheus "display to the full of the poet's gift of splendour and they present as well a reserve and purity of language, a cool beauty which he rarely attains".[45]

That Swinburne has used the chorus in the Greek manner with more success in this play than in Atalanta in Calydon is seen while we compare the fourth Stasimon of the play with "who hath given man speech" in Atalanta. The lines in the choir chanting on the Acropolis from Strophe I to Antistrophe 4 have a dignity of soul more worthy of man, walking "by the light of stars and fire". The display is possibly of a cosmic conception that was not that of the Greek tragedies in general, but of Sophocles in particular, who more nobly kept his lips from over-speech. And we wonder why Swinburne owes his debt only to Aeschylus, and not to Sophocles.[46]

(iii) The Spirit:

According to Bruno Herlet, "Erechtheus is altogether too fatalistic and inhuman. The altogether too great insistence upon fatalistic principle is perhaps the reason why Erechtheus, despite its wonderful beauty, leaves us cold".[47] But Herlet's opinion sounds weightless. A play of Sophocles does not leave us cold. And if it does not, then the question also does not arise in case of Swinburne.

Again, that destiny should play such a part is absolutely essential to the poet's purpose; otherwise, the heroism of his men and women becomes motiveless, and they lose much of their greatness which shines so resplendently against the sombre background of merciless Necessity.

The Athenaeum for January 1, 1876, commented that Erechtheus was not a translation from Euripides and found the narrative of Praxithea singularly fine and impressive, and the rhapsody concerning Athens splendidly eloquent — a magnificent outburst of chorus. T.S. Kelby also does not find Erechtheus cold. He writes, "Erechtheus is full of passion, or a white heat passion for something remote from the minds of most men, and its body of verse is evenly magnificent, and never allowing readers' attention to get deflected from the single, central theme. That is why the serious tone of the drama is interpreted as 'cold'. But sublimity and high seriousness are simply the general features of a Greek drama. And to condemn Erechtheus for its pervading intellect is to miss the sustained loftiness of emotion, the grave ardour in expression, the unfaltering speed with which the action is conducted, the exactitude with which the whole material is organised, the continuity of all the themes to the central relation of the play. The chorus who tells of the North Wind's wild wooing of the Oreithyia gives out a magnificent lyrical brilliance, put to order, effusive exuberance, highly disciplined".[48]

Rutland has referred to Kratislaw who thinks, "Erechtheus contains some of his finest writing, and yet to me it seemsto be

devoid of proper poetic feeling. It is full of splendid rhetoric, and yet it is productive of no emotion but pain — the play has never seemed to me anything but fierce and barren and intolerable".[49] But the present researcher does not agree with the critic that Swinburne's play is devoid of emotion and barren, fierce and intolerable. He would rather support Rutland's view as follows: "One suspects that this critic would have all these feelings accentuated were he to read Attic drama as written by the Attic dramatists instead of written by Swinburne. If he said that such death of Polyxena produced no emotion but pain, that such a play as the Hecuba, or the Medea was intolerable, one could understand him. But would he find the Oedipus Rex or the Orestiea or the Electra of Sophocles less intolerable than Erechtheus? Would he think that Antigone is fierce and barren and devoid of proper poetic feeling? ..... Erechtheus is to be judged as Greek drama; if one does not like Greek dramas, very naturally one will not like Erechtheus".[50]

In this play Swinburne never crossed the limits of self-control. In fact, he achieved sustained control of emotion in Erechtheus. Some critics have praised Chthonia for her self-sacrifice. They felt that she has rendered an inestimable service to the state.

The play is remarkable for its technical flawlessness. In fact its impeccable art has appealed to some critics too banal to be the final appeal of the drama. Humphrey Hare has said, "Planned under Jowett's eye,

with a too-conscious regard to exact conformity with the principles of the Aeschylean drama, with a too-disciplined, a too-impeccably hellenic symmetry, the play moves in a serene, remote empyrean, in an atmosphere too rarefied for the breath of human tragedy or the quickening of the heart's beat".[51]

The reviewer of Erechtheus in The Edinburgh Review, July, 1876 began his praise of the drama by saying, "It would be hard indeed, to find another theme that could be brought into more perfect harmony with the Greek tragic genius... So it is that Mr. Swinburne seems to have arisen far above a simple imitation like Mr. Browning's Balunstion, and to have achieved the difficult feat of casting a genuine Greek tragedy, in the more cumbrous moulds of modern English diction".[52] And then this anonymous reviewer makes further remarks. He admits that human sacrifice is intensely repugnant to modern feelings, but points out that Swinburne's treatment is, in itself, far less revolting while sternly powerful, than the representation that often held the Athenians spell bound. He compares Erechtheus with the Eumenides which might be characterised in the language of our modern criticism as offensively sensational. In fact, the drama of Erechtheus is cast with a high purpose. One may discover its counterpart in the sacred Hebrew history, and say that it resembles the great crowning sacrifice which is the keynote of the entire scheme of the quieter Christian dispensation. Chthonia dies for her country like the daughter of Jephtha, but her death is the deliberate seal of a reverent submission to supernatural behests instead of the redemption of a reckless vow.

Compared to Atalanta in Calydon, Erechtheus has more breadth and stateliness of action and a more perfect Hellenic repose. It has less sweetness but more majesty with no frantic declaration against the Gods. What it loses in graceful juvenility it gains in maturity of self-control. Rutland[53] is of the view that the true grandeur of Erechtheus lies not in its relation to the past, but in its relation to the perennial aspiration of Humanity. Erechtheus is not only great but noble because it expresses love which makes life a worth living.

The implication of the sacrifice depicted in Erechtheus can be properly understood if we have a knowledge of the ancient traditions and beliefs constituting the folk culture of Greece. Subtle emanation of bloodshed in a proper sacrifice was regarded as necessary for a noble cause, for averting or overcoming some calamity, for helping people in any practical respect. It links the idea that there is always, at the basis or foundation of any importance, a sacrifice. And even in the present day the idea is active in the folk-mind in many parts of the world.

Edmund Gosse[54] said that Erechtheus is the most organic of Swinburne's writings. That, indeed, is the appeal of the drama to us. Erechtheus may rightly be regarded as the work in which Swinburne was most completely master of all his resources and most resolutely bent on securing through them a single effect.

6. Conclusion

In the foregoing sections of this chapter, an attempt has been made to assess the impact of Greek tragedy on some of their English counterparts. An attempt may now be made to summarise the observations made in this connection.

Milton's Samson Agonistes is decidedly the best among the attempts to naturalise Greek tragedy in English. Milton has reproduced with great fidelity the form of Greek tragedy. Milton's complete mastery of form is made possible by the firmness of his tragic design and the perfect assimilation of the matter of the Book of Judges. Milton has reproduced the simple grandeur and austerity of the Greek tragedy. Characters are few and no situation presents more than two characters on the stage, which is occupied always only by the chorus. The unities are strictly observed. Milton's drama specializes in 'peripeteia'. The end is quick, sudden and total reversal — a reversal for Manoa, Samson and Philistines. Samson Agonistes also bears the moral effect of Greek tragedy. But the spirit of the drama is Hebraic. It also lacks the tension of Greek tragedy. The conflicts in the drama are less urgent and the subordinate characters are more shadowy than in Aeschylus' 'Prometheus Vinctus'. The real beauty in Milton's drama lies in the full yet bare statement of a noble theme. The form of classical Greek tragedy was the right choice for something Milton wanted to say.

Shelley in Prometheus Unbound, Arnold in Merope and Swinburne in Atalanta in Calydon and Erechtheus enjoy an advantage over Milton. They find it certainly easier to make their plays Greek, as the themes of their plays are Greek, although one may certainly question their success. Shelley, however, did not cast Prometheus Unbound on Greek tragic form. This is expected of Shelley as he was never an ardent imitator by the nature of his temperament. He sought to recreate Aeschylus' Prometheus Unbound (which is lost) within the framework of a new idealism, presenting a new myth and a new ritual of faith, struggle and fulfilment. This he does in his own manner and the way of Shelley is certainly not the Aeschylean way. Shelley's play strikes one as like what the Periclean drama might have become in the hands of a great lyrical poet. Hellas, however, is on the lines of Aeschylus' Persians and it has much more of the form and style of Greek tragedy than the Prometheus Unbound. The influence and inspiration of Greek drama on Shelley's plays are undeniable.

Arnold's Merope is more than an imitation; it is a replica of Sophoclean tragedy. It captures the Aeschylean foreboding and irony. The Greek elements in the play are the gnomic chorus, the unities, the tirade and relief of stichomythia. Arnold's tragedy is written in a subdued and low-toned way designed to reproduce the quiet concentration of the pure Attic style. But Arnold completely fails to thrill us with the story which has neither philosophical nor emotional weight. He could not use the method of tragic irony in the Greek way as the modern

reader is not familiar with the story of Merope. And secondly, Arnold wanted to dismiss a romantic subjectivism by turning away from it to its seemingly opposite classical objectivity. What was needed was to minimise the romantic mood by the comprehension of that mood itself in a severe form and in action.

Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon and Erechtheus have the likeness of a Greek tragedy. The Greek form was imitated not because it was Greek, but because it was the best. Again imitation was the self-imposed rule, although his singular poetic gift made at least Atalanta in Calydon, in his justified words, more of true poetic life and charm than Merope. The Greek form afforded Swinburne the opportunity for full employment of his highest and more natural faculty of lyric utterance and song. In the choruses, where Arnold failed, Swinburne succeeded because he saw by a true intuition that to equal the effect of the Greek chorus full English lyric with rhyme and musical sweep was required. In its poetry, Atalanta in Calydon is Aeschylean; in its thought and characterisation it is Euripidean. The philosophy of life as presented in this play is a negative one. Caught within the trap of a hostile deity man himself becomes ungracious, a sacrificial victim to the essentially inhuman orgies of existence. Swinburne presents this sense of life in a mould so self-consciously antique as Greek tragedy and thus conveys a suggestion of the perennial nature of this dilemma. Erechtheus also presents a world in which men fight against the sombre background of merciless destiny. But the play is planned with a too-conscious regard to exact conformity with Greek tragedy.

It goes without saying that no great work of art is possible by mere imitation. Every work of art, and an Attic tragedy as such, is living and follows the rules of its own being. Any attempt to write tragedy on the model of a particular Greek tragedy is, therefore, bound to meet failure.

There are other factors, too, to be considered in connection with the question : is it possible to naturalise Greek tragedy in English? The form of a play is determined by its own vital idea and by the limits fixed by the conditions of performance. The Greek dramatists were conscious citizens. They found a perfect form in tragedy to express their national spirit. The Greek tragedies were, in a sense, responses to the culture which sustained the Greek people. In their characters, language and action they gave articular form to the submerged communal desires of the Greek people. There is another side of the picture. In ancient Greece, tragedy concerned not only the great artists but the entire people as well, who felt the appeal of the tragedy to such a degree that they would gather in a large number to see a performance. Then again, Greek tragedy achieved a synthesis between form and content. The form serves its restraining and equilibrating function by interposing at every critical turn the comments of the chorus.

The form of Greek tragedy is an archaic art. The concept of tragedy has also greatly changed since the days of the Greeks. With the rapid growth of civilisation, the political, social, economic and theological values have usurped the place of gods

of Greek tragedy. Man is no longer a victim of cruel Destiny but a victim of the economic necessities. He is a creature of reflexes and complexes. He is sometimes presented as a slave to the unconscious. The old ground of religious faith is gone.

The English poets well knew that Greek tragedy was the characteristic product of social and political conditions and of all that such conditions involve and imply which have no analogy in modern times and that, consequently, its reproduction in exact counterpart must necessarily be an anachronism in art. Yet they believed in the effectiveness and permanence of the form of Greek tragedy. Milton thought the Greek tragic form to be the best rule to all who endeavour to write tragedy. And he has reproduced it in his drama. But what vitalizes his drama is his theme which unfolds Samson's position and destiny and in which Milton realized a tragedy analogous to the tragedy of his own life. Shelley modifies his models to such an extent that he can scarcely be called an imitator. Swinburne's plays are in structure closer to Greek prototypes, but nothing could be more un-Greek than all that constitutes their attractiveness. Arnold was equally affected by the power of Greek poetry and of the consummate form of Greek tragedy. In his Merope he reproduced without the smallest modification the exact counterpart of Attic tragedy in its most perfect shape. In the art which had cast its spell over him he would confide. But how could he confide in the spectators of his day who were unfamiliar with the story of the Greek myth?

There is yet another vital consideration. Greek tragedy was conditioned by the nature of the Greek theatre which was designed to accommodate the bulk of the town's citizenry. In such theatre grand style was natural. With the accompaniment of dance and music Greek chorus made possible grand operatic effects that one can scarcely appreciate in reading and never reproduce exactly since Greek music and choreography have been lost. Greek drama had always a vital meaning for the contemporary audience. The Greek dramatists wrote for the stage; public performance was a must, otherwise the drama would have lost its total meaning and effect.

The English plays, under discussion, on the contrary, were not written with an avid eye to the stage. Milton's Samson Agonistes was written for the study and not for the theatre. Shelley owned that a drama must be for the stage and not for the closet. Prometheus Unbound, however, is more a dramatic poem than a drama. It is Shelley's testament of faith in man. Both Arnold and Swinburne put poetry into dramatic form without any effort on their part to give it a test of the theatre. Swinburne wanted a stage of antiquated time.

It appears then that none of the English plays on the Attic model have been successful in producing the effect of the Greek tragedy or in evoking its spirit. But it will be wrong to assume that the imitation of the Attic model have rendered these plays dull and ineffective. All that vitalizes Milton's drama is

what is implicit in its theme and in what its theme presents in symbol. It is Shelley's own version of man's suffering and success in Prometheus Unbound and his superb lyricism which constitute the impressiveness of his play. Arnold's Merope is a tragedy sincere, moving and honest in such feeling as it evokes, Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon stands in its own right as a true work of art.

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C H A P T E R V

C L A S S I C A L A N A L O G U E S I N E N G L I S H P L A Y S : U S E O F T R A G I C M Y T H A N D O F C H O R U S B Y B R I D G E S O ' N E I L L A N D E L I O T

CHAPTER V

Classical Analogues in English Plays: Use of Greek Tragic Myth and of Chorus by Bridges, O'Neill and Eliot

1. Introduction:

The twentieth century revival of interest in Greek myth is an important phenomenon in modern literary drama. The myths in Greek tragedies bear a tremendous appeal to dramatists of all ages. Had these myths not sprung from the very sources of our being, they could not cast their enduring spell. They deal with love, war, sin, tyranny, courage, fate and relation of man with god. They deal with problems which do not change. Naturally dramatists find potentialities in the myths while rendering them in their plays.

The revival of interest in Greek myth and in the formal devices of Greek tragedy seems a more complex matter. Part of the interest is due to psychological recognition of the archetypes, and the nomenclature of certain of them from the Greek tragedies like Oedipus, Electra, Orestes and the Furies archetypes. The myths thus acquire a new validity in themselves. The modern dramatist by manipulating the values of myths brings out from within their archaic lineaments shadows of psychic repression and blood ritual. The ancient myth, as

George Steiner observes, "can also be read in the light of psychoanalysis and anthropology".[1] Besides, as the audience are found to be familiar with the myth, the dramatist has the advantage to proceed to devise rocking variations on themes already at hand.

There are other factors, too, behind the revival. T.R. Henn is of the opinion that one such factor relates to the experience of the two world wars. His observation, couched in a metaphorical language, may be quoted: "The experience of two wars has given the ghosts of Greek drama sacrificial blood to drink; conquest, occupation, resistance, have helped further to make them opaque. The clear-cut form, the symmetrical structure, the progressive and even mechanical revelations, have their own specific appeal".[2] But the more important factor than this, as the same critic has pointed out[3], is that the dramatists have an opportunity for a distancing of perspective, a curious philosophical amalgam in which paganism and Christianity are perceived abstractedly in alternate opposition or synthesis, and in the successive removal of layer after layer of the unknown elements of the situation, a microcosm of the discipline towards self-knowledge.

Not only the mythic stories, but the chorus and the unities have also proved to be of some relevance to the

dramatists from Thomas Hardy to Robert Bridges and even to some of them of the post-fifty. Allardyce Nicoll[4], in his discussion of tragedy, expresses his view that the spirit of chorus, that of which it is the expression, is a permanent thing, well-nigh necessary in all high tragedy. The chorus, quite apart from its lyrical element, presents features of a kind essential to tragic expression. The unities also prove to be of no temporary value. About the significance of the unities, the same critic asserts, "... in a broader sense they [the unities] are rules from which no great dramatist may ever swerve. The unity of action, intimately associated as it is with the unities of place and time, thus accords with the clearness, the restricted passion, and the concentrated emotion demanded by high tragedy".[5]

Twentieth century dramatists, when they turn to the themes of Greek tragedy, usually give a new twist to them or charge them with a contemporaneous sensibility. While using the chorus they are fairly alive to the relevant aspects of its application. In his epic-drama, The Dynasts (1903-1908), Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) makes an excellent and a unique use of the role of chorus as a commentator of action. It is also interesting to note that there is much of the ancient Greek in Hardy. Hardy's conception of the irony of fate approximates to the primitive Greek notion of the 'Jealousy of the Gods',

and has its root in the harshness and precariousness of the peasant's existence. However, while Greek tragedy sought to moralise this doctrine, Hardy appears to have found a sufficient explanation of what happens in human life. The indifferent and dominant Fate which overshadowed the heroes of his novels become in The Dynasts Immanent Will, a huge and threatening force which is interpreted for us in the play as a group of supernatural characters who contemplate the historic events of the Napoleonic times. These supernatural characters are meant to perform the function of the chorus.

The supernatural spirits in Hardy's drama are divided into two groups — the spirit of the pities, with those akin to it, Ironic and Sinister; and the spirit of the year.

The main function of the chorus in Hardy's drama is to vivify the action. The speeches of the spirits of the overwork form an integral part of the action of The Dynasts. The discussion of the spirits set in motion the action of the drama. The spirits of pities express sympathy for the sufferers. The spirits, Ironic and Sinister, revolt against the all-determining Fate. The speeches of the spirits thus intensify the action. The spirits participate in the action, too. They depict the attitude of the ordinary people towards the impending disaster. In the disguise of ordinary strangers, they

watch the debates in the House of Commons. The comments of the Spirits of Year intensify the action and enable the audience to make up their minds about Napoleon. The Spirits of Pities are also used to telescope the events.

The varied commentary of the Spirits of the Overworld underline the dominant idea of The Dynasts — the power of the Immanent Will and the utter helplessness of the subjects of Destiny. In this way they resemble to the chorus of Greek tragedy. Their comments, interpretation and involvement in the action are all necessary for the evocation of the action in our imagination.

It is very clear that the whole machinery of the Spirits of the Overworld in The Dynasts is suggested by the machinery of Shelley's Prometheus Unbound. Hardy's continued use of the semi-chorus has also been modelled upon Shelley's practice.

In The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall (1923) Hardy retains the unities of the classical drama. The chanters in this play correspond to the Greek chorus.

Robert Bridges (1844-1930) used the Greek pattern in few of his dramatic works. He uses chorus in his Return of Ulysses (1890). In Achilles in Scyros (1890), the elements of Greek tragedy, such as the prologue and the chorus, are also

used. In his Prometheus the Fire Giver (1884), the most important one of his classical poems, Bridges treats of the Prometheus-myth of the classical mythology. In Demeter, too, Bridges has an excellent use of the chorus.

Robinson Jeffers (1887-1962) treated the stories of his three tragedies on Greek tragic myth. One of the most powerful philosophical and dramatic poets of the present century, Jeffers was drawn to the philosophic and prophetic diction of Aeschylus' plays at the early stage of his career. His The Tower Beyond Tragedy (1925) is a re-telling of the Agamemnon story. It is a composite of ancient tragedies, the Oresteia trilogy, freely adapting the Greek text using its materials to propound the poet's philosophy of heroic passivity. Gilbert Highet, however, criticises the play as a "violent abbreviation of the Oresteia into a single piece, half drama, half poem"[6]. Nevertheless, the play is marked by impressive poetry, philosophical power, imaginative awareness of the psychological forces in prophetic dialogue. One instance of the wonderful imaginings in the play is Agamemnon's voice speaking after his murder through the body of Cassandra. Jeffers, however, allows physical horrors to take place on the stage. In this play physical violences of lust and murder reach the extreme point which renders the action incredible sometimes.

Jeffers' At the Birth of an Age is a freer adaptation of the Greek tragic material. This time he adapts the story of Helen as it appears in Euripides' tragedy, Helen. His Medea is another adaptation of Euripides' Medea. Sex is the leading motive in the play. Jeffers' Medea is a woman of more stature. Jeffers' main concern in the play is the demonic power of the sexual impulse and its close link with the urge to kill. The distortion of that impulse makes his Medea a fury. When the weeping nurse tells her of her rival's fearful death she laughs as luxuriously as a happy lover.

Jeffers goes to the Greek tragedians for ideas and he utilises the ideas to cast a revealing light upon the predicament of modern man in an age of atomic power.

In the United States Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953) attempted to construct a tragedy-by-analogy using the action of the ancient Greek tragedy in an American setting in order that something of the power of Greek tragedy would emerge and strengthen his own concepts. His Desire Under the Elms (1924) is reminiscent of the story of Phaedra and Hippolytus as we find it in Euripides' Hippolytus. The Oresteian trilogy of Aeschylus furnished the basis of his Mourning Becomes Electra (1931).

T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) is, however, very original in his use of the classical analogues in his plays. His Murder in the Cathedral (1935) is structurally close to Greek tragedy. He put The Family Reunion (1939) into the mould of the Orestes story. The plot-source of his third play, The Cocktail Party is the Alcestis of Euripides. Eliot's last plays, The Confidential Clerk (1954) and The Elder Statesman (1958), have their affinities to Ion of Euripides and Oedipus at Colonus of Sophocles respectively. Beside the use of mythical analogy, we find the use of chorus, of the Eumenides (only in The Family Reunion) and of some formal devices of Greek tragedy in Eliot's plays.

The myths in the Greek tragedies bear a tremendous appeal to dramatists of modern age. But in trying to give the classic fable a novel twist the modern playwright may destroy its meaning. There are dramatists, in the present century, besides, Bridges, O'Neill and Eliot, who have turned to Greek tragic myth and have used the chorus. But there is very little novel and significant in their attempt. The researcher, however, seeks to achieve a coherent study on the nature and significance of classical analogues specifically in Bridges' Prometheus, the Fire Giver, O'Neill's Desire Under the Elms and Mourning Becomes Electra and Eliot's plays.

2. Classical Analogues in Bridges' Prometheus, the Fire Giver

A. Introduction:

Robert Bridges (1844-1930) has used the Greek pattern in few of his dramatic works. These poems absorb and annex the tenets of classicism in the later phase of the nineties and reveal a particular cast of mind. The spell of hellenic influence on Bridges is not just accidental. It is filtered down to him from his predecessors. It was an effort to escape from the Victorian times of doubt, distraction, dispute and fear. By following the classical tradition as recluse, Bridges, like Arnold, had only escaped to pagan times, an escape into times "when wits were fresh and clear".[1] Francis Thompson (1850-1907), Walter de la Mare (1873-1956) and W.B. Yeats (1865-1939) found refuge in oriental art, thought and occultism. Bridges, like Tennyson, took comfort in dramatising classical themes and exposing them in newer rhythm. The classical strain in Bridges' poetry is sane and pure. It marks the serenity and purity of Eliot's poetry and plays. On the whole, it conveys the fusion of the Greek attainment and the Christian ideal.

Among Bridges' classical poems, Prometheus, the Fire Giver comes first. It is based upon the Athenian model. It is a mask rather than a play. Here Bridges treats of the myth of Prometheus. Bridges finds immense possibilities of

originality in the Greek mythic stories. He shares his views with Sturge Moore that the Greek stories are of "inexhaustible fertility".[2]

In his Return of Ulysses Bridges recasts some of the chief scenes in Homer's Odyssey into a dramatic form. He employs the chorus and uses Athene as prologue but fails to give his material any dramatic wholeness.

In his Achilles in Seyros, the elements of Greek forms, such as the Prologue and the chorus, intermix with the romantic elements of the Elizabethan dramatic art.

Demeter is another work of this period in which Bridges uses the chorus. In Act I, Hades tells of his purpose which is to carry off Persephone and make her his queen with the consent of Zeus. The chorus of Ocean nymphs praises Sicily and Spring. Persephone is carried off by Hades while collecting flowers in the valley below Enna.

In the second Act, the loss of Persephone is deplored by the chorus after a lapse of ten years. Demeter upbraids the nymphs in a choric scene and describes her search for Persephone until she learns the whereabouts of Persephone from Helios. She decides to compel Zeus to restore Persephone to her. Hermes brings the message of Zeus to Demeter that she

should return to Olympus. The scene comes to a close with the vow of the chorus to enlist the support of Poseidon and Demeter.

In the third act, which relates the events of a year later, the chorus, summoned by Demeter to witness the restoration of Persephone, laments Demeter's anger. As Demeter narrates the Eleusinian episode of her wanderings, Hermes enters with Persephone. Demeter hears from Hermes the terms of Persephone's restoration. A scene of reconciliation follows. The chorus sings and crowns Persephone with flowers.

The very fact that Bridges has used in his version of the story the Greek names, as Hades for Pluto, Zeus for Jupiter etc., indicates that he is close to the Greek model. Hence, the representation of the story is both classical and conventional. As a whole, Demeter used the conventions of a Greek play to its advantage.

As regards the construction of the play, it is marked by economy and concentration. Bridges has focussed attention on the main argument of the story, its central kernel. As such, the play gains in depth and concentration. The play, as a whole, evokes the Latin and Greek atmosphere.

B. Prometheus, the Fire Giver : Bridges' Treatment of the Promethean Myth and use of Chorus:

Prometheus, the Fire Giver is a mask in the Greek manner. The title of the poem is reminiscent of Aeschylus and Shelley as the same story has been handled by them. However, Bridges has not imitated Shelley or Aeschylus in the strict sense of the term. He, instead, lays emphasis upon the form of the poem.

The character of Prometheus, as developed by Bridges, is influenced by Aeschylus and Shelley both. He is, however, not an embodiment of moral idealism and sacrifice like Shelley's Prometheus. In the first part of the poem Prometheus is the embodiment of Bridges' philosophy of beauty. He is made to describe that searching for beauty which distinguishes the spirit of man from the rest of creation. Thus, we are led to imagine that Bridges, following Shelley, is about to refashion the Greek myth for his own symbolic purposes.

