

A COMPARISON OF THE TRAGIC ELEMENTS IN GREEK DRAMA
WITH THE TRAGIC ELEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY
DRAMA

by

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INTRODUCTION

In determining the tragic elements a study of a few typical plays of each of the three periods--Greek, Shakespearcan, and contemporary--was made. A comparison of elements with their changes as periods developed to conform with circumstances was noted. All material available in the library dealing with these periods was studied to get the viewpoint of people who have made a more or less exhaustive study of elements.

GREEK DEFINITION OF TRAGEDY

Aristotle says "Tragedy is an imitation of action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through pity and fear effecting the proper katharsis or purgation of these emotions."¹ Since action is to be serious it must not be trivial or ridiculous; to be complete, it needs a unified beginning, middle, and end; to have magnitude, it must be above usual events. The test of a tragedy is whether it

¹Butcher, S. H., Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art, page 236.

arouses pity and fear in watching the suffering of a person enduring more misfortune than he deserves. Fear causes pity not to become sentimental, as pity is self love, a dangerous emotion. Great tragedy "soars to a lofty expanse where tears are useless and only dry-eyed fear and awe can dwell". If tragedy is successful, according to the Greek standard, it cleanses the emotions by pity and fear and relieves the spectator of accumulated emotion. This is the purgation or katharsis mentioned by Aristotle.

SHAKESPEAREAN DEFINITION OF TRAGEDY

The Shakespearean idea of tragedy is as follows: "The action of a tragedy should represent a conflict of wills, or of a will with circumstance, or will with itself, and should therefore be based on the characters of the persons involved. A typical tragedy is concerned with a great personality engaged in a struggle that ends disastrously."¹

The range of emotions is much wider in this conception of tragedy than in that of the Greeks. Pity and sympathy are predominant emotions yet there are others such as love, hate, awe, admiration, horror, dismay, and despair. The reversal of fortune in the fall of the mighty is no longer

¹Thorndike, Ashley H., *Tragedy*, page 9.

the favored theme of tragedy. The plots of the Greeks are simple but Shakespeare uses complicated double plots. Themes are much wider and use greater variation than those of the Greeks but many cling to renowned people and unusual events. The Greeks use poetry for their tragedies, Shakespeare combines both prose and poetry.

MODERN DEFINITION OF TRAGEDY

A modern definition of tragedy, which is brief, does not contain many restrictions. "A tragedy is a play in which the treatment is serious, profound, and lofty and the ending is both disastrous and inevitable."¹ No mention is made of "embellished language" and most of present day tragedy is written in prose. The hero may be an ordinary man and the action contemporary. There is a tendency to make the plots simpler than those used by Shakespeare. The protagonists instead of being people may be abstract virtues or vices such as love, hatred, devotion, selfishness, pride, vanity, or envy, in this respect going back to the morality play.

¹Carpenter, Bruce, The Way of the Drama, page 86.

ELEMENTS OF GREEK TRAGEDY

Source of Plot

The source of stories for Greek tragedy was from some old familiar religious tradition; and Homer was the source of all characters. Since the spectators knew a general outline of the plot the dramatists introduced subtleties that they could not have used had the story not been familiar. In this way old stories were always interesting. The Epic Cycle of Homer included the history of the Trojan War and the legends of the House of Atreus. The latter was perhaps used most as it contained such characters as Orestes and Electra. Often a slight episode of a few lines was sufficient for a drama. New characters might be added and the whole emphasis be changed to suit the whim of the dramatist. Aeschylus built his "Oresteia" trilogy on the Epic Cycle. Sophocles and Euripides both wrote plays upon the theme of the revenge of Orestes and also used the sacrifice of Iphigenia as a theme.

The Labdacidain myth was the source of the Oedipus legend and gave the admirable character of Antigone. Three of the best plays of Sophocles were founded on this legend. All three of the Greek playwrights used each of the following

stories: the Argonautic expedition with the story of Medea, the fate of Andromache, the return of the Trojan captives, and the legends of Hecuba, Helen, and Ajax. These were the most popular legends although a few others were used.

The dramatist did not use historical material of recent date, as the stage was first religious then national.

"Euripides seems often to make a shadow of some contemporary walk across the stage, if not to show himself how others see him, at least to make others see more plainly than they do what he is like."¹ The emotions of the play lifted spectators above such every day affairs.