But the second part marks a retreat from the movement of the drama, as Bridges falls back on the mere recounting of the myth and makes Prometheus, with Aeschylean precedent, to describe the wanderings of Io.

On the whole, Bridges' Prometheus revives the memory of the selfish and proud Prometheus as drawn by Aeschylus

and, on the other hand, that of Prometheus, the lover of mankind, as delineated by Shelley. He is, by no means, a selfless benefactor of mankind, though his revolt against Zeus is transformed into his love for humanity. Like Shelley's hero, he, too, has his liking for the toil rather than the moral joy of humanity.

It is not his love for melancholy men that inspires Prometheus in hisaction; it is the rationalization of his own egoistical motive that prompts him to adopt a pragmatic approach towards life.

Bridges' Prometheus is represented as a practical character. He is swayed neither by passion nor by pride. Shelley's Prometheus is a proud sufferer, having unbounded love for humanity. To Bridges, this extreme conception is not palatable. No less alien and unpalatable to Bridges is the pride which Aeschylus assigns to his Prometheus. The truth is that Bridges steers clear of both the extremes. As a result, the character, he has developed, is neither a champion of mankind in whom unrestraint is a disease, nor a character to whom pity is alien as it is befitting only to the "self despising slaves of Heaven".[3] The voice of Bridges' Prometheus is a voice of truth, liberty and love.

Bridges' Prometnus is full aware that Zeus not only hates him but hates the humanity as well. In order to protect himself from Zeus, he takes a wise step, thereby saving himself individually and mankind in general. He, out of his love of mankind and strong dislike for Zeus, tries, in earnest, so that fire should be given to man. He makes Inachus an instrument to this end. Inachus is careful and wise and brave, and is determined to secure the fire but with the prompting of God. Prometheus advises him to secure fire even at the cost of incurring wrath of Zeus. He convinces him of his cause by arguing that all is not good for man that seems God's will. Thus, psychology assumes a great significance in the working out of the whole affair. Prometheus is rational in his belief of nature and its existence in life. In his view, it is not the will of God but nature that is responsible for human existence. He convinces Inachus that obstruction cannot weaken man's desire as it is unquenchable original cause, the immortal breath of being. He points out the move of Zeus which is directed to mislead man's mind.

Prometheus succeeds finally in persuading Inachus to steal the fire. This wisdom, this sharpness of intellect, this pragmatic approach put Bridges' Prometheus in line with modern thinkers. He does not follow the method of persuasion with Inachus or confront him with logic. Rather, he achieves

.is end by arousing curiosity in the mind of Inachus. Inachus is fully convinced and his doubts and fears are removed. The change in this mode of thinking becomes natural on psychological and logical grounds. Furthermore, Prometheus promises to give Inachus the cunning of invention and all arts. His plea for an impassioned quest for knowledge, like that of Ulysses in Tennyson, is frankly Victorian. Always led by this passion, he not only satisfies his own thirst for knowledge but also awakens such a craving in the mind of Inachus. Prometheus' central concern of life is to gather knowledge. Bridges has, therefore, more liking for the Greek tradition than for the Shelleyan model. Prometheus, the Fire Giver, is certainly not Prometheus, Unbound, one having unlimited power and foresight. Thus, the very title of the play suggests that Bridges is more inclined to Aeschylus than to Shelley.

Bridges' Prometheus, unlike Shelley's, is not a selfless benefactor of mankind; nor is he a champion of humanity. He is neither a prototype of a tyrant, nor is he guilty of pride like the character drawn by Aeschylus. On the contrary, he is a character guided and motivated by revenge. Like Milton's Satan, he tries to rebel against Zeus and his very action is motivated by revenge. Whatever classicism is there, it is purely Miltonic. Though Bridges was well-versed in the classics, he was, by temperament and inclination, closer to Milton than

to any other classical writer.

Bridges' Prometheus is a symbol of prime and youth. As a God, he is placed above the rest of Gods, for his gifts are pledges of love. He is the symbol of the new religion of love. Prometheus, the Fire Giver, retells the transition of human worship from Zeus to Prometheus, and symbolises the substitution of the God of Love of the New Testament for the angry God of the Old Testament, or more generally, of modern Christianity for all less human religions.

Bridges' Prometheus believes in righteousness, truth and love, and he also knows the art to impress upon others to follow those ideals. In this respect, Prometheus is a full-blown character embodying the ritual wedding of love and faith. As such, he is far more practical and rational than the character depicted by both Aeschylus and Shelley. To Aeschylus the co-ordination of the law of human development with other and greater laws finds expression in the portrayal of Prometheus. Prometheus embodies this union by his sympathy which brings about the union. Shelley's Prometheus is rather a lyrical figure. Shelley has also clearly pinpointed his hatred of tyranny through the instrumentality of Prometheus. Aeschylus, in pinpointing the weakness of Prometheus and Zeus, has accepted neither of them as hero.

Among the other characters Zeus is shown as a prototype of a tyrant whose rule is sheer oppression. Prometheus and other characters of the play have borne the brunt of this oppression. This image of Zeus as an autocrat and despot has been projected by writers of no less re ute than Euripides and Plato, not to speak of Shelley. It is only natural that Bridges should have made use of this popular view of a tyrant for dramatic effect.[4]

The Chorus plays an important role in Bridges' Prometheus, the Fire Giver. The abundant use of odes and chorus indicates the influence of Aeschylus. The choral odes are integral to the dramatic structure of the play. The purpose of the chorus in both parts of the play is related to the exposition of and commentary on the theme. Bridges' main objective has been to narrate the past family history of Gods and Goddesses, to forecast further events, to link the theme to human life and destiny. Thus, the chorus and semi-chorus both serve meaningful purposes.

As for the employment of choral odes, each part of the play closes with an ode. It indicates the after effect of the events and also provides much needed poetic relief, thereby enhancing the charm of the play.

Bridges has produced some of his best lyrics in this play, yet the spirit pervading the play is dramatic rather than lyrical. Bridges has successfully preserved the dramatic structure by introducing not more than five major characters. The dialogue between Prometheus and Inachus, for the most part of the play, contributes to the unity of effect. As far as the plot-movement is concerned, what is to come and what has gone before are revealed through the dialogue and the narrative. All the dramatic unities are adhered to. Bridges is influenced by the Greek rather than the Shelleyan manner of narration which is penetrated by lyrical intensity and passionate strophes. A true painter of landscape, Bridges is at his best in combining the narrative colours with the pure transparent hues of the Greek scenery. His art of drawing the landscape is both English and Greek.

Prometheus, the Fire Giver is rich in pregnant metaphors and meaningful imagery. The scene of mountains amidst the "rocky coast", "azured waves", "laced in foam", or lost in "water-lighted waves" reminds one of Greek mythology.

3. Classical Analogues in O'Neill's *Desire under the Elms* and *Mourning becomes Electra*

A. Introduction

Joseph Wood Krutch in his *Modernism in the Modern Drama* observes that Eugene O'Neill's distinction derives chiefly from his determination to confer upon man a tragic dignity. O'Neill's plays reflect the post-war world (First World War) which has revealed more uncertainties about life than before. Man finds himself in a mysterious and inimical universe and gropes for an understanding and a justification of himself in this universe. He has to grapple with what ails him.

O'Neill is a great poet of the discontent, broken, faithless rhythm of our time. "Do not take pain away from us. It is our truth. Without pain there is nothing" — such is his outlook on life. A reading of O'Neill's plays shows that out of thirty-seven of his plays, there are only five free from murder, death, suicide or insanity. In the other plays, the score is eight suicides, and one unsuccessful attempt, twelve important murders (not counting incidental episodes), twenty-six deaths, nearly all due to violence, and eight cases of insanity. O'Neill's plays, however, are not melodramas but tragedies which strike the very root of the sickness of to-day.

In O'Neill's plays, violence is not a necessity of the action; it is an end in itself. It is evident that the characters have no choice whatever; the author's handling of murder and blood springs from the need to justify cruelty and violence as the normal conditions of our existence.

Joseph Wood Krutch[1] is of the view that O'Neill's handling of the death theme results in his having written tragedy. George Jean Nathan[2], on the other hand, holds that O'Neill is basically a tragic dramatist. In his view The Iceman Cometh contains the profound essence of authentic tragedy. John Gassner[3], however, is more categorical in stating that like Webster's and Ford's, O'Neill's plays are marked by his susceptibility to extremes of passion, will and affliction. Like them, he explores the morbid by taking us through the labyrinths of passion. Man's tragic predicament lies in his struggle for an understanding of himself in a mysterious universe. O'Neill himself has explained his philosophy of tragic drama as well as of tragic life in an interview in 1922:

"I suppose it is the idea I try to put into all of my plays. People talk of the 'tragedy' in them, and call it 'sordid', 'depressing', 'pessimistic' —— the words usually applied to anything of a tragic nature. But, tragedy, I think,

has the meaning the Greeks gave it. To them, it brought exaltation, an urge toward life and ever more life. It roused them to deeper spiritual understandings and released them from the petty greeds of everyday existence. When they saw a tragedy on the stage they felt their own hopeless hopes ennobled into art ... Any victory we may win is never the one we dreamed of winning. The point is that life in itself is nothing. It is the dream that keeps us fighting willing-living".[4]

To O'Neill the tragic situation of modern man lies in the abdication of the real individual self from the place of authority and decision-making in favour of self-images drawn from society's expectations. Man pretends to execute something that does not fit in with his make-up. The tragic element emerges out of the choice made, and the choice is governed by pride. This leads to a suffering through which man has to pass to prove himself worthy of a finer realization. As the suffering deepens, the need for a 'belonging' gets intensified. One has to belong to something.

In his eagerness to make some of his plays tragic, O'Neill has attempted to bring home to the audience the meaning of the tragic affirmation. O'Neill felt, with Nietzsche, that tragedy is an affirmation — a "symbolical

celebration"___of life. The death of the hero must reveal the dignity, nobility and universality of his struggle. In all his tragedies, O'Neill gives us the impression that in spite of the great ordeals that a man has to undergo, life is still worth living. In his last great tragedy, Mourning Becomes Electra Lavinia is prepared to meet her punishment for her crimes, by living a solitary life and not committing suicide like her mother and Orin. His tragedies soothe, console and strengthen us, and never depress us, as they make us conscious of the inherent grandeur, dignity and heroism of the human soul. It is here that he shares somehow the art of the Greek tragedians.

It is interesting to note that on some points, O'Neill's position in American drama can be equated with Euripides' in Greek drama. Both of them rebelled against the diction and conventions of the theatre, brought forth a natural sense of melody and, above all, revealed a profound sense of the dramatic. Both examined theories, found shelter in none. Their plays displayed morbid aberrations and real but ugly passions. They tapped mercilessly but judiciously the customs and ideas of the society only to show their hollowness.

Lazarus Laughed (1925-26) is an attempt to illustrate O'Neill's definition of tragedy(just quoted). The ideas embodied in it had been germinating in him ever since he

first read Nietzsche's Zarathustra and The Birth of Tragedy. They are Nietzsche's ideas, for the most part, but O'Neill felt then that they answered various troublesome questions that he was asking himself in the 1920's.

O'Neill did not consider modern Christianity capable of fulfilling the primary religious feelings — how to live joyously and die fearlessly. O'Neill created Lazarus, therefore, in the image of a Nietzschean superman, assigning him the dual role of saviour and tragic hero. Dionysus, whose death and resurrection are symbolized in the pagan acceptance of life, is the hero of the play "where he embraces destiny with the rhapsodic, almost hysterical affirmation of Zarathustra".[5]

Lazarus has made his discovery at the beginning of the play, when he appears as a joyful and integrated character, the only one who does not wear a mask. He has returned from death, resurrected by Jesus, in whose eyes he found the secret which he knows is man's salvation. His mission is to preach the doctrine of his discovery to mankind. The play is a vast symbolic pageant, tracing the progress of Lazarus as he preaches to the Jews, the Greeks and to the Romans. In Rome he meets the resistance of Caligula and Tiberius, who represent the primary inhibiting forces which Lazarus must fight — pride with its accompanying fear of

loneliness. Lazarus is finally burned at the stake, still affirming with his magnificent laughter his secret — "There is no death ! "

Lazarus has learned that death is only a stage of natural process, one step in the continuum of perpetual 'becoming' which is existence. The conception of death as finality is a mistake. Death is man's invention and can exist only by virtue of man's persistent fear of it. The cure of the fear of death lies within man. He must embrace his destiny with positive love. Lazarus brings a message from Jesus which can be summed up thus : There is Eternal Life in No and there is the same Eternal Life in Yes . Death is the fear between.

Thus O'Neill has conceptualized his philosophy in Lazarus Laughed, but he has not dramatized it. Cyrus Day[6] is right to say that effective drama cannot be erected on such foundations. It is eventually a play about an idea, rather than about a human being's reactions to an idea.

Lazarus is an integrated, undivided character. As superman he triumphs over his animal passions through self-discipline and achieves a kind of happiness. He has already fought the battle with himself like a traditional tragic hero and he has already achieved inner peace and died. He is a static character, incapable of learning anything more by

suffering than he has already learned. He has no personal traits of any distinctive kind. He is a mere mouthpiece for O'Neill's ideas.

In Lazarus Laughed we find the use of the chorus. But the importance of the choruses and the crowds lies less in the words they chant than in the sound pattern they create. Travis Bogard explains the nature of the chorus in the following words : "... they seek to convince, not through logic or poetic beauty but through massed power ... On the page, the chorus lines appear to follow sequentially, cue-to-cue. In the theatre, however, they overlap the speeches of the protagonists, their sound and their words echoing what is said elaborating, emphasizing and augmenting the dialogue. ... O'Neill has continually played the choral climaxes against scenes of relative solitude and quiet, thus setting a rhythm of high and low, loud and soft, exultant and introspective. ... In extending the choric element of the play to such unusual lengths, O'Neill was working characteristically toward enveloping and overpowering his audience. ... The choruses are to break over the audience as a wave of sound, causing them to rise to Lazarus's share of exultation, causing them, in short, to believe".[7]

Lazarus Laughed is not a tragedy in the Greek sense, although parallels may be drawn between the play and Greek

tragedy. One of the parallels relates to the use of mask. In Greek drama the use of mask indicated the Dionysiac ritual dance; it added to the majesty and grandeur of the figures who appeared in a very large stage. As it made facial acting impossible, it brought the whole body into play, emphasising especially the movement of the actor.

In Lazarus Laughed, O'Neill made an elaborate experiment in the use of masks with the result that all the characters except Lazarus remain masked throughout the play. O'Neill's use of the masks in this play is more significant than the use of masks in a Greek tragedy. O'Neill has tried to present a new psychological insight into human life, and his study of masks in this play, is, therefore, an exercise in unmasking. The masks have certainly enabled him to express the profound religious hidden conflicts in characters like Tiberius, Pompeia and Caligula and to suggest the highly sensitive relation of love between Lazarus and Miriam, his wife.

Lazarus Laughed is a religious drama, a ritual drama of sacrifice. It is the dramatization of the sense of mystery inherent in human life and the mask and the chorus are imaginative devices by means of which the difficult work of interpretation is performed.

O'Neill attempted to construct a tragedy-by-analogy, using ancient Greek tragedy in an American setting in two of his plays, Desire under the Elms (1924) and Mourning Becomes Electra (1931). His objective was to see how far the power of Greek tragedy could strengthen his own concepts. He turned to Greek drama more specifically for a model through which to transform the most ignoble debased lives into the grandeur and transfiguring nobility of tragedy.

B. Desire Under the Elms : O'Neill's treatment of the story of Hippolytus

In Desire under the Elms (1924) O'Neill was first attempting what he later undertook more explicitly in Mourning Becomes Electra (1931) to construct a tragedy-by-analogy, using ancient Greek tragedy in an American setting.

The play begins as comedy, but it is not long before that the comedy breaks up and the tragedy comes on. That the play is a tragedy, everybody will admit. As Edgar F. Racey observes, "It combines a traditional tragic theme (the Oedipus legend) with a dramatic reconciliation in the interests of a higher virtue (justice). Abbie and Eben, as they are reconciled to their fate (which they will), assume a dignity which approaches tragic stature. As they acknowledge their guilt and enter

into the process of expiation, their characters tend to become generalized, and O'Neill manages to suggest something approaching the idea of universal justice".[8]

Desire Under the Elms is reminiscent of the story of Phaedra and Hippolytus as we find it in Euripides' Hippolytus. O'Neill's reliance on Euripides, however, is not elaborate : in Abbie's murder of the child (as we find in the play) the dim outline of Euripides' Medea appears. However, Travis Bogard is correct to say that "neither Medea nor Hippolytus is a precise source for O'Neill's story. He has used his 'source material' much more freely than ... he was to do in Mourning Becomes Electra. The reminiscence is evoked by tone and texture more than by detailed imitation".[9]

The action of Desire Under the Elms takes place in a farm in New England. The play is divided into three parts, the first of which concerns the revolt of Cabot brothers, Simeon, Levi and Eben against their tyrannical father Ephraim. Ephraim Cabot is a self-centred, loveless man who has projected his own personality into that of his god, "a tyrannic ascetic, restrictive embodiment of Puritanism".[10] He is dedicated to this god, who is, of course, only an image of his own ego. Ephraim has enslaved his sons to the farm. But the most pathetic victim of his cruelties was his second wife,

mother of Eben, a gentle sensitive woman whom he married not for love but for land, who died overworked and love-starved. A spirit of vengeance works in Eben, the son of the wronged woman and through Abbie, Ephraim's third wife. Abbie has married Ephraim to acquire property. Eben is motivated by a desire to revenge upon his father and Abbie by a desire to have a son to inherit Ephraim's property. Abbie falls in love with Eben. Upon consummation of that love, a child is born to them. Eben is drawn to Abbie not by love but by lust. His greed is expressed in his desire of buying out his brothers' share of the farm; in desiring possession of his father's paramours, Min, a neighbouring prostitute as well as Abbie, he duplicates his father's lust. Eben must cast off the mask of egotism in order to become integrated with his other self.

After a child is born to him and Abbie, Eben discovers her real motive in having the child and threatens to untie the bond. Abbie kills the child in order to prove the genuineness of her love for Eben. Eben gets furious and goes to the police to report her. But he also realises his share in the guilt. He accepts with her the consequences of the crime. In the process, his vengeful lust is transformed into love. They face death together accepting without question the justice of their fate. On knowing the whole truth about Eben and Abbie, Ephraim decides to escape the loneliness of the farm.

He plans to go to California, taking with him all his hoarded savings. But he discovers that the money is gone, Eben having used it to buy out his brothers' share of the farm. Laying the loss of the money to the will of God, Ephraim recognizes that he can never free himself from the tract of barren land nor does he want to. The farm is himself and his prison like the house of the Mannons in Mourning Becomes Electra. He, too, accepts the tragic fate and its justice.

The story of O'Neill's play is akin to that of Euripides' Hippolytus in broad outlines if not in details. Euripides' Hippolytus deals with the revenge of Venus on Hippolytus for having refused love. A son of Theseus and Hippolyta, Hippolytus was more devoted to Artemis, the goddess of celibacy than to Venus. Venus was determined to take revenge on both Hippolytus and Phaedra, the young wife of Theseus.

As the Greek play begins, Hippolytus returned to the palace after hunting, singing the hymns of Artemis. Phaedra was unhappy. On being coaxed by the Nurse she said that Hippolytus was the cause of the storm of her soul. She was madly in love with Hippolytus, though she knew that there was no moral or social sanction of this love. She tried her utmost to repress this love, but in vain. She, therefore, decided to put an end to herself. When informed of this love,

Hippolytus became frightfully angry and began to curse women in general for their inconstancy. He was pledged to the Nurse not to divulge it, otherwise he would have reported it to his father. Phaedra, still intent to die, wanted to punish Hippolytus for neglecting the call of love. Phaedra complained to Theseus that Hippolytus, in a fit of passion, dishonoured her. Theseus lost his reason and invoked Poseidon to destroy Hippolytus. Phaedra had put an end to herself. Assuming her death to be the result of her dishonour, Theseus began to revile Hippolytus as a traitor. Hippolytus defended himself, and yet did not accuse his step-mother. Theseus banished his son. Poseidon sent a monster from the sea to kill Hippolytus. Artemis told Theseus from the clouds that Hippolytus was innocent, and Venus made Phaedra love-sick. Theseus was to be blamed for his hasty action.

Hippolytus was brought there on the point of death. Artemis consoled and accused him that he would ever be remembered by the girls about to marry. She then asked Theseus to take the dying son in his arms. They were reconciled, and the son forgave the father and passed away.

Hippolytus forgave his father. And though Hippolytus recognized that he was following Artemis' advice, he showed too that he was fully conscious of the fact that in forgiving he was doing what she could not do.

Euripides' Hippolytus thus ends with an act full of human interest. B.M.W. Knox observes that forgiveness is "possible only for human beings, not for gods".[11] He continues, "It is man's noblest declaration of independence and it is made possible by man's tragic position in the world. Hippolytus' forgiveness of his father is an affirmation of purely human values in an inhuman universe".[12]

There are some thematic resemblances between Hippolytus and Desire Under the Elms. In Desire Under the Elms, Ephraim (O'Neill's Theseus) returns with a young wife Abbie (O'Neill's Phaedra) who is captivated by the charms of her step-son, Eben (O'Neill's Hippolytus). But Eben has affairs with Min, the neighbouring prostitute, while Hippolytus is a chaste spotless character.

Like Phaedra, Abbie conceals her growing passion for Eben with the mask of scorn. Like Phaedra, she asks that the son be banished. Like Phaedra, again, Abbie makes advances, but with more success than Phaedra.

It is in the murder of Ephraim's supposed child that O'Neill is found to modify his prototype to suit his dramatic purposes. In Euripides' Hippolytus, Theseus utters a curse on his son Hippolytus. In O'Neill's play, Ephraim also utters a curse — the curse of god — on his sons, but this curse

is not dramatically very significant. The original curse is transferred to Eben, who is the rightful father of Abbie's child. Eben's curse, as we find it in the play, is uttered against his son in the throes of error, and rashly. In Abbie who is the prototype of Phaedra, we find a glimpse of Poseidon. She proves as implacable an instrument of fate as Poseidon. Like Theseus, too, Ephraim is left alone, surveying the wreck of his kingdom.

In Euripides' Hippolytus, a sin had been committed against the gods. Aphrodite imagined herself slighted by Hippolytus' devotion to Artemis. In O'Neill's play, more important sin from the dramatic point of view is that of Ephraim. Eben's mother was forced to work intolerably and the strain of work finally killed her. Ephraim has also unlawfully taken the farm from the mother and from the son, on whom it should lawfully devolve. Like Theseus Ephraim must atone for his sin. Eben and Abbie may be seen as agents of the process of justice, directed against Ephraim. The two insure Ephraim's complete downfall. Ephraim is condemned ironically, to the land he has stolen.

Desire Under the Elms also presents "a simplified, somewhat stereotypial response to the Oedipal drives in American society".[13] Oedipal patterns of incest emerge both in Eben's love for Abbie, and in his seeking out the prostitute

Min. with whom his father and his brothers have slept.

The play's ending awakens echoes of Greek tragic patterns that conclude with the protagonist's acknowledgement of his responsibility for a general guilt. In acknowledging his responsibility in the crime, Eben submits to the ideals of love and justice.

The ending of the play also shows that O'Neill's god-oriented tragedy comes to focus on man, in conformity with the spirit of Euripides' Hippolytus. When it is no longer possible for them to belong to their god, the lovers in this play have one recourse — to belong to one another. Eben accepts Abbie's sin (the murder of her child). In turning back to Abbie, after his rejection of her, Eben reestablishes their love so that they need to rely on nothing outward, can get comfort in the other and forget the loneliness for a time.

In Desire under the Elms, a sense of the operative destiny is also conveyed. The characters are fated men and women but moving in predictable courses to known ends. The happenings of the play are concentrated into three days, one in summer, one in fall and one in spring. Each act follows the course of its day from late afternoon or early evening until the following dawn. The fluid unity of the setting and the cyclic control on the action that his time-scheme exerts cause the play to

approximate classical unities of action, place and time. There is also the use of stichomythic duet in the play as between Eben's brothers, Simeon and Peter.

The play is a bit ritualistic in setting. The time is spring, the season of ritual. It is the spring which has sent Ephraim to learn god's message. It is a spring so compelling in its beauty and life that even Simeon and Peter are moved to utter, from their animal existence, "Purty !" The play ends in late spring.

Edgar F. Racey comments, "As a classical tragedy, ... Desire is both successful and complete".[14] But we should remember that the tragedy is complete and successful in capturing the tone and texture of the Greek play. The spirit of the play is certainly not Greek. Throughout the play, it is the Hebraic God who is invoked as a god of wrath and retribution. In this play, O'Neill creates characters who, by their very nature , are endowed with the necessary motivation to enact the myth of the Greek play. But the play embodies a vision of life that is distinctly O'Neill's own.

C. Mourning Becomes Electra : O'Neill's treatment of the Electra-story

Mourning Becomes Electra was composed in the year 1932. In the year 1929 O'Neill wrote to Joseph Wood Krutch[15]

of the necessity for selecting a big subject for his art, comparing his current project to Greek tragedies in its possibilities. In a letter to Mannel Komroff on August 23, 1930, he revealed the subject-matter of his play — it is a retelling of the Orestes story laid in New England at the close of the Civil War; it is a "psychological drama of lust"[16], and it has more complicated relationships than any Greek treatment.

There are some entries in the work-diary kept during the period of the composition of this play. The first entry raises the question whether it is possible "to get a modern psychological approximation of Greek sense of fate into a play intended to move an audience which no longer believes in supernatural retribution. Perhaps the Electra story or that of Medea would serve?"[17] The second entry shows that O'Neill appears to have settled on Electra and her family as being "psychologically most comprehensive intense basic human interrelationship".[18] In the third entry, O'Neill notes that it will be important "to give Electra a tragic ending worthy of her"[19]; there is no play about her life after the murder of Clytemnestra. With that O'Neill finds his area of contribution.

O'Neill's audition to the story, then, will be the punishment of Electra who, in O'Neill's words, "has too much tragic fate within her soul, to be allowed to slip from heroic legend into undramatic married banality".[20]

O'Neill recognises that the Civil War with its heroic and epic scale is the best possible period, permitting the desired modernity, yet providing the time and distance essential to the tragic legend. O'Neill selected the Greek model and in reworking older material found once more the sources of his creative life. Travis Bogard, in this connection, writes, "His [O'Neill's] own habits, his imagination, his involvement with brute-size and with important themes, ... led him by no conscious route to the source of all tragedy, the Oresteia of Aeschylus ... From that primal fountain, he took new life".[21]

The House of Atreus, as we find it in Greek mythology, is overshadowed by an ancient curse. Agamemnon, brother of Menelaus, belongs to the generation of Atreus. His wife, Clytemnestra, the sister of Helen, during her husband's absence, takes for her paramour, Aegisthus, and rules Argos with his help. In due time, Agamemnon, having at the god's behest sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia and bringing with him Cassandra, Priam's daughter, returns, and is murdered by

Clytemnestra and her lover. Electra, his daughter, is shamed and prays for the return of her brother Orestes, long ago sent out of the country by his mother and now become a man. Orestes returns, kills Clytemnestra and Aegisthus. He is pursued by the Erinyes, and only after wandering and agony, and a vindication of himself before the tribunal of Athena's Areopagus, is he cleansed of his sin.

In his famous Oresteian trilogy — in the Agamemnon, Choephoroi and Eumenides — Aeschylus treats of the legend of the House of Atreus. The first introduces Agamemnon's coming and murder, the second treats of Electra's revenge on her mother and mother's lover using Orestes to help her and the third play deals with the retribution on Orestes and Electra.

In his treatment of the legend, Aeschylus draws on a traditional story that expresses the experience of the Greek people on three levels : the individual, the social and the transcendental.[22] The history of the House, in his hand, becomes the history of the human race and its relationship with the gods. The action of the Greek play dramatizes the family curse, the effect of the code of blood-revenge on the city of Argos, and finally "the gradual evolution, according to the master plan of Zeus, of the institution of civilized

justice".[23] In the Oresteia, the legendary sources, the plot incidents and the structural elements all conspire towards "the reconciliation of the individual with a reconstituted society under the guidance of divine providence".[24]

An analysis[25] of the plot of the Oresteia shows that the main incidents dramatize the motifs of blood-guilt, dynastic struggle and the persistent working of the curse through the generations of the House of Atreus. On the structural plane the 'agon' in the Oresteia can be reduced to the struggle between polarities in the tribal code : filial piety and blood-revenge. From this springs the 'pathos', the sufferings of generations of Atreides, culminating the dilemma which faces Orestes. The 'epiphany' reveals the divine teleology that dissolves the old social system and creates a new, more enlightned one. On the level of the ritualistic pattern, the hero's experience culminates in rebirth. He passes from guilt through suffering to purgation and emerges a new man. He is purged of all guilt and 'reborn', a new society is initiated and the cosmos is ordered on all levels.

Mourning Becomes Electra follows the general outlines of the Aeschylean trilogy very closely. O'Neill borrows the three-day division; he uses the sequence of events point for point; he adopts character-types and relationships and

he accepts the conventional ritual structure of conflict (agon), suffering (pathos) and revelation (epiphany).

In Homecoming, the first play, we find, at the start, Christine and Lavinia, the mother and the daughter, awaiting the return of Ezra Mannon from the war. Meanwhile Captain Brant appears. He pays a certain court to Lavinia, and she, with the help of Seth, traps him into admitting that he is the son of one of the Mannons who had seduced a Canadian maid-servant and been driven from home by his father, Lavinia's grand father. She has all her data straight now. She has suspected her mother, followed her to New York, where Christine has pretended to go because of her own father's illness, but has in fact been meeting Adam Brant. Lavinia has written her father, Ezra Mannon and her brother, Orin, hinting at the town gossip about her mother. We learn that Captain Brant has returned to avenge his mother but, instead, has fallen passionately in love with Christine, who loves him as passionately as she hates her husband. Ezra Mannon, together with his son Orin, returns. Then follow the details of the father's hatred of the son and the son's of the father, the son's adoration of his mother, the dauther's and the mother's antagonism, the daughter's and the father's devotion. Christine, ultimately, murders her husband with the poison sent by Brant and substituted for the medicine prescribed against his heart-trouble.

The story moves on in the next two plays, The Hunted and The Haunted in the following way. Lavinia convinces Orin with the facts about her mother. They trail Christine to Brant's ship where she has gone to warn him against Orin. Orin shoots Brant. Christine next day kills herself. Brother and sister take a long voyage to China. The Haunted culminates with a judgement on Orin and Lavinia for their part in the destruction of their mother. Orin believes that he is growing like his father. He finds himself making an incestuous proposal to Lavinia and is repulsed by her. He shoots himself. Lavinia, left alone, tormented in her soul, accepts her punishment by living in the ill-fated Mannon house till her death.

The point-for-point parallelism in the plots is quite evident. In the first part, Ezra Mannon (Agamemnon) returns from war and is poisoned by his wife, Christine (Clytemnestra) who is carrying on an affair with Adam Brant (Aegisthus). In the second part, Orin (Orestes) and Lavinia (Electra) avenge their father's death by murdering Brant and driving Christine to suicide. The last part culmininates with a judgement on Orin and Lavinia. The final curtain of the first part falls on Mannon's death, as in Aeschylus, it does on Agamemnon's.

The story, however, follows the Greek prototype up to the middle of the third division of the play. In O'Neill's play, the death of the lover, as in Aeschylus and Euripides,

not as in Sophocles, comes before that of the mother. But O'Neill's remarkable fidelity to basic motifs of the Greek myth is obvious. As a critic observes, "The presence of the sea in the Troy story finds congenial recapitulation in O'Neill's response to the sea and the islands of the South Pacific; the primitive need to honor the dishonored father, and the horrifying origin of the curse in the devouring of children is echoed in the fates of the Mannon heirs, Lavinia, Orin and Adam Brant; the sense of a haunted world, peopled with ghosts, and of men and women thrust into action by the dictates of a compulsive and destructive will and pursued by the furies of their own guilt are admirably brought into alignment with the legend".[26]

But there are some modifications of the Greek story in O'Neill's play. And there are some additions, too. The incest-motive; the death of Orin and the transference of the whole situation and dramatic conclusion from the mother to the sister in O'Neill's play depart from Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. In O'Neill's play Lavinia (Electra) gets the pivotal role. Nowhere in Greek drama does this happen. In Sophocles' Electra, though she undergoes so much of the torment, Electra, at the end, is let off with a betrothal to Pylades and the forebodings and remorse rise in Orestes only, who kills his mother. In Euripides' Electra the conclusion lies in the

forebodings of Orestes and the marriage of Electra to Pylades. In Aeschylus, Electra appears only in the middle of the trilogy; the central hero is Agamemnon as well as Orestes.

In the Oresteia Electra plays a subordinate role. She acts a surrogate to Agamemnon; as her visit to her father's tomb opens the Choephoroi, she is immediately identified with his cause. She also serves to introduce Orestes by lamenting his absence and recognizing him on his appearance. O'Neill's Lavinia, on the other hand, appears in the first scene of Homecoming. She has previous knowledge of her mother's identity; she tries to warn her father of his danger; she discovers evidence, immediately after Ezra's death, of Christine's treachery. Apropos of the title, Lavinia assumes the role of heroine in Mourning Becomes Electra.

O'Neill's modern parallels for the Electra story are "appropriate and unforced".[27] The Civil War offered an appropriate means of modernizing the post-Trojan-War period of the legend. The closest parallel to the Greek family in American experience is the Puritan family (the Mannon family) with its conviction of man born to sin and punishment. The Civil War is a historic authentication of the motif of a house divided by fratricidal strife and destruction. The Mannon house is a large building of the Greek temple style. The wall of the house is of grey-cut stone. The white wooden portico

is Grecian.

The details of the relationships in the House of Atreus create the structure of the Mannon class, Travis Bogard discovers, "The names, following the punning allusion to 'Agamemnon' in Ezra Mannon, with its connotation of power and wealth, were developed by the alliterative scheme which at one time he [O'Neill] tried to maintain in Lavinia by calling her 'Elavinia' ".[28] Captain Brant is obviously O'Neill's Aegisthus. His relation to the Mannon family adds to the role of the lover the motif of a blood-relationship. Christine is O'Neill's Clytemnestra with her sexual passion, acceptance of a paramour, motherly affection and murder of her husband. Orin is O'Neill's Orestes. He murders Adam Brant as Orestes takes the life of his mother's lover. Orestes, in the Greek story, is pursued by the avenging Furies. In the last part of O'Neill's story, Lavinia becomes to Orin what the Furies were to Orestes, a constant reminder of guilt, driving him to madness. He wants to be her lover in order to force her to share his guilt. He says to Lavinia, "How else can I be sure you won't leave me? You would never dare leave me - then ! You would feel as guilty then as I do ! ... "[29] In the ancient servant of Electra, O'Neill finds Seth, just as Peter emerges from Pylades and Hazel from Sophocles' Chrysothemes.

O'Neill's chorus of gossip comes "naturally, if not entirely, convincingly"[30], from his source. The chorus is of small town civic types. Prominent among them are Seth Beckwith, Mannon's gardener; Amos Ames, carpenter by trade, "a townsfolk type of garrulous gossip-monger"[31]; his wife, Louisa, of "a similar scandal-bearing type"[32]; her cousin, Minnie "with a round mouth pursed out to drink in gossip"[33]. They constitute a chorus representing the town folk coming to look and listen and spy on the rich and exclusive Mannons. Before the murder of Adam by Orin, the drunken sailor who serves as a chorus complains about "the yaller-haired pig who put her arm around me so lovin"[34], and then cleaned his pockets. Similarly, in the knocking-on-the-gate episode which opens the third play, the cronies who gather round the gardener allow that Christine was a "looker". One offers to let her ghost sit on his lap if ghosts "look like the living"[35]. Along with them the clerks, doctors, visiting cousins, businessmen, ministers convey something of the typicality of the chorus of Lazarus Laughed, but, as Travis Bogard[36] holds, they are not so diagrammatically conceived as to create a symbolic unit. They only sketch what may be called the human background for the drama of the Mannons.

O'Neill's and Aeschylus'___both the plays include a 'judgement' in the last part. But while Aeschylus' play opens out into a social revolution and a theophany, O'Neill concludes

with a self-judgement by the two remaining members of the House of Mannon. Lavinia immures herself in the sepulchral family mansion; she punishes herself with a living death. Orin is not vindicated like Orestes and not absolved of his mother's murder; he commits suicide. Porter's analysis in this connection is worth quoting. He writes, "The epiphany of the Oresteia vindicates, on three levels, those teleological processes by which suffering leads to a new life for the individual and the community. The epiphany of Mourning depicts an isolation imposed by self-judgement that leads to death. Mourning becomes Electra; death becomes the Mannons".[37] He further explains the significance of the epiphany of Mourning Becomes Electra by saying, "This epiphany, however, is not a simple, disconnected cry of despair; it proceeds from the cultural determinants with which O'Neill situates and motivates his action, the Puritan heritage and Freudian psychology. The cultural attitudes that are formulated under these headings are as definite and describable as the dictates of tribal custom in the Oresteia. Each supplies a set of motivations for the personae, and together they constitute an agon like the filial-piety and blood-revenge components in Aeschylus. They function in Mourning Becomes Electra to determine the direction of the action and the over-all meaning of the play".[38]

Stark Young holds that the incest-motive, coming toward the last of the play, in modern terms, "is the most brilliant re-creation"[39] of O'Neill "in the most profound sense of Greek equivalents"[40]. For Orestes the Erinyes are the Furies who will avenge the crime he has committed in his own blood. When they are appeased, their other selves, the Eumenides will leave him peace. For Orin Mannon there comes the sudden form of his desire, incest: the realization and admission of what it has all been about all along, his feelings toward his father, toward his mother, toward Brant, toward Lavinia. This recognition of his obsession is his avenging Erinyes.[41]

Explaining the analogies between O'Neill's play and the Oresteia, Stark Young writes, "The motives of the resemblance among the three men, Mannon, Orin and Brant, is of a great dramatic image : it provides a parallel to the Greek motive of a cursed house, and at the same time remains modern and fresh. The Greek husband returned from the war with his paramour and after sacrificing his daughter; Mannon's return will bring the son also home again, to a more subtle and complex situation than the other ... The mother in Mourning Becomes Electra is not killed by her son but takes her own life; his essential murder, nevertheless, of his mother turns in his mind with a terror more modern but no less destroying".[42]

As with the original Atreidae, the family fate of the New England Mannons is ancestral. In his detailed "Working Notes and Extracts from a Fragmentary Work Diary", O'Neill outlines his purpose and method in Mourning Becomes Electra, emphasizing repeatedly his equation of the Oedipus and Electra complexes with destiny. He writes, "They are a modern tragic interpretation of classic fate without benefit of Gods for it [the play] must, before everything, remain [a] modern psychological play — the fate springing out of the family".[43]

But before explaining the nature of Oedipus and Electra complexes, let us review the origin and nature of the family curse in O'Neill's play.

Instead of the Aeschylean concept of a god-given curse inherited by innocent members of a once-guilty family, O'Neill presents a Freudian explanation of the events in the Mannon family. He reveals the tangled complexes and psychosis of the characters and attributes their fate to these sources. This was clearly the dramatist's aim, because, in answer to an inquiry about the inspiration of the play, O'Neill wrote, "... I wanted to borrow ... the theme-pattern of Aeschylus (and the old legends) and to reinterpret it in modern psychological terms with Fate and the Furies working from within

the individual soul".[44] The tradition of the Mannon family — conventional behaviour based on Puritan standards — insures the perpetuation of the curse. The Puritan code provides no resources for purging guilt. The Mannons are caught in their private hell, and the family circle draws tighter around their mutual guilt. The family is helpless in the face of guilt and death; there is no prospect of salvation anywhere.

In the Mannon family, the family fate has been set in motion before the opening of the play by Abe Mannon, father of Ezra (Aganemnon). Abe's younger brother, David had been involved in a liaison with Marie Brantome, resulting in her pregnancy. David married her but Abe, in Lavinia's words, "put them both out of the house and then afterwards tore it down and built this one because he wouldn't live where his brother had disgraced the family".[45] The child of David and Marie is Adam Brant, the Aegisthus of the play, who returns to avenge his parents' death in poverty and misery.

The house of the Mannon, therefore, is built upon outraged pride and Puritanism, leading inevitably to death for the Mannon line. For them pride is the source of death, and love is the source of life. In order to escape the ugly reality of their actual lives the Mannons yearn for release

in love untainted by pride and sin, and in death, itself. Ezra's homecoming, like Orin's and Lavinia's, is an attempt to escape from a life dominated by pride and death into one filled with love and joy; but the men are thwarted by the women, and the women by the men.

The closed circuit of the Mannon fate cannot be broken as long as outside blood mingles with the Mannon blood, and produces the endless repetitions of error and evil all over again. The only atonement for the family is to leave it in a state of absolute being as a patina of history, and provide it no chance of 'becoming', an organic force for life. And hence, the inevitability of Lavinia's final rites of withdrawal and isolation.

The question of Family fate is linked with that of the Oedipus and Electra complexes. The Oedipus complex is as potent a device for plot-motivation in O'Neill's plays as the Delphic oracle in Greek tragedy, and has much the same significance; it is one manifestation of the ways of destiny, and becomes philosophically, a symbol of the destinies. O'Neill at moment comes very close to these devices in Mourning Becomes Electra as when Mannon says to Lavinia, "I want you to remain my little girl — for a while longer, at least"[46] or when he tells Christine,"I tried not to hate Orin, I turned to Vinnie,

but a daughter's not a wife".[47] Lavinia is caught in the father complex while Orin is caught in the mother complex. Ultimately, Orin feels that he and Lavinia have actually become their father and mother. He says to Lavinia, "Can't you see I'm now in Father's place and you're Mother? ... I'm the Mannon you're chained to".[48]

In Aeschylus' drama the blood-code is more than a social convention; it is an expression of the will of the gods. Zeus, by his messenger Apollo, orders Orestes to avenge his father. The hero in the Oresteia is ultimately purged of his guilt. O'Neill is striving to revitalize the legend, to render its values in modern terms, to write a play containing a modern psychological approximation of the Greek sense of fate. And so he substituted Freud for Apollo. Porter in this connection observes, "When O'Neill chose Freudian psychology to motivate the action he extended the dimensions of his play-world into areas as broad as the Olympus of Aeschylus. The Freudian view of behavior invokes a region as mysterious as the dwelling place of the gods and sees human motivation as guided by impulses as imperative as divine commands"[49]. And it is here that O'Neill comes closer to Euripides than to Aeschylus, owing to his psychological interest.

O'Neill relentlessly analyses the lives of five persons at the centre of the drama; Lavinia, Christine, Orin, Ezra and Adam are placed in a crucible. They are solely concerned with themselves and that concern is limited to the psycho-sexual problems which they all fatally share. With the psycho-analytic lead, O'Neill provides an essentially purgative action.

For example, Orin's long-written confession which relates the history of the Mannon's crimes has something of the same motivation — the psycho-analysis of a family which may lead to purgation. He accompanies Lavinia to the Islands in order that she might purge herself of her repressions and he comes back home to purge himself. Lavinia says, "You told me that if you could come home and face your ghosts, you *knew you could rid yourself for ever of your silly feeling* of guilt about the past".[50] Orin's attempt to force his sister to incest shows that his self-discovery is complete. He loves his sister, who, in his eyes, is his mother, the ghost of the mother of Adam Brant, and also "some stranger with the same beautiful hair".[51] Although his attempted seduction dies in its disgust, it wrings from him the final plea for purgation: "Vinnie ! For the love of god lets go now, and confess and pay the penalty for Mother's murder, and find peace together".[52]

A similar realisation that peace can be obtained only through payment comes to Lavinia, when with a crushing but heroic self-recognition, she takes the punishment on herself:

"I'm not going the way Mother and Orin went. That's creeping punishment. And there's no one left to punish me. I'm the last Mannon. I've got to punish myself. ... I'll never go out or see anyone ! I'll have the shutters nailed close so no sunlight can even get in. I'll live along with the dead, and keep their secrets, and let them haunt me, until the curse is paid out and the last Mannon is let die ! ... It takes the Mannons to punish themselves for being born ! "[53]

Mourning becomes her as she becomes mourning. And the complicated woe of humanity is resolved in the play, not in terms of neurosis, as critics like O'Connor[54] seem to imply, but by means of a responsible adult recognition of guilt, and a self-punishment which is also an index of the self-understanding attained in Greek tragedies. There is a tragic totality of vision in Lavinia's entering into her coffin-like mansion, a poignant consummation of the ritual sacrifice of Mannon to a "non-man". Stark Young rightly observes, "The end of the play is by imaginative insight Greek in spirit : 'Lavinia goes into the house, the blinds are closed forever, the stage is silent, the door shut, the exaltation is there, the completion, the tragic certainty' ".[55]

The course of purgative action, concentrated on the raising and recognition of submerged truths, can be paralleled in Greek tragedy. It is, however, given a modern quality. O'Neill, while accepting modern psycho-analytic theory still holds to the idea of crime and punishment that he inherited from the source in legend. In Greek tragedy, crimes committed by human beings are punished by Gods who control human destiny. In O'Neill's play the tangled web of love and lust in which the characters struggle is the evil destiny that shapes their lives.

O'Neill is careful to avoid significant reference to any deity as an agent of fate. Consequently, as observed by Travis Bogard[56], the play is redirected from thoughts of God toward human responsibility. When Hazel speaks of God's forgiving Lavinia, Lavinia replies, "I'm not asking God or anybody for forgiveness. I forgive myself !"[57] In the same spirit she judges, condemns and punishes herself. In this, however, she acts as her own 'God' rather than as her own psycho-analyst. The promise of purgation offered by psycho analysis is finally vitiated by the drive toward self-inflicted punishment. Well said by a critic, "For all its Freudian modernity, the action is controlled by the dead decrees of Olympus".[58]

In the Greek tragedies the sequence of events originates with the determination of the tragic hero to accomplish an end. Somewhere in the process the truth about himself and his relation to the action is revealed to him. This revelation of the self of the protagonist is a characteristic mark of Greek tragedy. In O'Neill's plays, however, this self-revelation is the one end and aim of all the action; its end is to solve the mystery of the self.

Character in a Greek tragedy is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kinds of things a man chooses or avoids. The tragic hero brings about his own destruction through some error or frailty. In O'Neill's play the moral purpose of a character is to strengthen an illusion about himself. This moral purpose often runs counter to another aim, which is to discover himself. The illusion is a self-image substituted for the real self, the latter being unconsciously hated by the character. This self-hatred and the consequent pursuit of illusion constitute the tragic flaw which destroys him.

Aristotle considered the pride of the Greek tragic hero a flaw, an error or frailty in the character of a man like ourselves. The pride of O'Neill's characters follows the destructive pattern of 'hubris'. Lavinia's final acceptance of responsibility and guilt indicates that she tries to know, accept and control her flaw. She realises that the only fitting

punishment for the hated self may be inflicted by itself. In the Greek tragedy, although the hero's destruction seems to be determined by fate, he still takes responsibility for that destruction. At the moment of self-knowledge predestined Oedipus blinds himself in symbol of his life-long blindness; Orestes welcomes the persecution of the Furies, although he was fated to murder his mother. Lavinia's struggle is equally fated, equally hopeless. When she attains self-knowledge she takes the punishment on herself. She thus achieves a true tragic dignity.

Mourning Becomes Electra is a powerful naturalistic tragedy in which O'Neill's technique has gained much from the study of his Greek models in simplicity and economy of structure, in steady advance toward an inevitable ground. It is a much more realistic play than Strange Interlude. The action is less diffuse and better integrated. But the movement of events, in spite of violence, evades progression. The characters have no goal toward which they are moving.

In his essay, Trying to like O'Neill, Eric Bentley makes a severe criticism of O'Neill's experimental device in Mourning Becomes Electra. About characterisation in this play he writes, "... in Mourning Becomes Electra are the characters over life-size,

Unhappily this is not because of the size of their bones but, as it were, by inflation with gas, cultural and psychological. The cultural gas is the classic story".[59] He elaborates by saying, "If we ask what difference it makes that Orin and Lavinia are versions of Orestes and Electra the answer is that they thereby acquire an artificial prestige. They have become more important without any creative work on the author's part".[60] About O'Neill's treatment of the Greek myth, he remarks, "In Mourning Becomes Electra the myth makes it hard for O'Neill to let his people have their own identity at all, yet to the extent that they do have one, it is naturally, a modern and American identity, and this in turn makes their ancient and Greek actions seem wildly improbable".[61] He further comments, "O'Neill has made the effort, though a vain one, to assimilate the myth to modern life".[62] Making a comparison between Mourning Becomes Electra and the Oresteia, he writes, "Mourning Becomes Electra is unrealistic, unsocial, illiberal, unpolitical, and pessimistic. What of the Oresteia? It celebrates the victory of law over arbitrary violence, of the community over the individual. It is optimistic, political, social and with pessimistic license might be called liberal and realistic as well".[63] Garff B. Wilson criticises the play by saying, "The drama seems overly long; much of it is sententious and repetitious; the Freudian psychology is overly simplified and obvious. Some modern critics now consider the play a hulking bore".[64] George Steiner, for example, is of the view that O'Neill commits inner vandalism by sheer

inadequacy of style. In his words, "In the morass of his language the high griefs of the house of Atreus dwindle to a case of adultery and murder in some provincial rathole".[65] However, there are critics also to judge the play a great drama. As late as 1960 John Gassner praised the play by saying that it possesses "greater tragic depth and scope than any American play written before or after it".[66]

Allen Lewis makes a comparative study between the Greek tragic vision and O'Neill's by saying, "Greek heroes violate social law and are doomed until harmony is restored. O'Neill explores the dark recesses of the inner self. In both cases, man is pitted against unknowable and mysterious elements beyond control; but with the Greeks, order, though deliberately balanced, is preserved. ... With O'Neill chaos and disorder continue..."[67]

T.H. Porter's study of the Greek leanings of Mourning Becomes Electra is more up to the mark. He observes, "The plot of Mourning Becomes Electra is remarkably faithful to the Oresteia. Its characterization, symbolism and tone, however, are determined by O'Neill's interpretation of the Puritan heritage, by Freudian psychology, and by the corollary motif of salvation by spatial remove. The effect of these non-Hellenic elements is a shift of focus so radical as to produce a complete inversion of the play's meaning. The Oresteia proclaims a constant

relationship between the individual and society. Orestes' crime does not isolate him from the community — he flees to Delphi, the communal shrine; he is judged by a jury of citizens; his personal fate changes the structure of society from clan-centered to city-centered. Conversely, the Mannons become progressively more isolated from the community. The town's folk attend the funeral in the second act but in the third they shrink from entering the 'haunted house'. The familial society contracts until only Orin and Lavinia are left; finally, Lavinia shuts out all society. Secondly, in the Oresteia the Greek code of blood vengeance provides the motivation for Orestes' crime and defines the nature of, and sets limit to, his guilt. He must murder his mother to avenge his father. In O'Neill's play, on the other hand, the crimes are rooted in the characters' sub-conscious, and the feeling of guilt is unlimited because it proceeds from the Puritan sense of damnation. Finally, the solution to Orestes' dilemma in the Oresteia is rooted in the popular history of the Athenian nation. ... O'Neill's solution to the Mannon curse is not purgation, but death. Orin 'returns to Mother' by committing suicide, Lavinia's self-immolation is merely a surrogate for suicide. No Providence, benign or malicious, is invoked".[68]

O'Neill, it is true, did not differ from the Greek tragedian in concerning himself with fate and the working out of the family curse in the story of a New England family. But

the motivation is analysed in terms of modern psychology, and the purport of the trilogy —— unlike Aeschylus' —— is one of disillusionment. However, O'Neill employs the Athenian and the Puritan themes, not to explain away the human predicament, but to illuminate it with all the classical suspense of a terrible past repeating itself in the present. On the context of O'Neill's view on tragedy Anita Block's observation about Mourning Becomes Electra is worth quoting. She writes, "O'Neill's analysis of the course of this trilogy presented in the light of contemporary psychological knowledge, gives to Mourning Becomes Electra purging quality which is the essence of all great tragedy; it lifts its audience beyond tragedy into the realm of a new and enlarged understanding of life. Men will no longer need to punish themselves, if they utilise their knowledge of the laws that dominate their lives so as to thrust their destructive powers and make them constructive forces for the attainment of individual fulfilment. Towards this goal, Mourning Becomes Electra points the way. To control and direct these laws, instead of being controlled and directed by them, means the end of the old Greek concept of fate by which we purpose to live today".[69]

4. Classical Analogues in Eliot's Plays

A. Introduction:

T.S. Eliot's (1888-1965) objective in using classical analogues in his plays was to achieve a complex dramatic statement capable of fusing widely separated concerns into a single whole — concerns as varied as symbolism, naturalism, poetry, religion and entertainment. Transposition of an older heroic action to a contemporary setting was envisaged, in addition, as a way of synthesizing past and present, the archetypal and the particular.[1]

A classicist as he was, Eliot in his own trenchant way emphasised the value of order and discipline, of authority and tradition. His fascination to Greek drama becomes more intensive, partly owing to his taste for primitive art, and partly to his needs of themes for his plays. He was indeed a keen admirer of Aeschylus and particularly of the dramatic concentration of his art. His interest in Aeschylus was first apparent in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales", with its epigraph taken from the dying words of Agamemnon. In 1821 Eliot sent Ezra Pound a draft translation from Aeschylus, but no more was heard of the translation. As early as 1919, Eliot referred, in a review of Henry Adam, to "the Erinyes which drove him madly through seventy years of search for education".[2] "In a play of Aeschylus",

Eliot observes, "We do not find that certain passages are literature and certain passages drama; every style of utterance in the play bears a relation to the whole".[3] A play of Aeschylus was, in his eyes, self-consistent, and a kind of ordered whole.