Class of People Represented by Characters

"Tragedy according to Aristotle is the imitation of a serious action; and this dictum was freely interpreted to apply not only to treatment but to subject matter. An action, in this view, could only mean one dealing with the illustrious; and the illustrious, before the days of democracy, could only mean those of exalted social rank."²

They confused nobility of rank with that of character and important events were only associated with people of rank. Many of the myths concerned the founders of cities who were of the nobility. The misfortunes of the titled people on the stage affected them much more than the sorrows

¹Watt, L. M., *Attic and Elizabethan Tragedy*, page 21.

²Henderson, Archibald, *The Changing Drama*, page 254.

of people of equal rank with themselves would have. It was natural that they prefer tragedies in the palace of the kings and queens. They revered the heroes of myths such as Agamemnon and Oedipus. Puttenham says: "Tragedy deals with doleful falls of unfortunate and afflicted princes, for the purpose of reminding men of the mutability of fortune and of God's just punishment of a vicious life."¹ This was evidently true in many instances.

Form of Drama

Greek tragedy was not divided into acts and scenes, possibly because of the chorus which stayed on the stage during the whole drama. Dialogue and choral odes alternated without pause. Fundamentals of structure in all tragic plots were the same. Aristotle took the conflict theory of drama for granted. The conflict was a thread running through the entire drama as the unifying force.

Aristotle used five stages in his plot. The beginning included origin, first principle and starting point, which was the basis for what followed. The word "end" as he used it signified completion or consummation. All between these two points has been gradually building toward the

¹Henderson, Archibald, *The Changing Drama*, page 255.

consummation, showing development of characters and situation from the source given at the beginning. In the middle the opposing forces met and complication developed. The situation was such that the audience saw which side would probably be victorious. In a decided tragedy they saw disaster approaching the person with whom they sympathized. This part was shorter than the complication but must not be confused with the catastrophe, which was the final blow.

In the beginning the playwright made the scene clear, gave the setting, and the leading characters gave the situation in their speech. In "Antigone" two girls come from the royal house and in forty-six lines of the conversation give the setting of the play. The characters of the two girls, Antigone and Ismene, were shown in contrast. Their brother, Polynikes, who has been killed, was denied burial by Kreon, the king. Antigone felt it was her duty to bury him, so in spite of the king's decree she did so. This was the major situation and Antigone was in conflict with the king. Haemon, son of Kreon, who was in love with Antigone pled for clemency but Antigone was banished to a rocky cave to starve to death. Teiresias, the blind prophet, told Kreon that his denial of burial to the dead has poisoned the altar sacrifices and the gods are angry.

Kreon repented and decided to free Antigone and bury her brother, but Antigone was found hanging from the roof of the cave dead. Haemon was so grieved he fell on his sword and Euridice, the queen, has killed herself. Kreon finding himself without wife or son cursed his pride and folly. He realized that he could not escape retribution. This was the final consummation.

Plays generally interlock in transition and can not be absolutely and positively divided into sections, as the evidence of these stages would kill the interest.

Language

Poetry was used in the tragedy of the Greeks since it developed from Dionysaic festivals where there was a chorus to sing songs of praise to the God and to dance for him. The ballad dances were lyric as they had song music and gesture. Gradually the dramatic developed with the chorus and the chorus leader spoke to the actor. The chorus leader spoke more than half the words of the dialogue while a single actor took all the other characters in turn. Later they had a second actor and finally a third who acted the parts of all the characters needed for the drama. They spoke in poetry to avoid contrast with the choral odes.

Tragedy contained the main branches of poetic literature. At first it was entirely lyric while epic poetry gave it actors and satire gave meter for the dialogue.

In regard to poetry Freytag says: "The language of verse lifts the characters to a higher plane. It keeps ever awake in the spectator the feeling that he is in the presence of art, that its influence is withdrawing him from reality into a different world, whose relations the human spirit has freely ordered."¹ Matthew Arnold said man's most perfect speech is poetry, meaning that verse is the basis of life as well as its heart. In serious drama characters could express their meanings better by using verse, and poetry had a tendency to elevate the content. Each speech was carefully studied and thought out before it was put in the play and they all had to have a certain standard.

The attendant describes Admetus and Alcestis as they await her death:

"He weeps, indeed, and in his arm supports
 His much loved wife, entreats her not to leave him,
 Asking impossibilities. She wastes
 And fades with her disease; her languid limbs
 Supporting on his hand, yet while some breath
 Of life remains she wishes, to behold
 The radiance of the sun, 'tis her last view,
 As never before to see his golden orb.
 I go to tell them thou art here: not all
 Bear to their lords that firm unshaken faith
 T' attend them in their ills; but thou of old
 Hast to this house approved thyself a friend."

¹Goodell, Thomas Dwight, Athenian Tragedy, page 47.

Minor characters use as beautiful language as the leading ones.

Observance of Unities

The Greeks required unity of action so that the plot could be individual and intelligible. The concreteness and individuality of a plot depended on its unity. All the incidents were connected by a bond by the law of a necessary and probable sequence. There must be the right number of incidents so the plot would be of a suitable length, yet there were no precise rules of length. Aristotle said that a play must be of such dimensions that the memory can understand and retain it or it should have sufficient magnitude to develop the story naturally. The action brought out the change of fortune of the hero. Only one hero was ever used as another would have necessitated a second chorus.

Aristotle mentioned a beginning, middle and end for the drama. Certain facts at the beginning showed that the drama was a sequel of some previous action and essential facts were related so that the play might begin at some definite point. Within the action, cause and effect were shown. The complication, evident in the beginning,

developed to the close by subordinating minor details to the impression desired at the end. It was a natural development of the central theme. Aristotle emphasized the necessary connection between scenes leading to the end. The end, being linked to the beginning, made the meaning clear. This impression was the test of unity in the drama.

The presence of the chorus, which remained on the stage through out the entire performance, tended toward the unities of time and place although these unities are not mentioned by Aristotle. A play began early in the morning and seemed to be confined to a single revolution of the sun. A choral ode often indicated a lapse of time according to the desire of the poet. In "Agamemnon", the announcement of the fall of Troy as shown by the signal fires followed soon by the arrival of Agamemnon from Troy shows time greatly accelerated. The chorus and Clytemnestra occupy the time between the events. A poet could manipulate time to suit his convenience.

As movement was concentrated a play seldom needed a change of place as breaks disturbed the unity of the whole. There was no scenery to effect a change of place. Aristotle holds unity of place as a controlling factor so any other events which could not conveniently be acted were narrated which was often done by choral odes. Other means were

sometimes used as when Cassandra was in the chariot before Agamemnon's palace, her gift of prophecy enabled her to narrate events taking place within the palace.

Emphasis of Plot

To the Greeks plot was most essential, and character was considered only as it was related to the main action.

In one of his dramatic criticisms Aristotle said: "Tragedy is an imitation, not of men but of an action and of life ... Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character; character comes in as a subsidiary to the action. Hence the incidents and plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all. Again, without action there can not be a tragedy; there may be without character.....The plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of tragedy; character holds second place."¹

Story and plot are the combination of incidents and characters were portrayed to fit the incidents of the myth on which the drama was founded. The power of tragedy is shown by the fact that much of mature life is made up of struggle that fails, ending in suffering or death. The Greeks maintained that the God, Zeus, controlled destiny subject to divine justice, Dike. The people endeavored to placate the gods so misfortune would not befall them. Pride should not oppose divine will and the gods contrived man's

¹Henderson, Archibald, *The Changing Drama*, page 147.

own downfall because of his own frailties. OEdipus is destined by the gods to suffer for the sins of his parents. He kills his father, marries his mother, affecting his fate by error rather than wilfully. Jocasta scorns the oracular decrees urging him to cease his inquiries, but he is determined to ferret out the whole trouble. The murder of Laius; his pride in solving the riddle of the Sphinx; doubts of the oracle; anger of Teiresias, the blind prophet, and Kreon; the banishment of Kreon; and the gouging out of his own eyes are all results of Fate, who caused him to suffer more than he deserved.

Men were puppets of the gods and moved at their instigation, meeting an end which was predestined and absolutely unavoidable. Each incident of the plot brought them nearer their fated destination.

Antigone met death for disobeying the king. His decree was unjust so he met punishment in the deaths of his wife and son. Even kings could not transgress the laws and escape retribution.

Purpose of Drama

Ancient tragedy is a vehicle of thought represented at religious and political festivals. It served both as

palpit and press to influence public opinion. They worshipped destiny and believed it was in the hands of the gods and drama proved this was true. Destiny is an abstract force around which all the characters in the drama are grouped. Destiny may cause the irony of fate as shown in the "Oedipus King" of Sophocles. The city was overwhelmed by a plague because the murderer of the king had not been found. Oedipus led the investigation determined to find the guilty one and bring him to justice. This is an irony, because the audience know since the legend is familiar that he himself is the guilty one and by these investigations is only hastening his doom.