Eliot was very categorical in stating that "a form which has been perfected by one particular age cannot be copied exactly by writers of another age".[4] Eliot's sense of tradition was not grafted on any idea of blind adherence to the past. Hence he did not aim "to copy Greek drama".[5] He decided, instead, "to make use of suggestions from remote drama, too remote for there to be any danger of imitation".[6]

Accordingly, in his plays, Eliot made use of suggestions from Greek drama. We find the use of mythical analogy, of the chorus and choric passages, of the Eumenides and of some formal devices of the Greek classical tragedy in his plays. He began with the fragments of Sweeney Agonistes (1932), an Aristophanic melodrama. His Rock (1934) was written to show the use of the chorus. In Murder in the Cathedral (1935) Eliot has incorporated very judiciously some of the well-known devices used by Aeschylus. Eliot put The Family Reunion (1939) into the mould of the Orestes story. The plot-source of The Cocktail Party (1950) is the Alcestis of Euripides. The Confidential Clerk (1954) has its affinity to Ion of Euripides. The Elder

Statesman (1958) is modelled on Oedipus at Colonus of Sophocles.

Eliot found that the contemporary drama had presented one-sided detail of the tragic and the comic elements, implicit in human nature. Therefore, in the beginning of this dramatic career, his view of drama was enriched by Euripides' novel infusion of tragi-comedy. Followed by his close reading of Dryden's view of drama, Eliot propounded his theory of drama in the light of the belief that "the comic and satiric could ... be portrayed on the surface while the tragic and spiritual existed simultaneously beneath"[7]. Euripides' indication that "every human disposition contains the possibilities of the species of good and evil"[8], though did not appeal to Eliot in its full content, yet has justified his sense in successfully extirpating the evil into good, in his characters.

Eliot's plays do not reflect a universal imitation of Greek patterns and sources. Instead, he has imitated dramatists from Sophocles to Euripides individually in his plays. Whereas Eliot follows Euripides and Aeschylus in the sources of his plays, Sophocles has been imitated in the formal aspects. "The warring modes of decided culture and the new incompleteness of human psyche"[9] create a striking note of loneliness in Eliot's plays. Eliot realized that the desolate isolation of the human mood could best be expressed on the lines of Euripides.

But, being a conscious dramatist, Eliot tried to find out a relevant solution to the note of hopelessness. He found ways of substantiating solutions to hopelessness in life in the plays of Aeschylus who lent the idea that the loneliness of human fate can be annulled by reconciling "God and man as just partners"[10] in civilisation. Aeschylus meant that hopelessness, which was a product of animalism of the particular civilisation, cannot be recovered unless we understand the instinct of the spiritual as much as we do the physical. Eliot has followed the idea in constructing the plots of his plays.

Eliot endorsed the use of myth in his plays as a means "of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history".[11] The Greek myth, in itself, was a rich store-house of the grave issues covering the permanent struggles and conflicts of human beings on a universal as well as cosmic plane. And it has a long history of use and re-use. Eliot was sure that by suggesting a universal meaning and by modelling his incidents on the pattern of mythical action, he could make it easily comprehensible to his audience. Moreover, as Eliot has observed in The Possibility of a Poetic Drama, an underlying mythical structure might provide a deeper level of meaning while the surface might cater to the interest of the audience who sought entertainment.

In his fascination for Greek drama, Eliot was also influenced by the work of Francis M. Cornford[12] among others, who emphasised the specific liturgical forms of fertility ceremonies, which were retained in Greek drama.

Eliot has transposed the ancient actions to modern settings and recast these actions from a Christian point of view. Now, a Christian reading of the classical actions alters not only the nature of the experience of the protagonist, but also the corporate focus of Greek drama. Why, then, Eliot should have used classical under-pattern, to project a Christian world-view? The answer lies in Eliot's adoption of the Bradleyan (F.H. Bradley) practice of thinking in contrarieties. Applying this dialectical mode to the drama, both Christianity and the classical plays, chosen for adaptation, may be taken as illustrations of the same basic movement towards self-awareness and salvation. Eliot sought to create a complex and comprehensible dramatic world, capable of subsuming within itself even possible contradiction.

Eliot was trying to instal poetry in theatre even for those who were not interested in theology. Hence he had deliberately chosen to build an outer fabric for the drama under the shadow of the Greek myth which implicitly helps the audience in understanding the course of the play. Eliot's use of the non-naturalistic devices was also intended 'to depayser' his

audience — to shock them into a more alert awareness of the issues presented in the plays.[13]

Since Eliot's avowed purpose is to transfigure the commonplace reality by means of an effective poetic communication, the structure of his plays reminds us of the complex conversions of Euripides' drama in which we find dramatic mutation of conventional reality. The technique of transfiguration, as adopted by both Eliot and Euripides, involves in a sense, the dramatization of the incongruities in a given culture. But Eliot's method of transfiguration differs perceptibly from Euripides' method because a work of greater reality becomes incarnate in the secular terms of his drama only under the stress of poetry.

As regards the use of chorus and other formal devices, Eliot has made a very significant comment. In a broadcast talk Eliot remarked : "... in making use of [the chorus] we do not aim to copy Greek drama. There is a good deal about Greek theatre that we do not know, and never shall know. But we know that some of its conventions cannot be ours. The characters frequently talk too long, the chorus has too much to say and holds up the action; usually not enough happens; and the Greek notion of climax is not ours. But the chorus has always fundamentally the same uses. It mediates between the action and the audience; it intensifies the action by projecting its emotional consequences, so that we, as the audience, see it doubly, by seeing its effect on other people."[14] To this end Eliot has restored the chorus in his plays, notably in Murder in the

Cathedral. D.E. Jones observes, "Eliot has used the chorus to open out the action into its full significance, as nobody else has done since Aeschylus".[15] But as the same critic noted, Eliot has not just copied Aeschylus; he has given the chorus a new significance in the light of Christian dispensation. Likewise, Eliot's use of the other devices of Greek tragedy are always meaningful.

Eliot's first specific experiment in drama is Sweeney Agonistes (1932). It was an attempt to see whether tragic feelings could be expressed through the medium of farce. It is known to us only in fragments. The Fragment of a Prologue and Fragment of an Agon were designed, Eliot tells us, as part of an "Aristophanic melodrama".

Eliot wanted to make an experiment of creating varying levels of consciousness so that there should be one character whose sensibility and intelligence should be on the plane of the most sensitive and intelligent members of the audience and his speeches should be addressed to the other personages of the play who were to be material, literal-minded and visionless. Sweeney himself answers to this description.

Sweeney is "the essential pattern of the action".[16] He is so different a character from the rest. He is, so to say,

the meaning of the play. Orestes' phrase from the Choephoroi, "You don't see them, you don't but I see them" — is a statement of the experience which separates Sweeney and gives him the formal status. Sweeney in his meditations on birth, copulation and death cannot communicate his feelings to Doris and Dusty and the visitors to their flat, but to the sentient members of the audience. Sweeney is completely isolated from the rest of the cast. Sweeney is thus "a fragment of Orestes experience, and Sweeney Agonistes is a brilliant dramatic aside on the contemporary context of such experience".[17]

Sweeney Agonistes is sub-titled as "Fragments of an Aristophanic Melodrama". It is a melodrama in the sense that it is embellished with songs among the dialogue. The character types are based on Aristophanes — Sweeney himself corresponding to the Learned Cook, e.g., the sausage-seller in Aristophanes' The Knights, who inherits the role of the life-giver from fertility-ritual. Thus during the 'Agon', Sweeney is to be stirring up eggs.

Sweeney Agonistes concludes with a nightmarish chorus in terror of execution : "And you wait for a knock and the turning of a lock for you know the hangman's waiting for you".[18]

The major importance of Sweeney Agonistes is its experiment in speech rather than in form. Raymond Williams

rightly observes, "... the fragments will be remembered as important ... for the experiments in language. A form is discovered, not so much in characters and actions, and not in any conclusive way in a pattern of experience, but rather in an inclusive ordering of speech".[19] It can be said without doubt that it is one of the finest pieces of dramatic verse Eliot has ever written. In this dramatic verse the form is a matter of language : the deliberate stylisation of contemporary speech in terms of a skilful mechanical rhythm.

The Rock (1934) was the first pageant play written by Eliot. Its situation does not give rise to any struggle or conflict; its structure consists of a series of scenes of a related tone, scenes which decorate the theme of the building of the Church.

The Rock, Eliot states, "makes no pretence of being a contribution to English dramatic literature".[20] According to Eliot, it was revue, and its only serious achievement was to show that there was "a possible role for the chorus".[21] Indeed the only interest of The Rock lies in the chorus. Bernard Bergonzi explains the nature and function of the chorus in The Rock in the following lines: "The choruses are something new in Eliot's play : they are emphatic and rather coarse in texture, exhibiting considerable formal variety but little rhythmic subtlety. The choruses are excessively didactic,

harshly instructing the audience in Christian truth and harangueing them for their godless ways".[22]

The choruses of The Rock are conceived as a group of impersonal and abstract figures. It comprises seven men and ten women. Their operation is conditioned by an ecclesiastical building, decorated with Victorian and Gothic paintings in the background against which they are to be seen and heard. The chorus emphasises not only their personality, but that of the entire ecclesiastical system governing the institution of the churches. Wearing half-masks and stiff robes, they speak with the voice of the poet addressing, indeed, "haranguing an audience that was most distinctly audible".[23] Many of the choral verses are distributed, yet the personages remain unindividualised. "Its members", says Eliot, "were speaking for me, not uttering words that really represented any supposed character of their own".[24] In brief, the choruses of The Rock do not constitute a unified or well-knit body of personages, nor do they present individualised characters. Virtually, they stand completely separated from each other.

It will be wrong to say that the choric segments have no dramatic relevance. In fact, their significance lies in the way they claim to focus the attention of the audience on certain problems and their possible solutions. For example, the squads of Workmen and Bricklayers present themselves in

military uniforms. They talk in terms of the creed of Communism and Fascism, and the allurement which these cults propose to offer to the weaker sections of the society. But the choruses are not allured by the new evangels. Instead, they reflect on a different view, which is juxtaposed to the one expressed by the squads of Redshirts and Blackshirts.

Suffice it to say that the choruses of The Rock, though not individualised, have their own place in the total scheme of the pageant. They have been so designed as to be spoken and read. They do not present any unified emotion, and yet have an important role to play. They illuminate the whole concept of The Rock, and mark a definite step toward the creation of a suitable form of verse. The chorus also assumes "the Greek role of commentary".[25] It also gives voice to some of the profound kind of meditative poetry. But The Rock hardly meets Eliot's test for a religious play as it fails to arouse the excitement of people who are not religious.

Eliot had penetrated deeply into the ritual origins of ancient drama and in The Rock, the liturgical element is dominant, specially in the choruses.

B. Murder in the Cathedral : A Choric Play

Murder in the Cathedral (1935) is Eliot's first full-fledged play. The theme of the play is tragic and it is the theme of Man and Fatality, of Man face to face with Destiny traced out for him by God, just as we find in a Greek tragedy. Professor Murray observes, "In Murder in the Cathedral, Eliot has returned to the most primitive form of tragedy on the earlier play of Aeschylus in which there is one great situation, the poet steeping our mind, with almost one or two sudden flashes of action passing over it".[26] Eliot himself held, "After all, what one gets essential and permanent, I think, in the old plays, is a situation".[27]

Like Aeschylus' plays, Eliot's plays are also about situations. They do not give delight in the excitements of narratives. Murder in the Cathedral, for instance, deals with Thomas Becket's choice in the eternal conflict between Good and Evil. And Becket surrendered his will to the divine design. Nevill Coghill holds the same view when he writes, "Murder in the Cathedral is about a situation and a quality of life; the situation is perpetual and the quality is rare".[28]

Eliot has provided to the play a poetic under-pattern based on classical myth. There is a close parallel between the death and martyrdom of Becket in a cathedral and the murder of

Oedipus in the Sacred Wood. In Sophocles' play, Oedipus at Colonus, Oedipus is tempted in various ways to leave the Sacred Wood. Becket, in Eliot's play, is also tempted to compromise his principles. Both the protagonists refuse to yield to temptation. Both of them meet with a glorious death, death that brings benefit to their land. Both learn the lesson of suffering and patience. Oedipus' death brings fertility and prosperity to his land and Becket's sacrifice fructifies the lives of common people. Thus, Eliot is able to communicate his ideas to the audience by running a close parallel between the ancient Greek myth and Becket's story, without imposing anything upon them.

Another parallel is noticeable at the start of Eliot's play. The women of Canterbury are awaiting the return of Becket to Britain. In a similar fashion, the chorus in Aeschylus' Persae is found awaiting the return of Suza to the palace.

Murder in the Cathedral opens with a chorus, and not with a prologue. But as the prologue sets the background of the theme in a Greek play, the opening chorus of Eliot's play suggests the theme of the play, i.e. "to bear witness".[29] It also informs the audience of the prior action and reveals what is happening at the moment.

Eliot follows Aeschylus in opening the play near the crisis. In order to achieve concentration, Eliot begins the play at a comparatively late stage in the career of the hero. This is in conformity with the technique of the Greek tragedians. Becket's progress towards martyrdom is already near completion when the play begins. Information regarding historical events which precede the martyrdom have been imparted through the classical device of retrospective narration.

Eliot's play, like a Greek tragedy, enacts only a single event and concentrates on a single theme. The theme is simple and spiritual and it has all the classical sobriety and solemnity and a universal significance. Eliot's theme is self-awareness and salvation, and what we get on reading the play, is an idea of the perfection of will — an idea which recurs very often in a Greek play. Becket says, "I have therefore to make perfect my will".[30]

The stress on premonition is a common feature of Greek tragedies. The beginning of Murder in the Cathedral is also marked by the premonition of the chorus. At their first appearance the chorus have the premonition of what is to come and of their part in it, and they fear that they will prove unequal to the task. They fear, even more, the impending disturbance of the quiet seasons, the irruption of the unknown into the familiar round of their lives. No doubt, the stress

on premonition has been slightly exaggerated in Eliot's play.

The Greek tragedian would use the Herald to announce the approach of the chief characters in The Persians and Agamemnon. The messenger is used, when necessary, to narrate the off-stage action at the climax. In Eliot's play, the messenger, and not the herald, announces the arrival of Thomas Becket:

> "I am too here to inform you ...
> The Archbishop is in England, and is close outside".[31]

In The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1943), Eliot[32] claims that the unities of Greek tragedy are not merely rules, but laws — and laws of human nature. In Murder in the Cathedral, the unities of time and place have been closely, but not strictly, observed. The entire action takes place in the cathedral of Canterbury, or just outside it. The play opens on 2nd December, 1170 and concludes on 29th December, 1170. The events depicted are those directly connected with Becket's martyrdom, and follow each other so closely that the unity of time is not disturbed.

Eliot, however, comes closer to Greek drama in this play in his emphasis on action over character. Though the play has two self-contained parts, it is unified by the movement from the fear and inertia expressed by the chorus in their first speech to their acceptance, simultaneously mourning

and rejoicing, of the full meaning of Becket's martyrdom in their last speech. Raymond Williams observes in this connection, 'The action of the play has great formal beauty of design, but it is not a design that has to be imposed on the audience; it is a formal movement, a succession of balances, which springs naturally from the fundamental relationships within the ritual. It is indeed "a form to arrest the flow of spirit" and to communicate it'.[33] The action in this play is confined to the period immediately before and after the climatic deed as we find in a Greek tragedy. The historical events are strictly subordinated to the theme to keep up the austerity. As Eliot himself says, "A man comes home, foreseeing that he will be killed, and he is killed".[34] Everything that happens is mainly psychological. The real dramatic movement is one which takes place in the mind of the protagonist. One is very easily recalled to Aeschylus' drama in which emotions are dramatized and not the events.

In a Greek tragedy, the sense of inevitable Fate or Nemesis is present throughout. The idea of over-hanging Fate also predominates Eliot's play. We may quote line like, "End will be simple, sudden, God-given".[35] or "Destiny waits in the hand of God"[36], that makes us feel that behind all that happens, there is the shaping hand of destiny. Fatalism which is so strong in some Greek plays, appears without any conflict in

Eliot's play but it has been made a part of the general pattern of Christian religious experience.

The Greeks were little interested in individual characters. In Murder in the Cathedral, the Priests, the Women and the Tempters are left nameless. Even the Knights are not known by their names in the main part of the play but only in their Apologia. The only character that is known by the name is the Protagonist himself. Still he is not individualised. Robert Speaight holds, "It is true that Becket was an idea rather than a character".[37] He is certainly not a tragic hero in the Aristotelian sense of the term. He is a perfect man without any flaw. It is the virtue that eventually leads to his death.

In keeping with the tradition of classical drama, Eliot has made use of minimum number of characters. Attention has been concentrated on the main figure. There is so much concentration on Becket that everywhere he dominates the play by direct presence or in the words of others.

In considering the Knights not as murderers but as 'the will of God', and also his apparent murder as a sacrifice to it, Becket reflects a change in his attitude and feelings. There are definite reasons for his change of behaviour, but Becket himself does not disclose these to anyone. In fact, in this change of attitude, Thomas is not Christian, but Greek. Francis

Fergusson has rightly equated the 'change' in Becket's behaviour, with Greek 'epiphany' which stands for "the change of heart in the mirror of reason".[38] Becket's change, which is abrupt and eternal, has been accentuated by reason, and not by faith. It shows the influence of Greek trends of thought.

Greek drama is essentially religious and moral in tone. This is also the tone of Eliot's play. But one thing is to be noted here. Eliot has chosen, as his ground, not religion but what leads towards it, goes with it and comes from it. With its ritual pattern and its theme of martyrdom, the play arouses strong religious emotions. Very often the Archbishop turns out to be the symbol of Christ. As Grover Smith[39] observes, Becket, like Christ, is tested, and slain, and executed, not for his sin, but for other men's. His murder may be called another crucifixion for the sin of the world. He follows the Lord on word, deed and creed. Eliot deals with the religion of Christianity in his play. But he shares with Aeschylus at least one basic religious experience. Both Eliot's and Aeschylus' plays are pre-occupied with the dignity of soul in agony.

Since Murder in the Cathedral is a religious play, Eliot has richly employed the ritualistic elements in the play. Ronald Peacock holds, "In Murder in the Cathedral, ritual belongs both to the inner structure of the play and to its performance".[40] In the play, the theme is presented through a

series of rituals. Becket's facing the tempters, the sermon on the day of Christmas, the display of banners, the words and the phrases from the Bible — all go to make Murder in the Cathedral a modern ritual drama. That is why Grover Smith groups it under a new branch. He writes, "It belongs almost to a new genre which is pre-tragic, the ritual drama of sin and redemption".[41]

The Aristotelian peripeteia is used at the end of the play. The chorus anticipates the sainthood of Becket. They anticipate pilgrims at his shrine. They learn much and they change much. There is much difference between the first and the last chorus. Eliot, however, does not employ Aristotelian categories regarding different kinds of peripeteia and anagnorisis.

Eliot has carefully pruned, sifted and ordered his material in order to concentrate on his central theme. Every thing superflous has been strictly done away with, so that the play can acquire the simplicity, symmetry and regularity of outline of a classical tragedy. Eliot has achieved the concentration, brevity and effectiveness of an Aristotelian tragedy. Stressing on this point John Peter writes, "Eliot places Becket's conscience within himself, treating the tempters merely as objectified facets of his own consciousness... All thought of a fall-through arrogance, all idea of a struggle at

the character level is accordingly bypassed and the dramatic effect is placed beyond all these, in a context of religious redemption. King Henry himself does not appear, being present only indirectly. The whole technique aims at such simplification and intensification as will give appropriate weight to the issues which are discussed... There are no superfluities".[42]

The chorus, like Thomas, have their moments of illumination. For all their desire to rest in the familiar and to avoid facing the demands, God makes use of them, they have been awakened through pity and terror to a fuller spiritual life. It is, no doubt, a masterly extension of catharsis.

Murder in the Cathedral is a choric play. Special attention, therefore, should be given to how does Eliot make use of the Greek chorus in his play and with what result. Eliot[43] himself pointed out how in his play he has heavily depended on the assistance of the chorus. According to his version[44], the introduction of a chorus of excited and sometimes hysterical women reflecting in their emotion the significance of the action, helped wonderfully. And secondly, writing for the theatre for the first time, Eliot, as a poet, felt more at ease in choral verse than in any dramatic language. Eliot wrote: "The use of chorus strengthened the power and concealed the defects of my theatrical technique".[45] According to D.E. Jones[46] we have to go back to Greek tragedy to find choral writing with which to compare the best of Eliot's chorus. He remarks that in Aeschylus the chorus "opens up the spiritual

dimension of the action"[47]; and that is what happens in Murder in the Cathedral. But Eliot does not only imitate the pattern of Aeschylus' chorus; he has followed Euripides' chorus of Hippolytus, too, in this play. And even while adopting the Aeschylean pattern, he is fairly alive to the relevant aspects of its application. He admits that in making use of the chorus, he does not intend "to copy Greek drama"[48], nor does he aim at using it "too frequently"[49] since it holds up the action of the play".[50] Nevetheless, it serves its purpose by mediating between "the action and the audience".[51] Besides, it intensifies the action by projecting its emotional consequences, so that "we, as the audience see it doubly, by seeing its effect on other people".[52]

Murder in the Cathedral, being a drama of spiritual self-conflict, as Wilson Knight[53] observes, a heavy responsibility falls on the chorus, needed to link the action to the audience. Bernard Bergonzi[54] has a similar opinion when he writes that much of the impact of the drama is conveyed by the chorus. This is not simply because the chorus participates in the unfolding of the action in the Greek fashion as the same critic observes.[55] This is also because Eliot's conception of tragedy which is rooted in the idea of suffering and emanates from the idea of Original Sin is best illustrated by the chorus. And here the chorus goets greater dimension in Eliot's play

than the chorus gets in a Greek play. Cleanth Brooks has rightly observed in this connection : "Into the cries of the chorus, he [Eliot] has poured the tragic expression of suffering humanity, caught in the grip of a secret cause : 'we are forced to bear witness' ".[56] Indeed the chorus is indispensable to the total dramatic conception. It presents a searching study of the significance of martyrdom as symbolised in Becket.

The play begins and ends with choral poetry. The chorus waits and watches, and feels with the protagonist that the doom comes nearer. Then, there is the sense of defilement and of the need for purification. The 'Te Deum' Chorus transcends horror and sorrow, and with the confirmation of faith comes the 'peace which passeth understanding'. The chorus in this play, therefore, quite in the Greek fashion, expresses the magic and the movement of the ultimate emotions such as the sense of suffering and sadness, triumph and forebodings of the future and sheds a lyrical splendour over the whole play.

The chorus, in Eliot's play, therefore, does not belong to any common plane of experience only; it does not only express the common necessities of the poor or the sense of discomfort or insecurity of the common humanity. It transcends its origin. It, ultimately, purports to deal with the concrete immanence of death and death-in-life. It stands for 'the religious

conscience of humanity'.[57] It comes to heighten the tonal effect of the drama by offering the readers or audience an insight into the higher world. Thus it helps to unfold the spirit of the play certainly to a greater degree than the chorus of a Greek play.

In Aeschylus' dramas, it is found, the chorus has no character of its own. For the most part, it is the dramatist's mouth-piece. In Murder in the Cathedral, on the contrary, the chorus is much more individualised. Here the chorus consists of four working women of Canterbury, not twelve as in Aeschylus or fifteen as in Sophocles. As the play opens, the women introduce themselves as "the poor women of Canterbury"[58] and later as "the small folk who live among small things".[59] When we first see them, they have a premonition of what is to come and of their part in it, and they fear that they will prove unequal to the task. But with the progress of the play, they regain spiritual stature under the guidance of Becket. The chorus, thus represents, in effect, the great mass of individuals which Christ came to save.

Then again in Murder in the Cathedral, the chorus is used as an expositor. It sets the motion of the play. Like its Greek counterpart, it gives us a good deal of information about the time, place, atmosphere and theme of the play. It anticipates the advent of and assault on Becket. It also creates an atmosphere of premonition and fear, sorrow and suffering,

foreboding and resignation. Thus the chorus opens out the action of the drama in an Aeschylean fashion.

The chorus does something more. It initiates, comments on, analyses and concludes the action of the play. In a Greek tragedy, the chorus participates in the action in the sense that it suffers its consequences. The chorus in Eliot's play not only participates in the action , at least in the moral progression of the play, and suffers its consequences, it also develops the plot, keeps its continuity and knits various actions into one composite fibre. "Like its equivalents in Greek tragedies", John Peter observes, "it presents a commentary on the action anticipating and preparing us for developments rousing us with its passionate dithyrambs to participate whole-heartedly in the emotional crisis that arises, supplying the action with the background, that is like music, all pervasive".[60] The proper dramatic interest of the play lies in the suggestive movement and action which the choric utterances bring forward. Moreover there are certain situations in the play which are made poignant by the reaction of the chorus. When Becket is faced with the Fourth Tempter, the chorus gives powerful expression to the presence of evil.

In Greek tragedy, the chorus, sometimes, tells the future action. In Eliot's play, the chorus is also marked by its power of intuition and special insight. It gives the

audience an idea of the coming events. In their exalted mood, they speak better than they know. They smell out death and danger, asking the Archbishop to save himself, and at the same time, are forced to bear witness. At the outset, they have an intuition about the imminent danger to Canterbury. They foresee that "winter shall come bringing death from the sea".[61] They have prophetic intuition of the crossing of the sea by Four Knights, who come over from France to do their work.

In Agamemnon, the characterisation of the chorus is not consistent. The opening songs of the chorus have the pathos and profundity of Aeschylus himself, but in its scene with Cassandra, it is almost stupid. In Murder in the Cathedral, the chorus cannot be said to have this type of inconsistency; there is a very distinct moral change the chorus undergoes. Nevill Coghill observes in this connection : "I do not know of any other dramatic chorus which changes its moral character during the course of a play".[62] And we agree with him that Eliot has revolutionised the classic device. The chorus appears some six times in Eliot's play, and every time there is a change in the emotions. At the outset, it represents ordinary miserable humanity. As the tempters gather their force for a united attack on Becket, they feel that death has violated them through every sense. They are no more ignorant. In the fifth choral ode, the women oscillate between faith and fear. In the next choral ode, we see the women growing wiser. They see the impending event as the consequence of the sin of community

in which they are also involved. As the moment of martyrdom approaches, the chorus has a vision of horror. The chorus craves the comfort of the Saviour's sacrifice, to be renewed in the sacrifice of their spiritual leader. At the moment of Becket's death, the chorus stands frustrated by the sinful act and realises that the blood of the martyrs will refresh the wasteland of barren boughs and dry stones. By the end of the play, the chorus has arrived at a full understanding of the significance of Becket's death. The women come to the realisation that everything is secure in its place, fulfilling its allotted role in the eternal design, that all things affirm the glory of God. Thus, under the image of martyrdom, they have moved from apathy and evasion to a lively faith with humble acceptance. The women find happiness in agony, glory in doom, birth in death, and light in darkness. Grover Smith neatly sums up this evolution of the chorus in the following words, "The song of praise ... ends with a supplication for personal forgiveness. The women assume the burden disclaimed by the Knights ... Now at the price of humility all is appeased and adjusted. Catharsis is complete".[63]

The chorus, at the close of Agamemnon, takes a resolute part in the action, denouncing the crime of Clytemnestra, and the comments of Aegisthus and prophesying that Vengeance will be taken by Agamemnon's son, Orestes. In Murder in the Cathedral, the chorus in the same fashion becomes the integral

part of the whole action of the play. At the opening of the play, the chorus says, "We are forced to bear witness".[64] They are not mere onlookers but partakers of the action. The women are spiritually involved in the martyrdom of Becket, because it is for their sake that Becket dies a martyr. At the close of the play the chorus is a participant in the moral progression of the play. Grover Smith observes in this connection, "They occupy a circumference, so to speak, of which Becket is the center, for they rely on him as the source of the movement they participate in. When he is the point, they are the wheel, as he is the wheel when God is the point. It is their dramatic function to comment upon the events they witness".[65]

Since the play is about what happens to the chorus through Becket, the chorus may be supposed to be the real protagonist of the play. It appears that the women of Canterbury, who make up the chorus, have a more impressive dramatic reality even than the dignified and impressive, but thin, flat, sharply outlined character of the protagonist himself. Grover Smith also thinks that the chorus acquires more significance than the protagonist : "in Part II ... their spasm of suffering leaves him behind, and they have died in will before his blood spouts under the sword".[66] In Greek tragedy, the chorus never assumes greater significance than the protagonist.

The chorus, more importantly, helps Becket to take his final resolution. When the chorus says, "Destroy yourself and we are destroyed"[67], Becket comes to a spiritual realisation and says, "Now is my way clear, now is the meaning plain".[68] It is with their last cry identifying their own balance between hope and despair with his decision that Becket comes to realize that his decision is no longer personal. He is involved in the well-being of the whole church.

The chorus in this play also helps the audience to fully understand the wisdom of the play. The idea of universal sin and redemption is conveyed to the audience through the poetical outbursts of the chorus. The chorus seems to play the vital role of the initiation who admits us into the mystery of religious rite. Helen Gardner makes a pointed reference to this aspect of the chorus' contribution to the drama;

"... their experience communicates itself to us, and gives us the feeling we have been not spectators, but sharers in a mystery. We live through a peripeteia, we experience a great discovery. We pass with them through horror, out of boredom, into glory".[69]

In one respect, the chorus in Murder in the Cathedral reminds one of the choruses of Euripides' Hippolytus. The chorus in Euripides' play adumbrates the intensity of feeling

and emotions, incorporated with a dramatic action and alerts the audiences to Divinity as well as its implications in human life. It says the audience that 'the case of God for us is a great thing'.[70] The chorus in Murder in the Cathedral is not simply disillusioned with the murder of Becket. But, in the crucial moment of his murder, where only horror and terror must prevail, the chorus clarifies that the spiritual order is more necessary than the temporal. It is the chorus only which prepares the audience to recognise the tragic atmosphere of Thomas' death as an ecstatic moment of sacrificing one's will to the will and case of God. The chorus is extremely grateful to Becket for his act of redemption. In his suffering they find a second crucifixion:

> "We thank Thee for Thy mercies of blood, for Thy redemption by blood. For the blood of Thy martyrs and saints shall enrich the earth, shall create the holy places".[71]

The formal chorus of Canterbury women is not divided in the Greek manner. Unlike Greek tragedy the play has more than one chorus. The priests and tempters have choric functions and sometimes they are openly choral. The four tempters form a chorus when they say: "Man's life is a cheat and disappointment".[72] The three priests form a chorus when they say : "O Thomas, my lord, do not fight the intractable tide".[73] Then the women, the priests and the tempters speak alternately.

Even the Knights form themselves into a chorus more than once. That the characters are meant to be choric is clear because Eliot hardly makes any attempt to differentiate them as characters. There is only differentiation of moods, views and functions.

Eliot's non-dramatic poetry like Portrait of a Lady, Gerontion etc. is largely passive — it is the poetry of waiting and watching, despair and suffering. This poetry reappears in the chorus. One feels sometimes that the chorus in certain situations are mainly to provide for such poetry. The intellectual and emotional range of the chorus is naturally limited, but as an expository device, the chorus supplies quite adequately the political and social context with a stress on the suffering of the people.

There is an excessive emphasis on the passivity and distress of the chorus, and there is hardly and relaxation. But there is a change in the Dies Irae chorus which rises to an intellectual level.

The choral passage following the departure of the Knights who depart only 'to come with swords' is one of the weakest parts of the play. It is easy to understand that animal forces are active in the drama of martyrdom, and that the sense of horror and aversion is quite natural. But nothing can defend the deliberate and inordinate emphasis on senses, on the images

of animals, birds and creatures — there are at least sixteen references — and on the images of nausea and disgust - there are at least seven references — which produce no legitimate poetic or dramatic effect.

The chorus, however, has a great lyrical beauty and the music of its poetry is re-inforced by choir-songs. Raymond Williams[74] thinks that the chorus is also a link between ritual and believers. Chorus is choir, the articulate voice of the body of worshippers. But this is true only of the Te Deum chorus. The chorus is certainly the strength of Murder in the Cathedral. But it is also its weakness. It is more Senecan than Greek. It appears before or after a dramatic situation serving very often a link between episodes, and it is not integrated into the play; the choral passages are easily detachable. But a more serious defect is the undue length of some of the choruses which painfully halt the movement of the drama. As the Knights leave the stage to "come with swords", there is a great dramatic movement and a moment taut with suspense and excitement. Just then comes the long choral passage on the quickening of the senses. The length of the passage on defilement is equally detrimental to the dramatic movement. Had the chorus been allowed to take part in action in the Greek manners it could have been much more effective.

Murder in the Cathedral is not entirely on the Greek model. No doubt, as the above analysis shows, the play fulfils some of the basic conditions, laid down by Aristotle. It has no under-plot; its theme is only the murder of the Archbishop; the choruses heighten the sublimity of the character of the hero and finally the tone of the play is a religious one. The centre of the play is the permanent experience of martyrdom. It has, as we have already noted, parallels to Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus, the finest classical tragedy of reconciliation through death. Yet the play is a departure from two of the fundamental concepts of Aristotle. In Greek tragedy no ghastly or sensational scene is exhibited. But Eliot has shown the murder of Becket in a ghastly manner on the stage. Secondly, in Greek tragedy the tragic hero's ultimate fate is caused by his error of judgement, and he is overtaken by Nemesis. But Becket is a perfect man — almost a superman or an ideal hero. He has no sign of imperfection.

Besides, the form of the play is not that of the Greek tragedy. Eliot, being a conscious artist, knew very well that the ritualistic Christian play that he was going to write could not be made to conform to the classical form of tragedy. So Eliot reversed the movement of a classical play in the sense that, instead of ending with pity and terror, he ends with transcendence of fear into the state of glory.

David Ward, among the critics of Eliot, takes into account this aspect. He comments "... certain prescriptions for tragedy have retained their classic status, and many of them are ignored by Eliot in Murder in the Cathedral. The change of fortune should be not from bad to good, but reversely from good to bad. It should come about as the result not of vice but of some great error ... A perfect tragedy should, moreover, imitate actions which excite pity and fear. In Murder in the Cathedral pity and fear are the staple emotions of the chorus, and are evoked from the audience too, perhaps, but the victory of the hero is so nearly complete that it removes him from beyond the reach of pity and fear, making those emotions irrelevant..."[75]

In turning Aristotle upside down, moreover, Eliot went farther back into the root of Western tradition through anthropological criticism. He went right back to the ritual origin of drama as delineated by Cornford, Harrison and Gilbert Murray. The theme of the vegetable God sacrificed and rejuvenated was incorporated by Eliot into the scheme of his drama of martyrdom. In Eliot's imagination the primitive cults are continued and transformed in Christianity. Becket's death is a kind of sacrifice which reinvigorates the community.

David Ward has presented the structure of Murder in the Cathedral in terms of Murray's exposition in his "Excurcus on

the Ritual Forms preserved in Greek Tragedy". Eliot, instead of writing either the model of actual Greek tragedies or the Aristotelian structure, used the scholar's model. Ward continues,

"Here, then is Murray's analysis of the prototypic elements of Greek tragedy, with comments on their adoption in Murder in the Cathedral. Eliot's play begins with a Prologue or exposition scene which is present in all Greek tragedies except for Supplices and Persae. Then following Murray's pattern there is I. An Agon or contest of the year against its enemy, Light against Darkness, Summer against Winter. In Murder in the Cathedral, the antagonist is split into four tempters, but as is made clear in many ways, the four are merely different manifestations of one antagonist. After this Eliot has an Interlude. Thomas preaches in Christmas morning. Then follows, an in Murray's analysis, 2. A Pathos of the Year-Daimon, generally a ritual or sacrificial death... in Murder in the Cathedral Thomas is stabbed to death by the four Knights. In Greek tragedy, the Pathos rarely occurs on the stage, so Murray's next stage is 3. A Messenger announcing the Death . Since Eliot acts out the pathos in the play itself, the scene is replaced by the address of the four Knights, justifying their actions as in a public meeting. Then in Murray's scheme comes 4. A Threnos or Lamentation. Specially characteristic, however, is the clash of contrary emotions, death of the old being the triumph of the hero".[76]

Critics like Grover Smith do not think that the play is a tragedy. Grover Smith holds, "Because the Archbishop triumphs morally over both the tempters and the Knights, it may be preferable not to call Eliot's play a tragedy".[77] The play is also not a tragedy in the Greek sense because in this play it is not the flaw of the protagonist but his virtue that leads to his death. We see 'nothing for tears' in the end because the play ends with the glorification of Becket. There is, again, no sense of waste. Greek tragedy is an organic whole, having a beginning, a middle and an end. In Murder in the Cathedral, Part I, the action reaches an internal conflict with the temptation and resolves with the resolution. Becket gives expression to this resolution and in Part II the action reaches the external conflict, with the Murder, and resolves with Becket's glorification. Thus when we consider all these, we can never call it a tragedy.

David E. Jones writes, "Murder in the Cathedral is not just a dramatization of the death of Thomas Becket, it is a deep-searching study of the significance of martyrdom".[78] In Murder in the Cathedral, the drama, in so far as there is a drama, is strictly interior. It constitutes a return to the origin of English drama within the Church as an extension of the liturgy and a means of religious instruction. So there are reasons to support G. Wilson Knight when he writes, "Murder in the Cathedral is a devotional morality ...; at its heart

it is a sermon. But is no ordinary morality ... It is a drama beyond drama written as from within the spiritual self-conflict of a saint, at a far remove from normal experience. A heavy responsibility falls accordingly on the Chorus, needed to link the action to the audience. The Chorus expresses twentieth century fears in a world sliding to irreligion..."[79]

That the spirit of the play cannot be Greek is easily understandable. Thomas' triumphant statement, just before his death, on the purification of blood emphesises the Christian spirit of the play:

> "I am a priest,
> A Christian, sacred by the blood of Christ,
> Ready to suffer with my blood".[80]

Unlike the Greek chorus the poor women of Canterbury rely on the Christian idea of regeneration through Christ. In fact, Eliot's Christian attitude is revealed in their statement:

> "And the saints and martyrs wait, for those who shall be martyrs and saints.
> Destiny waits in the hand of God, shaping the still unshapen".[81]

It is only the God's world where His will is to be done. Thus a shift from the pagan outlook of life of the Greek

tragedies to the Christian attitude is quite evident here.

Ordinarily Christianity is supposed to offer an anti-tragic vision of life, since it reposes all hopes in Christ, the Saviour and brings in promise of justice and resurrection. Eliot finds in the suffering of Christ the true basis of tragedy. To him the tragic sense never constitutes any total picture of darkness; on the other hand, it exhibits man's limitations and his struggle for light and consciousness.

C. **The Family Reunion** : "The Adjustment of the Oresteia to the modern situation".

In the Family Reunion (1939), Eliot had little indebtedness to classical form. Here he adapted a classical material to a naturalistic form. Eliot was determined "to bring poetry into the world in which the audience lives"[82], with the hope that "our own sordid dreary daily world would be suddenly illuminated and transfigured"[83] by the power of poetry. Ronald Peacock, taking this cue from Eliot, contends, "What he [Eliot] attempts to do is to portray a realistic scene... through which an underlying mythical pattern diffuses its meanings to the surface; so that the 'real' becomes, without being negated or displaced, transparent, and through it the myth appears as immanent meaning".[84] Critics, however, are not sure of Eliot's success in the handling of the Greek material. George Steiner,

for example, writes, "In The Family Reunion, Eliot makes wary use of the Oresteia. He keeps poised in our minds the near presence of the Aeschylean tragedy. This presence glows and darkens behind the frail structure of the modern work. For a time the dual focus is effective."[85] In a metaphorical language he further writes, "We do seem to hear above the nerve-tight cadence of genteel speech the overtones of ancient disaster".[86]

The play embodies the Christian myth of sin, suffering for that sin, and the ultimate regeneration and redemption through that suffering. Harry, the protagonist, has committed the sin of murdering his wife, or, of willing to kill her. As a result, he suffers from intense spiritual anguish, and does not get a moment's rest during the eight years which have elapsed since the day of drowning of his wife. Eliot shows, how through intense suffering, Harry ultimately realises the nature of his sin, and, so, instead of living a comfortable life at Wishwood, he goes out to expiate his sin, and then to achieve liberation. The play is a powerful modern exposition of this religious theme.

Eliot uses the Greek myth of the Oresteia as the fabric of his plot. According to Greek mythology, it is the banquet of Thyestes that leaves a curse upon the house of Agamemnon, and it is under the operation of this curse that Agamemnon commits the heinous crime of sacrificing his daughter, Iphigenia.

This, in turns, generates a curse and the consequence is that Clytemnestra kills her husband, Agamemnon. On the expiry of eight years, Agamemnon's son, Orestes, avenges his father's murder by killing his mother. Ever since, he is pursued by the Furies. At the intervention of the goddess Athene, the Furies are transformed into the Eumenides, the gracious ones, who help Orestes to achieve salvation. He has suffered and so has sufficiently atoned for his sin and for the sin of his mother. So the family is redeemed and the curse comes to an end.

In The Family Reunion Eliot has used the myth as embodied in Aeschylus' trilogy of the Oresteia. The theme of the Furies pursuing Orestes has been transferred to an upper class country-house called Wishwood in the winter-and-rain-swept countryside of the north of England. The myth was resuscitated by Eliot to find a classic parallel to suit his own ideas of sin and expiation.

Nevill Coghill[87] has noted that Eliot used the Greek myth in respect of four of its main ideas : first, the idea of a hereditary family curse; secondly, the idea of a protagonist bearing the guilt of his family and contributing to it and then driven by the Furies; thirdly, the idea of the Furies being transformed into the Eumenides; and lastly, the idea of general depravity by being born in a cursed family — "like a man living in a sewer, contributing to it, hopeless of a way out.

yet seeking one".[88]

First, let the analogies between the Family Reunion and the Oresteia be examined.[89] The curse on the family of Atreus finds a close parallel in the curse on the Monchensey family. Both the families suffer on account of a sin of ancestor. But while in the Orestes-myth, it is the mother (Clytemnestra) who kills the father (Agamemnon), in Eliot's play, it is the father who attempts killing the mother and finally leaves her and goes away. For him she is as good as killed. This proneness to murder is inherited by the son, Harry, who feels that he slew his wife by throwing her over the rails into the sea. The curse, which encompasses Harry's crime, is, however, closely related to his "father's lapse as an effect to a curse".[90]

There is no actual murder in Harry's case and there was only a plan in his father's case. But both of them have felt the sinful wish, and in the Christian view, the intention, as it is, is an evil as the actual deed. Amy, Harry's mother, knows of her husband's love for Agatha, and yet, she retains him. In doing so, she may be thought to have killed the real man. And she, too, is involved in the tangle of sin. This lethal hatred is the curse upon the House of Monchensey. It stands for the murderous impulse in humanity and symbolises the visitation of the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations. The curse proceeds, as

Grover Smith[91] observes, immediately from Harry's upbringing. He characterises it as fixations, inhibitions and lingering traumas in psychological terms or "resented moral consciousness".[92] This type of explanation on psychological terms, cannot be applied to Aeschylus' hero.

Some of Eliot's characters may be studied as modern-day counterparts to Greek originals. One such is Amy who can be compared with Clytemnestra. From the outset she figures as a proud and indomitable woman who bears no opposition to her will. Her relation with her husband is inhuman as she herself states:

> "Seven years I kept him,
> For the sake of the future, a discontented ghost,
> In his own house".[93]

She is also capable of willing someone else's death or so Mary believes as the text shows. The symbolic equation holding Amy as the representative of a corrupt spiritual principle works to bring death to Amy, in order to renew the old work into the new.

In Eliot's Harry we find both Oedipus and Orestes. Like Oedipus Harry is, at the outset, in dark about the nature of crime in which he is involved. He is enlightened in the matter in course of the progress of the play. John Peter finds another point of similarity between the two characters. In his words, "From the negatives of regrets,

self-mistrust and suffering, his [Harry's] attitude shifts round to the positives of repentance and the will to expiate the sin".[94] Peter quotes C.M. Bowra while comparing Harry's case with that of Oedipus : "He [Oedipus], who has been the victim and the sufferer, regains the initiative and takes his destiny into his own hands".[95] Then, again Harry's hostile relations with his mother, Amy, might be described, after C.L. Barber, as "the Orestes-Variant of the Oedipus pattern — where the son's attachment leads not to incest, but to matricide".[96] Harry is also infected by the question of birth-mystery like Oedipus, as his question to Agatha reveals; "Tell me now, who were my parents?"[97] The ritual term of wandering underlines another analogy between Harry and Oedipus.

There are several points of similarity between the characters of Harry and Orestes. Orestes returns to Argos after eight years; Harry also returns to Wishwood after an absence of eight years. Orestes kills his mother to avenge his father's death; Harry also kills his mother, so to say, by his cruel decision to leave Wishwood. Like Orestes, Harry undergoes a terrible spiritual anguish as a result of his sense of sin. Like Orestes, Harry is also haunted by the Furies and pursued by the Furies for the 'murder' of his wife, not of his mother. Harry leaves his mother and Wishwood and throws himself into the desperate loneliness of the desert. He steps into his new world of loneliness and seclusion, but

is not recovered in his hopelessness. This note of loneliness is definitely Euripidean. We find another analogy. The episode of Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia in the Oresteia and their "unborn child"[98] is analogous to Harry's act of throwing his wife into the sea as well as his father's contemplated murder of his mother.

In the Greek myth the goddess Athena, as already noted, intervenes in the trial of Orestes and the Furies are transformed into the Eumenides, the well-meaning ones who no longer haunt Orestes. In The Family Reunion, Agatha is Harry's spiritual guardian and she helps Harry to acquire an insight into the true nature of his sin and this discovery results in his spiritual regeneration. The Furies undergo a corresponding change and become benevolent angels whom Harry would now seek and pursue.

Lastly, Downing, the Chauffeur in Eliot's play suggests Pylades in Choephoroe, who is always at Orestes' side.

Eliot's use of the Eumenides in The Family Reunion is very significant. The overwhelming supernatural power controls the life of the Greek tragic hero. Eliot has tried to bring back this supernatural element on the stage in the form of the Furies. In Choephoroe Aeschylus depicts the Erinyes or Furies as thirsty for vengeance upon the blood-guiltness of

Orestes. But in The Eumenides, as already noted, these Furies are transformed into the spirits of mercy. This change in the Furies points to the dramatization of "the immense step that was taken by mankind in giving up primitive blood-vengeance, a life for a life, and submitting to the ordered process of courts of law".[99]

The Furies, in Eliot's play, symbolise Harry's sense of guilt and also "the powers beyond" that control the destiny of Man. Harry comes to Wishwood to escape the Furies, but the moment he enters, he feels them unseen staring at him. They are visible to him and not to any other member of his family. Our attention is thus drawn to the spiritual anguish of the hero.

The Furies next appear at the climax of Harry's interview with Mary. They save him from the temptation of a happy comfortable married life, based on the material plain, offered by Mary.

The Furies appear for the last time after Agatha's revelation and Harry's realisation of the true nature of his sin. Now he sees them for the first time. Harry says:

> "This time, you are real, this time, you are outside me,
> And just endurable. I know that you are ready,
> Ready to leave Wishwood, and I am going with you".[100]

This sudden change in his attitude to the Furies points to Harry's spiritual progress. They disappear and Agatha takes

their place as Harry's spiritual guide.

In a letter to Martin Brown, Eliot outlines the nature of the Furies by calling them "divine instruments, not simply hell-hounds"[101], and in their second appearance finding them "more patiently in the role of divine messengers"[102], and coming to the conclusion that they become exactly "hounds of heaven".[103]

But one thing is to be noted here. In Aeschylus, the Eumenides change, but Orestes remains static; in Eliot's play, on the other hand, the Furies do not change; it is Harry who gets a transformation. The Furies continue to do what they have done from the start, that is, they pursue Harry like the Hound of Heaven, into an awareness of his guilt and to an expiation.

To Harry, the Furies at first appear as 'fateful spirit of revenge'. In fact Eliot borrowed the Eumenides from Aeschylus to objectify the duration of a beneficial vengeance. But towards the end of the play they appear as 'the bright angels'. This change in his attitude offers an example of the necessity of accepting the Christian idea of original sin for resolution, as noted by C.L. Barber.[104]

Eliot, very pertinently, declares his use of the Eumenides as a failure.[105] Miss Maud Bodkin also minimises the

spiritual significance of the Eumenides. She writes, "... the Furies embody the energy of passion fixed in an evil relationship or custom — the same energy which, released from the fixation and redirected, becomes the sustaining force of a better order of individual and social life".[106] Denis Donoghue holds a different view. He observes that Eliot could not have avoided the Eumenides in his play "since he chose to relate Harry's private crisis to the story of Orestes".[107] In his view, "Their function in The Family Reunion is to act as divine messengers and yet to carry no positively Christian associations. They are angels without a credo, performing the same work as fragments of Sanscrit in The Waste Land".[108]

Eliot was confronted with two problems regarding the Eumenides. They created problem of successful stage-presentation. "They never succeed", as Eliot records his impressions, "in being either Greek Goddesses or modern spooks".[109] And secondly, to make the appearances of the Eumenides serve as replacements for the delineation of Harry's spiritual development obscures its urgent and personal quality. But the Eumenides, to be sure, serve as the objective correlative determining Harry's part in the Monchensey curse. Nevill Coghill[110] thinks that the whole story of the play is deliberately fashioned by Eliot to correspond to the human situation. We are sinners in a world of sin and this sin calls for expiation. The Eumenides

drive Harry on to this realisation.

Grover Smith is convinced that the play makes complete sense if the Eumenides are, "even if only in a symbolic aspect, the past selves of the women to whom Harry's childhood was enthralled".[111] But such explanations show that the critic does not take into account the dramatic significance of the presence of the Eumenides. If they were treated as external ghosts they would rather appear out of the place in the play, since the whole drama hinges on Harry's sense of guilt and gradual advancement towards an awareness of the inherited sin of his family. They are more psychological and less mythical than the Eumenides in a Greek play.

About Eliot's use of the Eumenides, Matthiessen observes, "The difference from the Furies in Aeschylus is profound".[112] In handling his ambiguous material Eliot failed to keep his realization that the action in a play must be perfectly intelligible. In his use of the Eumenides Eliot has hardly been explicit enought to take an audience with him. Again as Matthiessen observes, "Eliot could not contrive to endow his Eumenides with any of the collective significance that possessed for the Greeks".[113] Eliot's Eumenides look unreal and unconvincing in an age of science.

But still it is to be admitted that the Eumenides impart a sense of mystery to the play. D.E. Jones points out the exact

nature of the Eumenides in Eliot's play in the following lines, "The Erinyes-Eumenides are both less and more than the Aeschylean figures; they are no longer primeval deities, daughters of Night, but, instead, they represent the promptings of conscience and are the instruments of Divine Grace".[114]

Eliot is more original in his rehandling of the Greek chorus in The Family Reunion than in Murder in the Cathedral. He shows some rethinking in the use of the chorus in his present play. Perhaps he realized that in Murder in the Cathedral, he had depended "heavily on the assistance of the chorus".[115] Therefore, he decided to integrate the chorus "more closely into the play".[116]

The chorus is made up of Harry's uncles and aunts, namely, Ivy, Violet, Charles and Gerald, who are involved in the action of the play. In Aeschylus' the Eumenides the Chorus comprises of the Furies themselves. They, at some specific moments, withdraw for a while from the action and express their thoughts in unison and form a chorus. Matthiessen, however, thinks[117] that Eliot was rather influenced by O'Neill in the use of this technique. Eliot's chorus does not show any sign of individual awareness.

The members of the chorus fail to apprehend the spiritual drama of sin and expiation and, as a result, they are found absent in the scenes which chart Harry's spiritual progress. For the most part, the chorus expresses a sense of bafflement

and bewilderment, as well as a sense of fear and insecurity. Unlike the traditional chorus, the present chorus does not illuminate and clarify.

Another feature of the chorus in this play is that the choric chants disintegrate into the individual voices of the different members. That is why Ronald Peacock writes that the chorus in this play is a new form of chorus, "a formalised extension of the aside".[118] It has formal value of a considerable merit and this new treatment of the classical convention attains its goal. Eliot, however, was not satisfied with the device. He wrote , "... the device of using four of the minor personages, representing the Family, sometimes as individual character parts and sometimes collectively as chorus, does not seem to be satisfactory".[119]

Whenever Eliot introduces the chorus, he allows the audience to understand that the individual voices of characters which are more or less asides in a new form, are there only to express certain unrelated feelings of the individuals, whereas the joint utterance is meant to reproduce in general the universal attitude of the common people.

The chorus makes its first appearance towards the middle of the first scene of Part I. It voices the general feeling of unrest which results from its difficulty of

understanding the spiritual drama in which it is implicated, brought in and brought together. The third scene of Part I presents the chorus again and it voices a different note. It speaks of the inherited sense of agony and the deception in the face of certain inflexible laws. In the final choric utterance (Part II, Sc. iii), we come across the explicit statement of the common people's sense of limited knowledge. This ends in the general resolution that they must adjust themselves to the moment and do the right thing.

Thus, in the play, Eliot's handling of the chorus is original and unique. He has succeeded in adapting the Greek device to the requirements of the modern age. The verse-form which he has used for the choric utterances is equally original. It has colloquial intimacy, the transparency, fluency, and flexibility of common everyday speech. It suitably expresses the transition in the emotions of the chorus.

Nevill Coghill finds in the Orestes-story "a symbol for what is known as Original Sin"[120] in Christian doctrine and he thinks that this is figured in the frenzied imagery that Harry uses to convince his hearers of a reality he has experienced of which they know nothing.

The action of the play moves on the material as well as spiritual levels and both the levels are closely integrated.

The gap between the two levels has been skilfully bridged with the help of Downing who understands the emotional tensions of Harry and interprets his conduct to the common characters. Thus, despite duality and complexity, there is unity of action. The action of the play, concerned as it is with what happens in a soul, is "open to psychological as well as to religious interpretation, so long as the former does not negate the latter".[121] The unities of time and place have also been strictly observed. The entire action takes place in the residence of the Monchensey family in Wishwood, and the time taken is not more than three hours.

Notwithstanding these merits, the play has certain well-marked weaknesses. The inner struggle of Harry has not been sufficiently depicted. The play has very little dramatic action. The end of the play is its weakest point. It does not become clear what exactly is Harry's mission and his destination and how does he hope to achieve salvation. Eliot, himself, is not sure "... whether to consider the play the tragedy of the mother or the salvation of the son".[122] Harry's redemption brings to us no dramatic excitement. Matthiessen comments, "By no suspension of disbelief can we conceive how Harry, whose life seems to have been passed mainly in resorts and luxury hotels, can undergo the discipline of suffering in any broadly meaningful sense".[123] Matthiessen further observes,

"The inferiority for dramatic purposes of Harry's story to that of Orestes is manifest, since the hatred of a wife, though repeated in two generations, does not, as Eliot handles it, assume more than private significance".[124]

The Family Reunion illustrates Eliot's endeavour to present the drama in the framework of ritual. Eliot revolves the two-fold elements of Greek and Christian rituals under the shadow of the Greek myth. The ritual term of wandering and the birth-mystery are present in this play. The Christian ritual of sin and redemption, however, supplies the scaffold of the drama.

The play is definitely not a success in adjusting the Greek story with the modern situation. Eliot's own appraisal of the version was largely negative. He wrote, "I should have struck closer to Aeschylus or else taken a great deal more liberty with his myth".[125]

D. The Cocktail Party : "An Athenian Structure to A Contemporary Feeling"

In The Possibility of A Poetic Drama, Eliot speaks of adapting "a true structure, Athenian or Elizabethan, to contemporary feeling".[126] Euripides' Alcestis provides him with the Athenian structure in his third play, The Cocktail Party.

Eliot, however, adroitly concealed the source of his inspiration from reviewers and critics.

The Cocktail Party has been described as a comedy. T.R. Henn, however, considers it a tragedy "because of its ritual elements, its atonement of guilt, the sacrificial death of Celia, and its religious framework".[127] The main theme of the play is the quest after spiritual salvation. Even A.G. George who thinks that the play is a comedy observes, "Although a comedy in three acts, the play lacks a sense of humour; it contains more irony and satire than humour".[128]

The fact is that The Cocktail Party is modelled on the satyr-drama of Euripides as realized in the Alcestis. T.B. Porter thus summarises Euripides' technique in the Alcestis: "Euripides moved away from the strict satyr form and developed a curious sort of pro-satyric tragedy, a play in the tragic convention and free from satyric coarseness, but containing at least one half-comic figure and preserving some fantastic quality of atmosphere".[129] The structure of the Alcestis follows the ritual pattern of the tragedy with 'satyric' variations : Agon, Death and Resurrection, Marriage and Kommos. Eliot borrows elements of the Alcestis plot: the death-motif; resurrection by the Herculean figure, Sir Henry; the wedding of Edward and Lavinia in spirit and in truth. These details call attention to the Greek source of Eliot's plot and to the

ritual pattern underneath.

But it is to be noted here that while Eliot uses the Greek ritual pattern in his play, he is not trying to convert the audience to the worship of Dionysus. Instead he is interested in the re-casting of the ancient actions from a Christian point of view. In T.E. Porter's words, "He [Eliot] uses his own understanding of the Christian doctrine to specify and fill out the pattern he borrows from the Greek dramatists".[130]

The basic pattern of the Alcestis is the separation and the reunion of husband and wife — the identical movement that structures the comedy of martial misunderstanding. The significance of this pattern, put in proper perspective, establishes a broader base for the motivation and action of The Cocktail Party. The devices of recognition and discovery link the surface level of The Cocktail Party with an ancient tradition. D.E. Jones[131] rightly suggests that the more explicit symbolism of spiritual death and rebirth derives from the Alcestis of Euripices.

Eliot, however, was determined to use his Greek source as a point of departure. In an interview with Donald Hall, Eliot commented : "The Cocktail Party had to do with Alcestis simply because the question arose in my mind, what would the life of Admetus and Alcestis be, after she'd come back from the dead; I mean if there'd been a break like that, it could not go on just before. Those two people were the centre of

the thing when I started and the other characters only developed out of it. The character of Celia, who came to be really the most important character in the play, was originally an appendage to a domestic situation".[132]

Eliot does not use a point-for-point approach to the Euripidean play. The Alcestis opens with an agon between Apollo and Death and proceeds to a vivid presentation of the death of Alcestis. Eliot omits both prologue and departure; when the play opens, Lavinia has already disappeared. Then, again, while in Euripides's play, it is Alcestis, who is brought back to life, in Eliot' play, the Chamberlaynes, namely, Edward and Lavinia, get the resurrection of their old emotional ties.

As an instance of his debt to Euripides, Eliot cited the uninvited guest in The Cocktail Party : "the eccentric behaviour of this character [Reilly], his apparently intemperate habits, and his tendency to burst into a song, are modelled on the behaviour of Heracles in the Alcestis".[133] In the Alcestis, Heracles arrives as an unknown guest at the house of Admetus, and unaware of the death of Alcestis, makes himself unpopular with the king's servants by his revelry during the mourning of the household. When Heracles discovers that Alcestis has chosen to die in her husband's place and that, Admetus, now realising his loss, wants her back from the dead, he resolves to wrestle with Death and restore Alcestis

to her home. Heracles always appears, as a traditional satyric, in a state of Bacchic jollity in Greek drama, as is observed by David Paul.[134] Eliot has made clear that Reilly in his play is his modern counterpart to Heracles. He is the unidentified guest in the cocktail party. He has a drinking session with heavy-hearted Edward and sings a hilarious drinking song. Being a stranger his behaviour apparently seems unnatural. He promises to return Edward's departed wife. In him the Heraclean function is clear and unequivocal. In the end, he brings Edward, Lavinia, and others of the group back to life, not, of course, in the manner of Heracles, but with the force of spirit and mind.

Reilly also combines in himself the role of Pheres as a truth-teller in the Alcestis. The interview between Reilly and Edward in the first act is the counterpart of Phere's denunciation of his sin over the coffin of Alcestis. One should regard Reilly's preoccupation with the idea of death and resurrection as the modernised version of Heracles' encounter with Death:

> " Ah, but we die to each other daily.
> What we know of other people
> Is our memory of the moments".[135]

No doubt, the relationship between Heracles and Reilly is a vital contact between Euripides's play and Eliot's.

According to A.W. Verrall[136], the secret of The Alcestis is that Admetus has hastily consigned his wife to her tomb

without being sure if she is dead; that Heracles without having the power to work marvels, has found her rousing from her swoon and has conducted her home. Verrall has based his theory on Euripides' scepticism toward the mystery cults and his determination to show the Alcestis myth as fundamentally untrue. We can fairly assume that Eliot knew of this celebrated interpretation of the Alcestis. But Eliot, it is to be noted, does not subscribe to Verrall's view by wholly dispensing with the 'miracle', for he finds meaning in the action corresponding to the supposed resurrection of Alcestis, namely, Lavinia's emotional cure. Grover Smith has very amicably clinched the issue in the following words, "What Eliot did apparently was to entertain Verrall's hypotheses that Alcestis was put away alive and this action would not have been possible if her husband had loved her .... Then Eliot evaluated the characters of such a husband and wife in a contemporary setting. He dispensed with the burial, since he had not Euripides' axe to grind, and undertook to arrange through Sir Henry the rapprochement which was outside Euripides' scope, but which a modern audience would like better. Meanwhile he dignified Sir Henry, bestowing on his own Hercules some of the attributes, though not all, that Euripides had taken away. And in the end, by Celia's martyrdom and Sir Henry's foresight of it, he reinstated the sort of thing that Euripides had spurned".[137]

Besides the Heraclean figure, another parallel to the Alcestis is the agon between Edward and Lavinia. In the Alcestis, Pheres and Admetus dispute the culpability for Alcestis' death; in The Cocktail Party, Edward and Lavinia discuss the reasons for the death of their marriage. Also after the 'wedding' in the psychiatrist's office, there is a sacrificial feast, a ritual symposium with invocations by Sir Henry and his accomplices. T.E. Porter argues that "the Cocktail Party in the third act is a modified kommos, a wedding celebration for Edward and Lavinia".[138] Carol H. Smith shares the same view. She writes, "Eliot, even presents a triumphal marriage procession, like that at the end of the ritual drama".[139]

In case of Alcestis, Eliot divides her into two characters in The Cocktail Party. In the role of the wife who dies and is eventually restored to her husband, she becomes Lavinia, the life of whose marriage is saved, so to say. Lavinia's refusal to say where she has been during her absence corresponds to Alcestis' inability to speak until the third day after her return from the dead. But while in Euripides' play Alcestis has to keep silent for sacred reasons, in Eliot's play, Edwards is promise-bound not to ask Lavinia any question about her whereabouts. This silence provides a dramatic necessity of minimising the speaking parts in the Greek play; and in Eliot's play it serves as a dramatic device to keep the audience in suspense. As the woman who sacrifices herself, Alcestis becomes

Celia, who is finally martyred in Kinkanja. Thus Eliot saw two characters in Alcestis — the ordinary woman and the saint. Robert Heilman makes this point clear and develops it with illuminating insights in his Alcestis and the Cocktail Party.[140]

The saint in Alcestis is embodied in Celia, but there is a basic difference in the ways of their sacrifices, as pointed out by F.O. Matthiessen in the following lines: "Since Admetus was a king hedged with divinity, Alcestis' act was after all on one side a religious sacrifice. Eliot's Celia is a woman who without knowing it, has been trying to find, in an affair with an ordinary man, a way to dedicate herself to the divine. The action of the play, for her, begins with the discovery that Edward is only human, moves through the recognition, in the psychiatrist's consulting room, that what she has 'sought for in the wrong place' can be pursued in a dedicated life, and, ends, we learn, in death at the hands of unconverted savages when she is serving as a member of a nursing order, curing for Christian natives in a plague-stricken jungle. So the action, on her side, moves from the religion of human love to religion — from her trying, in a misconceived way, to do what Alcestis did, to her giving herself to God".[141]

Edward in Eliot's play is the counterpart of Admetus in the Alcestis. Like Admetus, he is a hospitable man. But his hospitality to the guests, especially to Reilly, does not

warrant any comparison with the admirable reception given by Admetus to Heracles in the critical hour of his personal grief. While entertaining the unidentified guest, Edward tells him that he had a mind to put off the party, but since he failed to get at some people in time, he has been forced to keep up the poor show. Unlike Admetus, Edward does not conceal from Reilly the fact that his wife has left him. He is rather a poor substitute for the Admetus of Euripides' Alcestis. But like Admetus, he undergoes a process of self-introspection before he attains spiritual regeneration.

Alex plays the part of the Greek messenger in reporting Celia's death. The servant's depiction of Alcestis[142] in Euripides' Alcestis may be compared with what Edward in Eliot's drama says in the following lines:

> "And yet I want her back.
> And I must get her back, to find out what has happened
> During the five years that we've been married.
> I must find out who she is, to find out who I am".[143]

The physical death of Alcestis has, as its counterpart in The Cocktail Party, the spiritual death of broken marriage. Alcestis simply affirms:

"I have chosen that you should live rather than I
because I honour you as my husband".[144]

The corresponding passage in The Cocktail Party presents in Lavinia, a much more complex motive:

I thought that there might be some way out for you
If I went away. I thought that if I died
To you, I who had been only a ghost to you,
You might be able to find the road back
To a time when you were real — for you must have been
real
At some time or other, before you ever knew me :
Perhaps only when you were a child".[145]

The plot of Eliot's play does not only correspond to the Greek play. The basic symbolism of the play — symbolism of the spiritual death and spiritual birth — is also derived from its Greek counterpart. Denis Donoghue[146] thinks that Eliot's treatment of his source is characterised by the assignment of a spiritual dimension to physical facts. The Greek play offers a story of literal death and rebirth, carried out by divine agency. Alcestis is rescued from the regions of the dead by Heracles. Admetus had also been saved from death earlier by Apollo's arrangement of the ransom of another's life for the life of the king.

Eliot uses the rebirth theme in the case of Edward and Lavinia and of Celia and Peter. All of them undergo spiritual change and bring about their own salvation.

Edward and Lavinia both live a life, wretched and miserable, because of mutual misunderstanding. Edward feels that Lavinia is a woman whom nobody can love. Lavinia, on the other hand, thinks that Edward is a man incapable of loving. Edward turns to Celia and Lavinia to Peter. They find it difficult to live together. Encouraged by Reilly, Lavinia disappears, 'dies to Edward', so to say. This gives a shock to Edward and leads to self-exploration and heart-searching. He realises that he cannot live without her.

Reilly brings both Lavinia and Edward face to face, strips them of all pretences and makes them see how much they have in common. This realisation of the truth about their respective nature is a further step in their spiritual regeneration. Lavinia is a stranger, her old self being dead, when she rejoins her husband. It is this fact which helps Edward, a stranger to his former self, to begin a new life with her.

Peter, on hearing the martyrdom of Celia, also gains a new insight and a glimmering perception that he might some day share her path. His self-assurance and adolescent pride melt as soon as he hears of Celia's death.

Celia's story is also an echo of the Alcestis theme. Celia also suffers spiritual death and rebirth but in reversed terms. The note of loneliness in the character of Celia is

distinctly Euripidean. Celia flies away from the life of Edward and Lavinia and escapes into an unknown country; she steps into a new world of loneliness and seclusion. In her discovery that she had loved an imagined creation of her own making, she suffers the death of her hopes for a life in the world. In her martyrdom, she suffers physical death but achieves eternal life. Eliot saw both Celia's and Alcestis' ransom of their lives for others as analogous to the sacrifice of Christ. Celia meets her death in her occupation of nursing sisterhood and her death reverberates through lives of others and marks a fresh beginning. For the natives, too, Celia's death must have made a difference. The impact of her death imparts to Chamberlaynes a fresh vision of life. Her selflessness provides a touchstone by which each is carried beyond his own egotism. It makes other characters more capable of adjustment with each other, with common human life.

Eliot said that he has introduced no Ghosts and no Eumenides in The Cocktail Party in the interest of realism. But the Guardians, Reilly, Alex and Julia, in a way, constitute the machinery of the plot. They seem, in some mysterious way, to be in touch with the supernatural. They have their own mysterious ways of gathering information and manipulating action. Their manipulation of the plot assumes a metaphysical significance and suggests the way, Divine Providence works in

society. Matthiessen[147] hints that Eliot appears to have planned that these characters, especially Reilly would overflow every realistic vessel, however large, however whole. In the presentation of Reilly, Eliot has successfully created an air of the unexplained, of the quizzically irregular, of the elusive. From the time when Reilly tells Edward that he has started "a train of events"[148] beyond his control and Lavinia confesses, "yet something, or somebody compelled me to come"[149], we are given continual impressions of mysterious forces in action. As a critic observes, "Psychiatry takes on a spiritual dimension".[150] Indeed while the 'dramatis personae' do not include the Eumenides, one feels that they are hovering in the wings, driving Celia as they have already driven Harry in The Family Reunion.

This sense of the elusive applies also to Alex and Julia. Grover Smith argues that the function of the "spiritual guardians"[151] corresponds to the ancient characterization in ritual. J.L. Styan,[152] however, says that the guardians, though apparently active in the play, are excluded from the self-revelation of the Chamberlaynes, of Celia and are explicitly uninvolved.

The roles of Reilly, Julia and Alex are, however, not confusing. Eliot wants us to feel that in some rather intangible way they stand apart from the realistically credible characters of the play. This prepares us for their emergence

as the spiritual guardians. Yet it should be noted, as pointed out by F.O. Matthiessen, that Eliot, has, included "sufficient traits of mere humanity"[153] in Julia, Alex and even Sir Henry, to signify that, apart from their role, they are not magical. Sir Henry is not absolutely a master. "His art is only to assist nature"[154], as Eliot remarked in an interview .

The ritual implications of satyr drama are spelled out in scholarly detail in F.M. Cornford's Origins of Attic Comedy. Eliot's estimation of this book was very high as he wrote, "Few books are more fascinating than those of Miss Harrison, Mr . Cornford, or Mr. Cook, when they burrow in the origins of Greek myths and rites".[155] Working out from his ritual base, Cornford describes the types that make up the protocomic cast of characters: Old Man and Young Man, Old Woman and Maiden, the Doctor and the Cook. The originals of these types reflect the actors in the Dionysian ritual, as described in Cornford's study. The Old Man symbolised the Old Year, the character who must die and be born again before the cycle of life can go on. In The Cocktail Party, in his interview with Celia, Edward announces that he is beginning to feel old. In the ritual cast, the Young Man is the New Year who succeeds to the kingdom. He usually takes over the function of the Old Man. Peter in Eliot's play has usurped Edward's place with Lavinia and desires to replace him in Celia's affections. The Young Women originated as the mute bride or the wedding, the fertile

feminine principle. In the Alcestis, when the Queen comes back from the region of the dead, she is mute. In Eliot's play, the role of the Young Woman is divided between Celia and Lavinia. Celia sacrifices herself for the community; like Alcestis, Lavinia becomes the bride of the wedding. The Old Woman-role is given to Julia. She is the mother to the demi-God (Reilly). She initiates situations, ferrets out those who need rebirth, and sends for the doctor. Sir Henry is the Doctor. On first meeting him, Celia says, "He has some sort of power".[156] This power is found to be resurrectional. Reilly promises to bring Edward's wife back to him. He resurrects Edward, Lavinia and Celia to a new life. Alex has, too, an ancient ritual role which he announces himself, "you know, I'm a rather famous cook".[157] He is the one to report Celia's sacrificial death at the second cocktail party. In the series of the intrusions in the first act, the ritual incantation of the Guardians, in the sacrifice and feast overtones of the third act, Eliot is drawing on the comic ritual. The farcical conversation between Julia and Alex which opens the play is filled with religious and ritual symbolism, such as wedding cake, Champagne etc. In the final cocktail party, Julia says, the party food is scarce suggesting spiritual starvation. Sir Henry's interviews in the second act with his patients are equivalent of the ritual purgation of the impurities in the first act. The act ends with the libation drunk by Alex, Julia and Sir Henry to the two ways, as in the Greek ceremonial celebration of the

purification feast. The third act presents the triumphant union and renewal of the Chamberlaynes and Celia and provides the groundwork for Peter's discovery of the way. Eliot, even, presents a triumphant marriage procession, like that, at the end of the ritual drama, when all the guests of the first party, except Celia, appear. The renewal marriage of the Chamberlaynes and the marriage of Celia with God are thus symbolically celebrated in ritual terms.

Denis Donoghue[158] finds a serious incongruity between the tone of the Edward-Lavinia story and that of Celia's martyrdom. The contrast between The Cocktail Party and the Alcestis is instructive at this point. R.B. Heilman[159] has noted that Alcestis is, in our terms, romantic comedy, but the distinction lies in its daring flirtation with tragedy. Alcestis encompasses this range of tone because its characters are sufficiently large; the frequent changes of tone are sanctioned by the manysidedness of Admetus, Alcestis and Heracles. Furthermore, the changes of tone in the Alcestis do not result in the *isolation of any of the characters; none of them is restricted* by association with a single tone. In The Cocktail Party, on the other hand, Eliot, in addition to dissolving Alcestis into two separate characters, isolates these characters still further by a crude disparity of tone. Lavinia and Celia, and all they represent, are from the beginning of the play, separate. Their worlds are thrust apart even further by the fact that *Eliot's treatment of Lavinia's activities is for the most part* comic, while his presentation of Celia's history is in a tone

of high seriousness.

The presiding virtues of the play are chasteness, restraint, terseness and precision which characterize Greek tragedies. Eliot has succeeded in absorbing and integrating in his modern theme all the elements which he borrowed from the Alcestis and this time the integration is so complete, the permutations so subtle, that one needs to be told in order to become fully aware of what they are.

Eliot does not assiduously follow any classical story for its own sake; the Greek myth in The Cocktail Party has been employed by the playwright as the scaffold for building up a modern poetic play for a naturalistic theatre. The Greek source has been chosen by Eliot not only because of the similarity of the Alcestis to the surface situation of The Cocktail Party, but also because it seemed to him particularly rich in Christian meaning. The spirit of the play is definitely Christian. Celia pays the highest price in suffering — both at the end and in her journey toward it. Both Edward and Lavinia feel they share some of the responsibility for her death. Their acceptance of this experience will renew them and alter the meaning of the past. The faith and resignation doctrine here is an application of Christian doctrine to the death-and-resurrection categories of the ritual structure.

E. The Confidential Clerk : A Modern Version of Ion

The Confidential Clerk (1954), like The Family Reunion and The Cocktail Party, derives its thematic background from one Greek masterpiece, namely, Euripides' Ion. Eliot chose such themes for his plays which helped to expand his religious ideas and beliefs and which also offered some plausible solutions to the existing socio-religious problems. Supporting this view, C.L. Barber writes, "When we come to look at The Cocktail Party and The Confidential Clerk in relation to the tragi-comedies of Euripides which are their prototypes, we shall see how each of them modifies the Greek plot so as to suggest a religious solution to moral problems".[160]

Eliot's plot source is the Ion of Euripides. The Greek play deals with a moral problem and the problem is that "one cannot have the child of a god for one's human child".[161] Eliot gives a religious solution, while adapting it to the modern naturalistic setting in The Confidential Clerk. The Greek myth not only intensifies the meaning of his play but also supplies a great body of reference upon which the audience can fall back for a proper understanding of the levels of significance presented in the drama. By running a parallel with the ancient myth, the plot of The Confidential Clerk obviously establishes the traditional importance of the theme

introduced in the play. But before analysing the adjustment of the Greek story to modern situation, the basic outlines of the plot of the Greek play should be touched.

The Ion of Euripides begins with the prologue spoken by Hermes, the emissary of Apollo. It tells us of Ion's divine parentage. Years back Apollo ravished Creusa, the princess of Athens, who later gave birth to a child and abandoned it. The priestess of the Delphic Shrine found this child (Ion) and reared it. He has now become a priest of the temple. In the meantime Creusa has married a neighbouring chieftain, Xuthus. As their marriage does not produce any child, Creusa has come to the temple at Delphi with her husband to know why they have no children. Ion enters the temple and begins to purify it. He stands face to face with Creusa, whose beautiful face is stained with tears. He asks her the reason of her distress. Patiently he hears of her account. He then tells her how in his infancy he was abandoned by his mother in a cave.

The Oracle says that Creusa had an affair with a god, and this should be kept a guarded secret. Xuthus enters and Creusa appeals to the priest not to say anything to him. Xuthus, however, seems to be jubilant, for he has heard from the Oracle of Trophonius that he is destined to return with a son.

The young priest (Ion) is mortified to learn that Apollo ravished women and forsook children. Xuthus comes there and embraces the young priest. He was told that the first man he would meet at the temple was his son. The young priest, is, therefore, his son, and he will take him away. The priest wants to know all about his mother. Xuthus had affairs with a Maenad, and it is quite possible that she is his mother. Xuthus wants to celebrate the occasion by arranging for a feast. Xuthus christens his son 'Ion', i.e. coming, because he has met his son while coming out of the temple. The chorus informs Creusa of the newly found son of Xuthus. Creusa is worried on this account. She decides to kill the son of Xuthus by mixing the wine of the young man with the blood of Medusa. As the cup of the wine is offered to Ion, he flings it on the ground. The birds drink it and die instantaneously. The Delphians are shocked at the murderous intent of Creusa and think of stoning her to death. Creusa seeks shelter at the altar as a suppliant. Ion comes there and begins to invoke his mother about whom he has no distinct idea. He is about to seize her, when a priestess appears there with a basket containing clothes, which he had put on, while being abandoned as an infant. Creusa looks at it and cries out in joy. The basket is hers, and there is no more doubt about the identity of Ion. The mother and the son are reconciled. Athena comes and announces that Ion is the son of Creusa and Apollo. She, however, asks them not to reveal to

Xuthus that Ion is Creusa's son. Ion gladly accepts his inheritance.

In Eliot's The Confidential Clerk, Act I opens with a colloquy between Sir Claude, a middle-aged successful financier and Eggerson, his confidential clerk, just now retiring. His successor is Colby Simpkins, a quiet adroit young man. Sir Claude hopes that his wife will come to like Colby so that he can tell her his parentage and they can adopt him as their son. We come to know that Colby is Sir Claude's illegitimate son, a fact quite unknown to Lady Elizabeth. What she knows is that Sir Claude has an illegitimate daughter, Lucasta Angel, a charming but a shallow girl, in love with B. Kaghan. Before her marriage Lady Elizabeth wanted to inspire an artist, had an illegitimate child by a guardsman who wrote poems to her, lost track of the child when his father was killed hunting, and could not recall the name of the foster mother to whom he had entrusted it.

With the movement of the action we find Colby and Sir Claude engaged in a private conversation. Sir Claude admits to Colby that in his youth, he had no wish to imitate his father by becoming a financier. Colby himself is thinking of his own disappointed ideal of becoming a musician.

Act II brings together Colby and Lucasta. Lucasta discloses to Colby that she is Sir Claude's daughter. For Colby's

perplexity Lucasta thinks she has a cure — for him to retire often into the 'secret garden', as she calls it, of his "inner world". Colby wants a garden as real as the literal one at Joshua Park.

After Lucasta's exit, Lady Elizabeth appears to notice a framed photograph of Colby's aunt, Mrs. Guzzard, who brought him up at Teddington. Recalling that Guzzard was the name of the woman to whose care her dead lover Tony arranged to have her child intrusted and that Mr. Guzzard also lived in Teddington, she concludes that Colby must be actually her own lost son. Sir Claude, however, on hearing her assertion, confesses the reason why her point is wrong : Colby is the son of Mrs. Guzzard and of himself. Colby, being confused, is able to find out the truth. To this end, Sir Claude promises to summon Mrs. Guzzard as well as Eggerson, who knows all about it.

Act III is rapid throughout. Eggerson arrives, and then, Lucasta, to announce that she shall marry B. Kaghan. Then arrives Colby — "a terribly cold person" to Lucasta. Mrs. Guzzard arrives next. She reports that some years back, she and her husband took charge of an infant left with them by an agent of one of the parents. Later, out of poverty they were forced to put him out for adoption by the Kaghans. In view of Lady Elizabeth's recollections about what her lover did with the child, Mrs. Guzzard now believes that B. Kaghan must be Lady Elizabeth's son. Mrs. Guzzard then reveals that

Colby is not Sir Claude's son but the legitimate son of herself and Herbert Guzzard, a musician. She herself and her sister, who had been Sir Claude's mistress, many years before, were undergoing confinement the same time; her own child was born, but owing to her sister's death the other child was not. When at length Sir Claude returned home from abroad and came to inquire about his child, he supposed it to be the infant he saw. Mrs. Guzzard let him believe so. She decided to prolong the fiction so that her son might be assured of a proper start in life.

Colby now chooses to claim a different inheritance. He has the chance to apply for the post of organist in the church at Joshua Park. In the interim, he may share Eggerson's home. With this decision, Colby becomes Eggerson's 'son in spirit'. Under his influence he may go further yet.

Even a casual study of the plot of the Greek play reveals that it bears a close resemblance to the story of Eliot's play. Lady Elizabeth is Creusa and her yearning for her long-lost child is similar to the hunger for a child in Creusa. Mrs. Guzzard of Teddington plays the role of the priestess in the Greek play. She is also reminiscent of 'deus ex machina' (Pallas Athena). Sir Claude is the modern version of Xuthus who plans to rehabilitate his illegitimate son in the household. Ion's role has been split over two different characters, Colby and B. Kaghan. Eliot has done this to fulfil

his two-fold objective of making the modern Ion a worthy counterpart of his Greek original as well as an acceptable figure in the commercial theatre. In fact, the doubleness in the action of the plot is represented by the two distinct selves of B. Kaghan and Colby. While B. Kaghan accepts his wordly legacy by acknowledging his relation with Lady Elizabeth, Colby gains his spiritual freedom by accepting his heritage. Their fathers adopted music and poetry, the important skills of Apollo, as their vocation. So the question of Ion's divine fatherhood has been tackled by Eliot. Eggerson is the aged servant. The episode of Lady Elizabeth's getting an illegitimate child, before her marriage, by a guardsman and of forgetting about its whereabouts after giving it to a foster mother, has its parallel in the rape of Creusa by Apollo and the exposure of Ion in the Greek play. Sir Claude, on his side, only thought that he had a child by Mrs. Guzzard's sister. This is paralleled by Xuthus' escapade with the slave girl, from which he presumes that Ion has resulted.

But Eliot has complicated his plot by a few incidents, which have no parallel in the Greek plot. The death of Mrs. Guzzard's sister before her baby was born, the death of her husband causing her to look after a new-born baby without support, are some events which have no precedent in Euripides. To provide the natural children who are to be recognised instead of Ion, Eliot arranges that Sir Claude does have an illegitimate

daughter, Lucasta, whom he has always felt as an embarassment. And he has given a start in business to B. Kaghan, engaged to marry Lucasta. These occurrences are also without any parallel in Greek story. Thus we may agree with D.E. Jones[162] that the parallels between the two plots are clear but not simple.

There is also difference in the basic motives of the two plays. "Euripides", as Matthiessen observes, "presents the hunger for a child in Creusa and Xuthus and dramatises how it turns into a jealous conflict over Ion, a temple servant of Apollo".[163] Ion, who does not know the identity of his parents, is partly divine. Euripides' play ends with a recognition scene in which Creusa finds her long-lost child so that he can become heir to the patrimony she and her husband share. But Eliot does a different thing. He sets out to make a modern version of this plot which ends with the recognition that none of them can have the child of a god for men's human child. Euripides' moral problem, as Eliot understands it, requires a religious solution and the solution is the giving up of human claims on the dedicated person to force him to pursue his relation with divinity. Lady Elizabeth and Sir Claude in Eliot's play end by discovering that Colby is not the child of either one of them, and so must in effect be given back to the service of the god. They also realise that they have been neglecting their natural children in their fascination with Colby. "In this way", Matthiessen observes, "the last act of the play

dramatizes very effectively a liberating recognition of the difference between the human and the divine".[164]

It is in The Confidential Clerk that Eliot has successfully maintained the Aeschylean idea of restoring hope to life. Colby is in search of his parentage. He is alone in himself and knows nothing, either about his family or race or relatives. He is a musician and is generally lost into the world of his repressions. In the meanwhile, as we have seen, Sir Claude claims Colby as his son and Lady Elizabeth does the same but it is revealed that he is son neither of the two. This gives a heavy shock to his heart. He is frustrated for his loneliness, but he does not run away from the physical world, like Celia and Harry. Instead, he recovers in hope of accepting Eggerson as his divine father.

While adapting the Greek myth to the modern setting, Eliot has used the retrospective method of the Greek plays. But a very thin relation exists between the quality of the present life led by the Mulhammers in the play and the events recounted from their past life. C. L. Barber points out this drawback of the plot:

"... the problem is that these events really only remotely relate to the present need of the characters to connect Colby to themselves".[165]

Thus the retrospective method has impeded the vitality of movement of almost all the characters of the play; whatever action they are involved in appears to be merely a poor reverberation of the past.

The presiding virtues of the play are chasteness, restraint, terseness and precision which are found to characterise Greek tragedies. As in a Greek tragedy, the plot is of prime importance in this play and the character-development, of secondary importance. But the plot is hanky-panky. We may compare The Confidential Clerk to a pyramid of happenings, as unlikely as they are artificial. The characters are distinct and defined in their positive outlines, but they lack warmth and humanity. They have the power to interest and entertain us, but they engage very little of our real sympathy. The play, however, does not follow the plot-structure of Greek tragedy.

Grover Smith characterises the play as "a farce".[166] He further writes, "Although it uses the immemorial plot device of a mystery about a bastard's parentage, it makes this carry some weighty truths about the emotional life".[167] On the surface, it is a pessimistic and depressing play offering the picture of a world of self-deception, petty falsehood, and hypocrisy. But it is not principally a play about death, but rather about life and its abundance. Grover Smith succintly points out this aspect of the play in the following lines, "It reflects faintly the tension of affirmative

and negative impulses as in mystical theology, in as much as it shows the young man rejecting the affection of human beings in favour of the life through which he may be closest to god".[168] Behind the farce facade of the play, there is a serious substance.[169] It is, as Gerald Weales holds, a play about the search for vocation as well as for a father. Sir Henry is the efficient financier who wanted to be a bad potter. Lady Elizabeth is the dabbler in religion who wanted to be an inspirer of artists; Colby is the bad organist who almost became a financier, following the wrong father to the wrong vocation .

F. The Elder Statesman :Modernised Version of Oedipus at Colonus

Eliot's last play, The Elder Statesman (1958), originally called The Rest Cure, is a modernised version of Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus. In an interview by Donald Hall in The Paris Review,[170] Eliot observed that he was "too close to the Eumenides" in The Family Reunion and "tried to follow his original too literally"[171] in that play. And, therefore, he announced that in the subsequent three plays, he has "tried to make the Greek myth as a sort of spring board".[172] "Harry's career needs to be complete by an Orestes or an Oedipus at Colonus"[173], Eliot wrote to E. Martin Brown on another occasion. It is not Orestes but Oedipus at Colonus that Eliot turned to for the basic

pattern of his last play. Lord Claverton, the elder statesman of Eliot's play, however, is not certainly Harry, grown old. It is his experience only that parallels Harry's.

Eliot deals with "the matters of conscience and sin and guilt"[174] in his plays. The central theme in The Elder Statesman is "the genesis and development of the sense of guilt in the conscience of a man".[175] Lord Claverton has to endure the fear of emptiness, and he suffers from morbid conscience. The tragic sense of life which most significantly characterises Eliot's play springs from this kind of the inescapability of suffering.

But The Elder Statesman is not a tragedy in the traditional sense of the term. A.G. George[176] thinks that the play is neither a tragedy nor a comedy. He argues that the traditional classification of plays into comedies and tragedies seems to be singularly inapplicable to Eliot's plays. D.E. Jones, however, holds a different view. In his opinion, "The sense of the unheroic dimensions of our age which has been strong in Eliot from the time of Prufrock led him away from tragedy for a time; yet he has come back, in his latest play to the borders of the tragic realm, has come back, in fact, to the region of melodrama, into which he made a foray in Sweeney Agonistes, and .... the melodrama is tempered with an admixture of comedy".[177] He further contends, "With The Elder Statesman he [Eliot] returns

to the sterner form of Greek tragedy — from Aeschylus he jumped to Euripides, and now he turns back to Sophocles ... but he reduces it to something much nearer melodrama".[178] Eliot himself has his considered views on the issue : "If you want to say something serious, now-a-days, it is easier to say it in comedy than in tragedy. People take tragedy seriously on the surface. They take comedy lightly on the surface, but seriously underneath".[179] His announcement, made with reference to The Elder Statesman, means that a mere serious atmosphere in the theatre could be presented by ritual drama, and not by a Christian comedy. It is thus that The Elder Statesmen, in conveying the serious philosophic nature of Lord Claverton, "has been based upon Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus".[180] Denis Donoghue[181] thinks that Oedipus at Colonus provides the shape of Eliot's play and also the model for some of its most significant human relationship. The Elder Statesman eventually rests on the central core of the father-daughter relationship highlighted in the Greek myth. The relation of Eliot's play to the Greek play is both structural and qualitative.

At the outset of Eliot's play, Claverton is disclosed as a lonely man, ill and prematurely aging. He has so far lived a life of unreality, externality and illusion as a public man. But this has blinded his inner vision. He is advised by the doctor to go to Badgley court for rest. His daughter Monica,

who wishes to marry Charles Hemmington, a young M.P., has to accompany her father. His son Michael has little consideration for him. Fred Culverwell, an old classmate of Claverton, who is now living in Central America under an alias as Frederico Gomez, visits him. He, following a jail sentence in England for forgery, has amassed a fortune by shady means. Culverwell puts blame on Claverton for the nature of life that has led to his exile. He also reminds him of how Claverton ran non-stop over the body of an old man lying in the road when Claverton and he himself went for a moonlight-drive with two girls in their Oxford days. The disclosure of the secret dismays Claverton. Claverton meets another visitor, Mrs. Coghill by name, who identifies herself as the one-time revue-singer, Maisie Montjoy, and reminds him of their love-affair, from which his father rescued him by buying her off.

Claverton now accuses himself of having dominated his children with a view to keeping up his pretence of integrity, while actually he has simply covered his shabby behaviour. He grows conscience-stricken and confesses everything to Monica and Charles. Monica forgives him. He then leaves the scene and dies off-stage while Monica and her lover renew their personal vows with a love intensified by their new emotional bond with Claverton.

There is a superficial resemblance between the plots of Eliot's play and Sophocles' Oedipus at Colonus. In Sophocles' play, Oedipus the exiled king, has grown old expiating his youthful crimes of patricide and incest. Having arrived at a state of reconciliation and acceptance Oedipus comes to Colonus near Athens, where the Erinyes are worshipped as the Eumenides. The blind king, being led by his daughter Antigone, takes refuge in the grave and appeals to Theseus, king of Athens, for asylum. His request is granted. From a prophecy made by Apollo, Oedipus recognises the place where he will have to die. The Oracle has also announced that for the prosperity of Thebes, Oedipus must be buried in Theban soil. The Theban people approach Oedipus to persuade him to return to his homeland and eventually want to carry him forcibly to their place. With the help of Theseus and his people, Oedipus is able to resist all efforts to take him away. Oedipus' son, Polynices, who was driven into exile by his brother, has now gathered strength and is about to attack Thebes. He visits Oedipus for his blessing. But by very much repulsed by his son's bitter treatment in the past, Oedipus crushes him. As Polyneices departs, the thunder from Olympus proclaims the hour of his death. After a loving farewell to his daughters, and his blessing to his homeland, Oedipus obeys the divine summons which urge him toward his fated place of death.

While reading Eliot's play we find its likeness to Oedipus at Colonus. In his last play Sophocles takes up again

one of his greatest subjects. In The Elder Statesman Eliot also resumes the theme of spiritual election as envisaged in his earlier plays. Again, the past events in Eliot's play are narrated in retrospect just as Oedipus at Colonus is provided with its background by Sophocles' earlier play, Oedipus the King.

The character of Lord Claverton, to some extent, corresponds to that of Oedipus. The retirement of Claverton is analogous to the self-imposed exile of Oedipus. Like Oedipus Claverton is also looking back on his ruined life. Both Claverton and Oedipus have been blind to their guilts and have lived a life of spiritual darkness. At Badgley Court, Claverton, like Oedipus at Colonus, recognises "the place and time of liberation".[182] As Oedipus entered the sacred grave at Colonus for his ultimate cure, so Claverton comes to Badgley court, the sanatorium, on his doctor's orders, accompanied by his daughter who will perform the sacred rite of Christian confession.

The irony of Claverton's public role as'Elder Statesman' in the face of his private guilt is made painfully clear when his correspondence to the aged Oedipus is seen, for Oedipus is an elder statesman in the most grotesque sense.

Oedipus is most affectionately looked after by his daughter Antigone. Claverton is also lovingly attended by his daughter Monica. The blind king Oedipus depends on his daughter. Claverton,

too, with a terror of being alone and a fear of being exposed to strangers, depends on Monica and insists that she accompany him to Badgley Court. As Oedipus is supported in his purgation ordeal by Antigone, so Claverton is finally cured by the love of Monica. Actually his recognition of his true self, his attainment of self-knowledge is brought about by the filial love of his daughter. And so Antigone vowed to carry out the burial rites for his brother Polyneices, if his assault on Thebes failed. Monica assumes the obligation of being her brother's link with his lost self, thus insuring his ultimate means of redemption. She tells Michael that whoever he is when they meet again, she will always pretend that it is the same Michael. Denis Donoghue rightly observes, "Monica is a gracious, if pallid, reflection of Antigone".[183]

While Oedipus goes forward to die to fulfil the divine dictate, Claverton ceremonially withdraws from this world to die peacefully, leaving behind the spiritual message of love and his blessing upon his daughter and son-in-law. His death, like Oedipus' is symbolic of the well-being of those whomhe leaves behind. To Monica, Charles says about the spiritual influence of Claverton's death:

> "It is not at all strange
> The dead has poured out a blessing on the living".[184]

Then again, the sins of Cleverton's past life correspond to those of Oedipus. While Oedipus had illicit relation with his mother without his knowledge, and had unknowingly killed his father, who obstructed him on the road, Cleverton ran over the body of an old man on the street in a nocturnal drive round Oxford, and had secret relations with Mrs. Coghill without knowing her identity and refusing to marry her. Again, he reared a son, who like Oedipus' son, Polynaices, is an outcast from the world of spirit.

Yet, there is a clear distinction between Oedipus and Cleverton so far as their sins are concerned. It is clear that while Cleverton is responsible for his misdeeds, Oedipus is the instrument of his fate. Sophocles clearly considers Oedipus innocent of guilt in having killed his father and married his mother. Oedipus repeatedly justifies himself as having erred in ignorance. In a speech of formal defence, he states quite explicitly that his deeds were unwilled, and that his griefs are due to no evil in his nature:

> "For there is nought in me
> Or deeds of mine to have you fear. My life
> Hath more of wrong endured than of wrong done, ...
> Yet never can ye fasten guilt on me".[185]

Cedric H. Whitman comments in this connection, "The legal claim that he killed in self-defence and ignorance is

backed by the moral claim that even if he had known that his assailant was his father, he would not be morally guilty".[186] Oedipus' guiltlessness is manifest in what he says to Creon:

> "Since in myself you will find no stain of sin
> For which such ruinous error against myself
> And mine own house might be the recompense".[187]

Unlike Oedipus, Claverton is not the victim of any divine dispensation. He is a free moral agent. The sins committed by him do not involve any serious moral complication in the play. He has corrupted a youth, but the youth is a free moral agent. He ran over an old man, but the old man was later known to be already dead and he made love to a young lady and refused to marry her, but the lady later happily settled down with another man. These actions are not largely to blame. What is to blame is his moral cowardice, his escapism from reality. Whereas Oedipus tries to justify himself as having committed the sins in ignorance, Claverton is nagged by guilt.

Like Oedipus, Claverton is visited by his son, Michael, who is in trouble and wants his help. Like Oedipus Claverton has also bitter encounter with his son. Michael's desire for temporal power and prosperity, his looking in for a job and hankering for a new life in San Marco — all these can easily be equated with Polyneice's planned attack on Thebes, the city of pestilence, conflict and destruction.

Mrs. Coghill, who was Claverton's mistress, but whom he refused to marry, is the transformation of Jocasta, Oedipus' mother and wife. She and Gomez want to restore Claverton's reputation, just like the people of Thebes who want to carry on Oedipus to his homeland.

A closer reminiscence of Sophocles in Eliot's play is Claverton's account of his marriage:

> "We never understood each other
> And so we lived, with a deep silence between us
> And she died silently. She had nothing to say to me".[188]

L.L. Jones comments, "This translates into terms of normal life the tremendous poignancy of the death of Jocasta, who, when she anticipates Oedipus in the realization of the truth, leaves the stage without telling him of her discovery and hangs herself".[189]

There is, of course, no Tiresias in Eliot's play, because Lord Claverton, in his role as self-critic, the silent observer who, when forced, speaks out, gathers up this role unto himself as Oedipus. Since the context, in which the action of The Elder Statesman is imitated, is not very important, there is no need of a Theseus, and since the gods are to be invoked — if at all — only obliquely and apologetically, there is no need of a Creon. These omissions speak for themselves.

Eliot learns from Aeschylus that the loneliness of human nature can be annulled by reconciling god and man as just partners. In The Elder Statesman Eliot has shown that happiness can be restored to life by exterminating 'evil' into 'good'.

Claverton expresses his spiritual darkness to Monica somewhat pathetically:

> "No , I've not the slightest longing for the life I've left-
> Only fear of the emptiness before me.
> If I had the energy to work myself to death
> How gladly would I face death! But waiting, simply waiting,
> With no desire to act, yet a loathing of inaction
> A fear of the vacuum, and no desire to fill it".[190]

Claverton is haunted with a terror of being alone. Now that he is retiring from public life, he has nothing to look forward to. With this recognition of the hollowness of his public honours, he is visited by the ghost of the past in the person of Fred Culverwell, who holds him responsible for his youthful crime and his subsequent loss of the country and the identity. He attempts a kind of moral blackmail whereby in exchange for his company he agrees to conceal the facts of Claverton's true nature from others. The second ghost appears in the person of Mrs. Coghill, formerly Maisie Montjoy. Her changes of identity have been caused by Claverton's abandonment. Claverton is forced to probe even more deeply into his spiritual wound, into the cause of his self and his destruction of others.

she accuses Claverton of violating her love and reminds him of his love-letters which she hopes to use in order to keep him from abandoning her again.

In watching the re-enactment of his own wrong course of action in his son's, Claverton is finally brought to the awareness of his own responsibility for his son's nature.

With Monica's encouraging love and her assurance that Culverwell and Mrs. Coghill are only ghosts who can be exorcised, Claverton is restored to serenity. He confesses to Charles and Monica the failures of his past. Claverton determines that he must endure the humiliation and suffering inherent in the past sins as a sign of his recognition of personal guilt and responsibility. He feels at peace in understanding of his past and a new unity of existence:

> "I've only just now had the illumination
> Of knowing what love is".[191]

He blesses the lovers, Charles and Monica, as he leaves them. In Claverton's suffering and death they find rebirth as a new person. Charles observes:

> "He's a very different man from the man he used to be".[192]

Thus in the certainty of love unchanging, Claverton learns to unlock the door in his heart and to enter that garden where all loves end. Claverton sums up his feelings at the fag end of the play : "I've been freed from the self that pretends to be someone; And in becoming no one, I begin to live".[193]

In Sophocles' play, Oedipus's parting words to his daughter also underscores the importance of love in life.

Eliot has followed up the hint and has tried to render the theme of love with its most complex and comprehensive meanings. The emphasis in both the plays is on obedience to the will of God and faithful observance of the bonds of love as a means of redemption.

Grover Smith has found in this catharsis Eliot's "equivalent to the epiphany in the Oedipus at Colonus"[194] Rightly has he observed , "Confession leads to absolution and sanctifies the communion of death [in case of Claverton]"[195]

In keeping with the requirements of the naturalistic stage convention Eliot has parted company with the supernatural machinery of Sophocles' play. He has, instead, stressed the moral motivation and intuitive interpretation of love. With the aid of supernatural agency Oedipus arrives at the recognition of his spiritual destiny and his action is controlled by divine

dispensation. But Eliot's hero Claverton acts upon the promptings of his own conscience and upon his intuitive understanding of human relationship. D.E. Jones neatly sums up this change in dramatic motivation in Eliot's play:

"In Sophocles, as we have seen, the recognition springs from supernatural knowledge. In Eliot the explicitly supernatural is reduced to the more naturalistic level of intuitive".[196]

Eliot has made other changes, in comparison to Sophocles, at the end of the play. The peace felt by Monica, at the end, is more ecstatic than that of Antigone and Ismene. The main change, in other than language, versification and setting, Eliot has made in the play is the transformation of ritual and legendary characters into modern democrats. As a critic observes: "Greek drama and myth have regained him so much vigour and thought that, once his plays have extincted on the stage, they revive in their nascent, intellectual appeal".[197]

The rituals play an important part in all Eliot's plays as in The Elder Statesman. In this play, the struggle between the old and the new "is ... enacted within the hero himself, who represents both the sin-laden old God and the re-born new God".[198] Again, through Christian death Claverton gains eternal life and in his blessing bestows fertility in the form of Christian love on the young lovers. The imagery of death and rebirth is emphatic in the close of the play[199] when Claverton realises that in becoming no one, he begins to live. Again,

the structure of the play is based on the pattern of the ritual cure. In the first act, Lord Claverton, as a representative of the old god, is ill with the corruption of earth and self. In the second act, through his struggle with the ghosts of his past and the image of his former selves which they project, he is brought to recognize the source of his illness. In the third act, through his daughter's saving love and his admission of guilt, he is purged through death of his mortality and made ready for his rebirth as spirit.

The father-daughter relationship which is one of the beauties of the Greek play is presented on a sentimental plane in Eliot's play. As a consequence, Eliot has to confer, what Hugh Kenner characterises as "a luminous mirade-play simplicity"[200] on the characters. The simplicity of its outline, however, saves the plot of The Elder Statesman from much of the unnecessary complexity of Eliot's previous plays. Hence John Wain describes the present play as something different from Eliot's other works. In his words, "It sets the reader no hard problem; we do not have to force ourselves to approve of characters".[201] The well-knit construction of the play, no doubt, makes it attractive. The inner and outer action of Eliot's drama has nowhere else been so well balanced as in the present play. D.E. Jones maintains that "as a piece of construction"[202], the play marks a considerable advance upon its predecessors. Grover Smith,

however, fails to do justice to the play when he says that "the action of the play drags".[203] The first act offers an exposition of Claverton's loneliness and its relation to his shady past. Act II complicates the action by further exposition of Claverton's deceptive life and his frantic effort to save Michael from those mistakes which he himself has committed. Act III offers resolution through Claverton's acceptance of reality through love. This analysis shows that there is no weakness in the construction of the play and the action progressively moves forward.

5. Conclusion

In the foregoing sections of this chapter an attempt is made to examine the nature and significance of classical analogues in a few selected plays of Bridges, O'Neill and Eliot. An attempt may now be made in this concluding portion to sum up the observations made in this connection.

There has been a tendency among some critics to undermine Bridges' handling of the myth and conventions of Greek tragedy. According to them the poet has nothing worthwhile to say; he is using repeated themes in a conventional way. It is true that for the treatment of the themes Bridges uses the Greek pattern rather loosely with the result that he makes the pattern a sort of ornament rather than an organic form. But it is to be admitted that his sure and constant sympathy with the spirit of Greek mythology helps him achieve a singular success in his dramatic writings. As the analysis of his treatment of the Promethean myth shows, Bridges is original in the portrait of his hero by showing him as a symbol of prime and youth, a symbol of the new religion of love. In his treatment of the chorus, Bridges, however, is influenced by Aeschylus. Bridges' classical poems, particularly Prometheus, the Fire Giver, in sum, mark the Greek attainment and the Christian ideals, and as such command our praise, satisfying our best intelligency.

The discussion on O'Neill's plays shows that the Oresteian trilogy furnishes the basis of Mourning Becomes Electra and it

is possible to detect the Hippolytus theme in Desire Under the Elms. O'Neill, besides, was very much drawn to the classical simplicity and austerity combined with the utmost freedom and flexibility. But it may be said that classical elevation is barely visible in his plays. O'Neill turned to Greek tragedies for a model through which to transform the most ignoble debased lives into the grandeur and transfiguring nobility of tragedy.

In Greek tragedies the hero wilfully or through ignorance violates the inexorable order of the universe or of his destiny. The hero flouts this order on the stage by his actions; the Greek poet dramatizes his struggle, and when he is destroyed and order is restored both the destruction and the restoration seem logical and inevitable.

In O'Neill's work, the violated order is that of the mind; when order is restored, it is restored in the mind. In Greek tragedies, characters act the consequences of defiance or suffer them visibly on the stage. Self-recognition is brought home to them by a progression of events, not by revelation.

Greek heroes violate social laws and are doomed until harmony is restored. O'Neill explores the dark recesses of the inner self. In both cases, man is pitted against mysterious elements beyond control. But with the Greeks, order, ultimately, is preserved. With O'Neill, chaos and disorder continue in the society. The Greeks found consolation in the intervention of the gods and the persistence of justice. For O'Neill psychological pressures take the place of fate.

The revelation of the self of the protagonist is essential to the depth and significance of a Greek tragedy, but it is not an end in itself. In O'Neill's plays, this self-revelation is the one end and aim of all action; its purpose is not to lead to further action, but to solve the mystery of life. This search for self and for a social and moral order to which the tragic hero can belong is characteristic of O'Neill's tragedy. The Greek tragic hero, on the other hand, acts within a known framework of order and there is search for neither in him.

In a Greek tragedy, the protagonist brings about his own destruction through some flaw, some frailty in his character. The ethos of an O'Neill character is to perpetuate or strengthen an illusion about himself. This moral purpose often runs counter to another aim, that is, to discover his self. The illusion is a false self-image substituted for the real self, the latter being unconsciously hated by the character. This self-hatred and the consequent pursuit of illusion constitute the tragic flaw which ruins him.

Aristotle considered the pride of the tragic hero as a flaw. The pride of O'Neill's characters is neurotic and it follows still the blinding destructive pattern of hubris, ultimately bringing the downfall.

O'Neill conceives of fate in a manner which stands apart from the Greek treatment. The modern fate is both in man and outside him. It paralyses his mind. It is not fate but his unconscious, his will and his emotions which are his worst enemies.

Finally, in O'Neill's plays, there is no pettiness, no real vulgarity, and nothing is to blame except everybody. Social forces, as such, do not exist, and as in Greek tragedy, we are face to face with guilty-innocent humanity on the purely personal level. In his tragic vision, O'Neill was, therefore, influenced mainly by Aeschylus. His plays, like the plays of Aeschylus, are attempts to explain human suffering and his heroes, like the heroes of Aeschylus, are free and responsible agents who bring most of the grief upon themselves through pride.

Eliot's plays, as we have seen, do not reflect a universal imitation of Greek patterns and sources. Eliot's contribution to the modern re-working of classical drama lies not only in the transposition of ancient actions to a modern setting, an attempt partially unsuccessful, but also in the re-casting of these actions from a Christian point of view. Now, we may consider to what extent does the presence of the classical analogues influence the technique of Eliot's plays, to what extent it is congenial to the Christian content of the plays, and finally, if this presence is necessary to establish the meaning of the plays. The first part of the question is already discussed. Let us now concentrate on the latter parts.

The discussion of the individual plays shows that Eliot's plays are rich in Christian meaning. But the blending of the classical and the Christian is not always harmonious. In The Family Reunion, the pressures of the classical underpattern work against the Christian intent of the play; in The Confidential Clerk and

The Elder Statesman only a partial reading of the *Ion* and *Oedipus at Colonus* make them suitable for Christian interpretation. It indicates that these actions cannot be incorporated in their totality into a Christian world-view.

A Christian reading of the classical actions alters, not only the nature of the experience of the protagonists, but also the corporate focus of Greek drama. To the Greeks, drama was an orchestrated whole in which the protagonist and chorus stood in a vital reciprocal relationship to each other. Eliot's is a drama of individual redemption.

Classical underpatterns required a great deal of modification before they could be used as bases for Christian actions. In ultimate analysis, both Christianity and classical plays chosen for adaptation may be taken as illustrations, in different ways, of the same basic movement towards regeneration. Two approaches complement each other in presenting a complex whole, which conveys the value of the experiences of self-awareness and salvation, in whatever forms they may occur.[1]

Through the use of classical analogues, Eliot sought to create a complex and comprehensive dramatic mould, capable of subsuming within itself even possible contradictions. A study of the role of the classical analogues, in Eliot's drama, is, consequently, basic to the understanding of his intricate design; their presence is essential to the kind of multi-level statement at which Eliot was aiming. Eliot's themes are self-awareness and

salvation, and these issues are fundamental enough not to require support and confirmation of their importance, from parallel statements in classical literature.

Secondly, the use of the Greek parallels involves Eliot in a problem concerning exposition — a problem which has a major repercussion on the plays. As for example, to make the appearances of the Eumenides serve as replacements for the delineation of Harry's spiritual development from despair to faith, in The Family Reunion is to obscure its urgent and personal quality. In The Cocktail Party, Celia's renunciation and martyrdom are quite as much the result of Reilly's semi-divine powers of manipulation as of personal choice, with Reilly's directives again offered as an alternative to the inward movement towards faith and self-sacrifice. In The Confidential Clerk, Mrs. Guzzard, in her capacity as "suburban Pallas Athene"[2], miraculously releases Colby from filial ties to Sir Claude, ties which might have hindered his natural inclination towards a vocation. Colby is provided with a disappointed musician for a father, and it is this revelation, rather than any sudden perception, or crystallisation of faith on his part, that prompts Colby to make the decision to serve the Church. In The Elder Statesman, the Oedipus at Colonus- analogue is so submerged as to be virtually unrecognisable. In the three earlier plays, however, the crucial moments of revelation, the moments at which the protagonists recognize and accept their spiritual election, are represented with the assistance of elements taken from the classical analogues. Yet the process of arriving at

the decision needed to be rendered concretely in terms of characterisation. As Eliot handles them, the classical analogues are made to bear too great a burden of explication — they are, in fact, offered as substitutes for the central action. To this extent, their presence distracts attention from the significance of that central action, which is the difficult spiritual process of the realization of faith.

In the final analysis, Eliot's plays remain interesting experiments, with The Cocktail Party demonstrating the most complex set of relationships obtaining between an ancient and a modern action.[3] In The Family Reunion the language is intensely evocative, especially in passages dealing with elements recalling the classical parallel, such as the curse, pollution, and the ritual rebirth in spring. Eliot does not, however, solve the problems of employing his Greek analogues in such a way that they simultaneously affirm the contemporary actions and retain their distinctive identities. In view of this, it is significant that, Murder in the Cathedral, which does not make use of a classical story, remains the most effective of Eliot's plays.

The nature and significance of the classical analogues in the plays of Bridges, O'Neill and Eliot have been variously estimated by the critics. An attempt should be made to find a common perspective to be applied to the subject. The modern dramatist's success in using the classical analogues depends on a few factors. First, the use of the classic myth toward the modern ideology requires an acute awareness, on the part of the

dramatist, of the great changes in meaning and intonation. Secondly, the dramatist must be close enough to his original to allow similitudes or dissimilitudes, to be perceived. Thirdly, he must postulate a sophisticated audience. Next the 'modern dress' must be carefully imagined for it can easily become ridiculous. The modern dramatist has some difficulties to face while handling the classical myth. The mythology of Greek tragedy was the expression of a complete and traditional image of life. The poet could achieve with his audience an immediate contact of terror or delight because both shared the same habits of belief. When these habits are no longer current, the corresponding mythology goes dead. Today the context is so totally altered that the ancient myths appear in the modern play house either as a travesty or as an antiquarian charade. A further qualification relates specifically to the plays as theatre rather than as literature. In the theatre, the plays are intended to operate at various levels, not necessarily concurrent, in their impact upon the viewer — as comedy of manners, as poetic drama, as religious dramas, as enactment of the eternal quest for identity and spiritual fulfilment. The dramatists have to work under the pressure of these restrictions and limitations. And the result is this that both O'Neill and Eliot, while using Greek tragedies, form their stories in a tragic pattern which is refined and integrated ultimately assumed as their own and told for the sake of their own period.

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Conclusion

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2. Alison Leggatt quoted in Neville Braybrooke ed. T.S. Eliot : A Symposium for his Seventieth Birthday, Op. cit., p. 79

3. In his interview with Donald Hall (op. cit., p. 60), Eliot remarks, "[The Family Reunion is] the best of my plays in the way of poetry".

C H A P T E R VI

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

CHAPTER VI

Summary of the Findings and Conclusion

1. Summary of the Findings:

The impact of classical tragedy on English drama which is the argument or the thesis forms the subject of discussion in the last three chapters. The impact is analysed in three various stages : the impact of Seneca on English tragedies (Chapter III), the attempt to write tragedy on the model of Attic tragedy (Chapter IV), and the re-casting of the Greek tragic myth and the use of chorus in some English plays (Chapter V).

The classical stimuli acting upon English tragedy in the beginning was Seneca. Seneca represented different dramatic impulses for the English dramatists in course of the rise and development of English tragedy. It is found that Seneca exercised a profound impact on English drama in matters of thought, structure and style.

The English dramatists, however, were not blind in their imitation of Seneca. They assimilated much of the Senecan drama but they added their imagination to it, reshaped its characters, its humour and its conventions to suit their audience.

Senecan influence on English drama was occasioned by the advent of Renaissance in England. It was also invigorated by the taste of the contemporary spectators. It did not clash with the native tradition but fused with it. It is now obvious, as Allardyce Nicoll[1] observes, that the only hope for the rise of a national drama lay in a conscious union of the two forces,

the native elements providing variety and vitality, the classical elements providing unity and harmonious construction. It was the task of the University Wits to make the classical tragedy popular and popular tragedy unified in construction and conscious of its aim. In The Spanish Tragedy Kyd did the same thing.

Attic tragedy hardly affected the English theatre until the influence of Seneca had worked itself out. Milton chose the tragic form to express his final mood, and, in doing so, he moved back behind Shakespeare, — behind Seneca to the Greek origins of tragedy. Samson Agonistes was written on the Greek model, in following of "Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, the Tragic Poets, unequall'd by any, and the best rule to all who endeavour to write Tragedy".[2] Samson Agonistes is a special case by virtue of its power and of its content in the history of English drama. Its form is Greek. But Samson's emergence from defeat and humiliation to victorious self-destruction has the implication of Christianity and Christianity is "an anti-tragic vision of the world"[3] as it offers the promise of redemption which undercuts the finality of tragedy.

Shelley also chose the form of the Attic tragedy while writing Hellas and Prometheus Unbound. He claimed[4] that it was precisely the inadequacy of the age that made it necessary for the dramatist to turn to the drama of the past. It was, however, not the age that provided inadequate material for tragedy, but the old forms that were inadequate to convey the tragedy of the age. Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, however, was not written so much

as an experiment in the Attic form of tragedy as in answer to an unspoken challenge to Aeschylus. His Hellas was modelled on the Attic form but it is only a fragment. Shelley's is a romantic vision. His Prometheus is heroic in his apparent defeat and sustained by the conviction of ultimate victory. Shelley's vision is fixed on a point beyond suffering.

Arnold wanted to write a drama that would be classical in structure, form, theme, sentiment and style for the literates of his time who did not care to read Greek. His intention was to give his readers a specimen of the world created by the Greek imagination. Accordingly he wrote Merope which may be called an exact reproduction of a Sophoclean tragedy. But the common allegation against Arnold is that by copying from the past he lost sight of his own time, which it was his true function to reflect. A living drama should express the ideas and passions of the age and reflect the national character. Each age must, therefore, develop its own methods and language as a vehicle for those ideas. That is why Arnold's drama is criticised by W.F. Henley as "a blunder alike in sentiment and in art".[5]

Swinburne chose the form of the Attic tragedy for his Atalanta in Calydon and Erechtheus. The Greek form afforded Swinburne the opportunity for full employment of his natural faculty of lyric utterance and song. He modified the choral songs of the Greek tragedy. In Swinburne they are not usually composed in strophes and anti-strophes. They are rhymed. With the

use of rhyme Swinburne could convey some of the variety and sprightliness which were possible in Greek quantitative verse. He had reasons, therefore, for not being stricty adherent to the form of Greek tragedy.

Eliot believed that a form which has been perfected by one age cannot be copied exactly by writers of another age. He further held , "The essentials of the drama were ... given by Aristotle: 'poetry, music, and dancing constitute in Aristotle a group by themselves, their common element being imitation by means of rhythm — rhythm which admits of being applied to words, events and the movements of the body'. It is the rhythm, so utterly absent from modern drama".[6] Eliot transposed the actions of Greek tragedy to a modern setting in the four dramas he wrote after Murder in the Cathedral and re-cast these actions from a Christian point of view. Eliot himself admitted in his essay "Poetry and Drama" that he could not achieve an adjustment between the Greek story and the modern situation at least in The Family Reunion. In Murder in the Cathedral Eliot has shown how the chorus of Greek tragedy can be effectively used even in a modern drama.

O'Neill, as a tragic dramatist, wanted to transform the most ignoble debased lives into the grandeur and transfiguring nobility of tragedy. With Milton the form of the Greek tragedy, as it was moulded in the hands of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, was the best rule to those who endeavoured to write tragedy. But O'Neill was more categorical in stating that "tragedy

... has the meaning the Greeks gave it".[7] O'Neill did not choose the form of Greek tragedy; instead, he borrowed the theme-pattern of Aeschylus and reinterpreted it in modern psychological terms with Fate and the Furies working from within the individual soul in Mourning Becomes Electra.

2. Conclusion:

It is found that Seneca exercised a profound and at times salutary influence on English tragedy. But attempts to write tragedy on the Greek model have met failure. This gives rise to a very simple question : is it possible to write tragedy of the stature of the Greeks?

When one takes a view of the whole tragic tradition from the Greeks to the present day, it becomes quite apparent that tragedy does alter its shape and meaning from one country to another with chameleon variability. Each age has different tensions and terrors though they open on the same abyss. Tragedian's primary source must be the data of his own experience and observation. Tragedy, like any drama, should be a reflection and introspection of life — of the ideas, passions and characters of the age in which it is written. Then again, tragedy is precariously balanced on variously ephemeral conventions of theatre or audience and that is why the tragic of one age cannot easily be revived in another with any assurance.

Joseph Wood Krutch argues in his well-known essay, "The Tragic Phallacy"[8] that modern sceptical and scientific outlook

has reduced man's stature and is thus inimical to the production of high tragedy. Classical tragedy presupposes a belief in the dignity and grandeur of the individual. Modern civilisation is built on the negation of dignity of the individual. Man no longer believes that his fate makes the least difference to a universe he conceives as soulless. He can no longer believe in his own nobility; he knows that he is a creature of reflexes and complexes, determined by heredity and environment. The glory both of God and of Man has departed this world. With increased freedom political and intellectual, modern man has come to realise that he is not so free, but a slave to custom, to economic necessity, to class consciousness, to unconscious desire, to irrational passion — to impersonal forces that cannot inspire the awe that the will of the gods once did.

George Steiner in his book on the death of tragedy points out that the decline of tragedy was manifested after the seventeenth century with the development of rational empiricism. In ancient time men created his own symbols and mythology out of the natural world. Such primal notions as the intervention of supernatural in human affairs, chain of being etc. were vividly present in the dramas of the Greek tragic poets. But the new concepts based on rational empiricism of Descartes, Newton and Voltaire made the conventions of symbolic language and mythology irrelevant to the audience after the seventeenth century.

Moreover, in Athens, in Shakespeare's England and at Versailles, social life revolved round the royal or aristocratic centre. The life and prospects of the common man were intimately bound with the fate of the royal or aristocratic families. But the centre of gravity in human affairs shifted with the rise of the middle class. Tragedy protests at the condition of life — it springs from a sense of disorder. It runs against the grain of middle class sensibility.

Tragedy of the stature of the Greek is, therefore, impossible in the modern age. Modern tragedy is based on new conceptions and its execution is also different. It deals not with man but with men moulded by the social forces of the age.

The responsible modern man cannot escape the radical and continuous change that the economic, political and scientific revolutions have brought about. The art and motive of modern tragedy are adapted to the taste and temperament of modern age. While with the Greeks tragedy was an ennobling experience belonging to a region of the mind freed from the contamination of the common-place, the struggles and frustrations of common man are the stock-in-trade of modern tragedy. Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman (1949) is perhaps the best example in modern tragedy of the common man betrayed by the false values of contemporary society. Throughout the play Willie Loman is blind and self-deceived, but his heroic gesture at the end (he commits suicide so that his life insurance money will go to the son) gives him

a measure of the nobility he has lacked during his life. Arthur Miller reveals a dramatic radicalism quite at odds with the sense of grandeur of tragedy when he claims[9] that it is possible, if the right issues are engaged, for the 'corner grocer' to outdistance the President of the United States as a tragic figure. He denies that the rank of the tragic protagonist has the same significance today as it had been in earlier centuries. What matters, he says, is whether the hero has the capacity to choose, and whether his choice is between alternatives of sufficient seriousness.

Modern tragedy rests mainly on psycho-analysis inspired by Freud or social criticism inspired by the liberal Protestantism of Ibsen, Shaw and Galsworthy or by the socialistic doctrine of the Russian playwrights or by the scientific orientation of Zola and Hauptmann. Under the impact of these powerful forces operating in the social and spiritual life of modern man the concept of tragedy has changed.

Christian symbolism and the context of Christian meaning still temper the climate of western life. In Steiner's words, Christianity is an anti-tragic vision of the world. The promise of redemption that is offered by Christianity mars the finality of tragedy. Religion in a wider sense involves a commitment of the entire being, a whole heartedness and single mindedness, the lack of which, in the view of J.L. Styan, makes the twentieth century unsuited to tragedy in the full sense of the word: "Our present-day mongrel conventions ... do not encourage the exclusive consistency of purpose as we ask of tragedy. Twentieth century

currents of contradictory thought and the mood of audiences do not permit it ; the laws of tragedy belong to a world which is religious in its affirmation of human greatness".[10]

The Romantic vision of life is also non-tragic. The optimistic outlook that informs the romantic vision undermines the very foundations on which tragedy is built. In tragedy as George Steiner[11] observes, the wounds are not healed and the broken spirit is not mended.

Marxist world-view also admits of no ultimate tragedy. There is no place in Marxist philosophy for such things as uncontrollable forces maddening or destroying the mind. Moreover, the Marxist view is immensely optimistic. To a Marxist there is no ground for tragic despair as in his view, mankind is advancing towards justice and final victory.

At the heart of tragedy is a tough dialectical struggle. Behind modern tragedy is the opposition between mass organisation and modern individualism. The battle of the individual against the varied forces that crush his spirit in the modern times offers tremendous scope for poignant tragedy. Yet it is impossible today to create tragedy comparable to Greek and Elizabethan tragedy. The protagonist of modern tragedy cannot challenge the social system.

There is also a marked difference in the theatrical environment of modern and ancient Greek plays. The open air ampitheatre of the Greeks and the indoor proscenium arch of the moderns are both physically and symbolically contexts conditioning the tragic experiences which they surround. There is something of vastness and majesty in the plays produced on the Greek stage, which is impossible in the plays written for the modern theatre where a small body of spectrators is brought into close contact with the actors.

There is yet another significant factor — that of the audience-response. If an implicit moral valuation must contribute to the understanding and enjoyment of the play, the dramatist must share it with his audience, and a homogeneous theatre seems a prerequisite for successful tragedy. The common interest to which the Greek dramatists appealed was patriotic. Greek theatre was peopled with an ideal audience, stirred by a uniform emotion. The Greek tragic poet while composing his masterpieces had to think of, in Virginia Woolf's words, "something emphatic, familiar, brief, that would carry, instantly and directly, to an audience of seventeen thousand people ... with ears and eyes eager and attentive, with bodies whose muscles would grow stiff if they sat too long without diversion. Music and dancing he would need, and naturally would choose one of those legends ... which are known to everyone in outline, so that a great fund of emotion is ready prepared, but can be stressed in a new place by each new poet".[12] But the picture is different with the modern dramatists.

In his plays like The Cocktail Party, Eliot has trusted his audience less and less; he does not deploy religious counters about his play; he merely implies a vaguely Christian reference which may be or may not be felt after the characters have suffered a particular secular experience. Eliot has nevertheless implied, within the body of his play which is a quite serious one, a code by which to reason and evaluate its inner meaning.

There is another side of the picture. The finest dramas of Athens and Elizabethan England have been produced for heterogeneous audiences — the aristocrats and the artisans of Athens or the apprentices and the peers of the Elizabethan period. But when the audiences tend to break into separate groups, when the theatre is patronized not by all, but by a class, then the drama produced for that theatre becomes weak. In the words of Allardyce Nicoll, "Only in the periods when the theatre mingled pleasure with some species of reflection ... was fine drama produced. ... Disillusionment gave birth to the ... plays of to-day".[13]

In respect of tragic vibration also there seems to be a difference between ancient and modern conception of the tragic experiences. Plot was all important for the Greek tragic poets but modern man vibrates more intensely than Aristotle seems to think possible to a tragic movement which is hidden in the depths of the soul rather than embodied in structure and action. To quote Jones[14], 'Aristotelian man cannot make a portentious gesture of "I have that within which passes show" (Hamlet, act I, sc. ii, l. 85) because he is significantly himself only in what he sees and does'. In the

dramas of Chekhov and Brecht on the other hand, the mental world fills the stage. In this sense although there is a common ground of human suffering arousing pity and horror it is a long way over from modern to Greek tragedy. Works like Manfred and Prometheus Unbound mark the end of the alliance between tragedy and the stage. In David Lenson's words, "if tragedy has a theatre thereafter, it is often the theatre of a single mind confronting the work of art in privacy".[15]

There is also the issue if tragedy is a permanent order of things. Raymond Williams[16] argues that what is claimed as a permanent order of things, to which, if it is to become tragedy, the particular instance of suffering must be related via the work of art, is in reality, a temporary expression of the socially determined culture of the day. He writes, "New kinds of relation and new kinds of law, to connect with and interpret our actual suffering are the terms of contemporary tragedy. But to see new relations and new laws is also to change the nature of experience, and the whole complex of attitudes and relationships dependent on it. ... The action of isolating suffering and then of reintegrating it within a continuing sense of life can occur in very different cultures, with very different fundamental beliefs".[17] Thus tragedy is not a single and permanent kind of fact, but a series of experiences and conventions and institutions.

The decline of serious drama in Britain in the nineteenth century is a well-known phenomenon. Until the appearance of Shaw's plays at the end of the century no contemporary drama of serious

nature was produced in the theatre. As the commercial theatre was more and more given to melodrama more serious writers turned to the tragic themes and wrote dramas for private reading only. But it is in the novel that the tragic experience is most interiorised as may be seen in Henry James' Portrait of A Lady (1881). As Henry James puts it, "The old dramatists ... had a simpler civilisation to represent societies in which the life of man was in action, in passion, in immediate and violent expression. Those things could be put upon the playhouse boards with comparatively little sacrifice of their completeness and their truth. Today we're so infinitely more reflective and complicated and diffuse that it makes all the difference. What can you do with a character, with an idea, with a feeling, between dinner and the suburban trains? You can give a gross, rough sketch of them, but how little you touch them, how bold you leave them ! What crudity compared with what the novelist does".[18]

James suggests that the novel penetrates the surface of modern life far better than drama can. As John Orr[19] observes, between 1848 and 1948 lies the period of tragic realism in the modern novel. The transformation of tragic realism in the modern theatre is delayed and less prolific . But it actually outlasts its appearance in the novel. The novel obviously presented itself as a more satisfactory vehicle for modern tragedy than the drama had become.

Not only the novel but also certain poems and lyrics manage to achieve a moving expression of the tragic experience within a much smaller compass. As R.P. Draper[20] has shown, the meaning of suffering is only understood when the reader is made 'to see it feelingly', and though that phrase belongs to a play, it aptly describes the responses evoked by such poems as Keats' odes. In his words, "... lyric tragedy becomes quite conceivable as a mode of tragic expression quite different from the Aristotelian in that it is more dependent on mood and atmosphere than on action and characterisation, and conducive to an individual and introspective rather than a public collective response".[21]

In his discussion of the chorus Allardyce Nicoll observes, "The spirit of the chorus, that of which it was the expression, is a permanent thing, well nigh necessary in all high tragedy ..."[22] In a radio broadcast Eliot also expressed his view that "the chorus has fundamentally the same uses".[23] That the chorus can be very effectively used even in modern drama is shown by Eliot in Murder in the Cathedral. Milton in Samson Agonistes and Hardy in his tragic novels[24] and in his drama, The Dynasts have used this device in their own way and with success. It is the poetry in the choruses of Arnold's Merope and Swinburne's Atalanta in Calydon which will allow nobody to forget them.

It is however difficult to present a convincing chorus of any kind in modern drama whether to express fear, joy, wisdom or civic feeling. The reason is that individualisation is too

highly developed in us as people. As early as Elizabethan times, there could be no directly represented chorus. Shakespeare had to find other ways of dealing with the need for a full expression of the collective impulse.

The choruses in Murder in the Cathedral are based directly on the model of the Greek chorus. They are satisfying as poetry to be read, and demonstrate a developed awareness of the traditions of Greek choric writing.

But Eliot modified the device . Where the Greek chorus combines "a mythopoeic function with an elementality of imagery"[25], Eliot must settle for a rather easier identification of the chorus with concerns of an agarian kind in Murder in the Cathedral. His imitation of the Greek chorus was conditioned by the modern stage. Secondly, he attempts to align the traditional concerns of the chorus with his own interest in Christianity. Especially in the closing chorus, this alignment dwells upon the similarities of Christ and Dionysus, their death and resurrection, their association with the poor, their closeness to the earth.

There is no tradition of choric appearances for the modern theatre. Eliot's critical statements[26] reinforce his practical elimination of the chorus. However, as Denson[27] observes, as long as the work of art remains verbal, there can be a choric counterpart.

In conclusion it should be noted that though there was scarcely any classicizing drama in English which was successful, the English dramatists learnt much from the classical drama. The structure of modern drama comes from Greece via Rome. The sense of proportion, the symmetrical division into three, four or five acts, each embodying a major part of the action, conventions like the chorus and the unities, the idea of having an intricate plot, the dignity of persons and the loftiness of utterance are all classical importations. Even the modern dramatic verse was created to rival the elegance of Greek and Roman drama.

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