The tragic drama takes up the moral sphere of the activity of life. The struggle terminates in right, according to destiny, even in evident failure. As drama is the utterance of the struggle of the soul and its conflict, tragic drama is the explanation of the agonizing of a person or nation. The crisis is shown in the contact of a person with the environment of destiny. It depicted most evident truths of the time without making them too evident. It is the most artistic representation of the primal beauty of the soul, yet it is never mere sunset painting, nor stained glass window work, but the living spirit conflicting with living spirit, and with its own lower self. It is motion and emotion, the passions in activity giving tangible reasons for themselves and for what they do, or abstain from doing. The practical Reason, with a definite purpose, moves like a monarch through the whole. The dramatic poet becomes a creator of a world in order to explain the world

of creation. The discontent, the questionings, the yearnings of the soul, set in living reality on the stage, is the true Drama."¹

Description of Theatre

The Greek theatre was unique. It was exposed to the weather and had no roof of any kind. It was usually built in a hill located in or near a city and was large enough to accommodate the entire population of the city so the largest part of it was used for seats for the spectators. These seats were arranged in a large semicircle with prolonged ends, and seats rose like flights of steps one above the other with aisles at intervals from the stage in front, to the rear. The flat space at the bottom of the semicircle was the orchestra or dancing place used by the chorus. At the far end of the orchestra was the stage with the stage buildings which faced the rows of seats. The stage was a long, narrow platform reserved exclusively for the actors.

Mr. Stark Young describes a typical scene in the theatre of Sophocle's day: "In the theatre of Dionysius the lighting was that of the sun; the scene was but slightly varied either through shifts or through light. The gestures were simple and restrained as we may infer from the spirit and style of the plays, and may be sure of from the difficulties of the costume, the onkus, the padding, and the

* ¹Watt, L. M., *Attic and Elizabethan Tragedy*, page 5.

high soled cothurnus would have put in the way of animated motions.....the larger part of the effect in the Greek theatre was to voices, trained as we train for the opera, and exerted for a trained public taste. However beautiful the lines of those garments may have been, their grave and exquisite rhythm and their subtlety of color in the bright air, the blowing on them of the wind from the Bay of Salamis, it was the voices of the actors that achieved much of the effect of beauty.....To all that antique world the ear was the seat of memory."¹

Scenery and Stage Devices

Scenery was never prominent in Athens but a proper background was used to show the actors to the best advantage. The simplicity of the scenery was due to the unusual construction of the stage which was long and narrow, about sixty feet long and fifteen feet wide. A change of scene was seldom made and scenery for all plays was very similar.

Painted scenery developed very gradually. There was a building at the back of the stage used for a dressing room for the actors but they were slow to get the idea that this might be painted to represent the scene in the tragedy. When Aeschylus presented his four early tragedies no scene was shown in front of the actors' room. In "Prometheus Bound" the action takes place in a rocky region but the cliff to which Prometheus was chained was probably built on

¹Bellinger, Mrs. Martha F., A Short History of the Drama, page 72.

the stage and there was no rocky background. In the "Oresteia" of Æschylus the scenes were in front of definite buildings frequently referred to by the actors. The palace of Agamemnon was the scene of the first two tragedies, in the third the temple of Apollo at Delphi was shown and later the scene changed to the temple of Athene in Athens. This is one of the rare instances of a scene changing during a play. All three plays had a painted background. Aristotle says Sophocles originated the idea of a painted scene.

There was a certain background for each type of Attic drama. In tragedy the scene showed regal magnificence by the use of columns and statues. Of the twenty-five tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides, seventeen took place in front of a temple or palace, four have an encampment for a background. The other four all have different settings.

The painting was crude and a city might be represented by a few houses or a forest by a few trees. If a temple was a background, as it usually was in tragedy, the characters in referring to it implied that it was very elaborate. The actors and mates, dressed in brilliant colors, stood on a stage above the chorus. The long rear scene showed off the actors to advantage without any attempt of being realistic. There was a narrow platform about half way up extending from wing to wing. This was used for the roof for the

watchman in Agamemnon. Euripides also used a roof for Antigone and her attendant to view the army encamped outside the city in "Phoenissae".

Aeschylus was the first to adorn the stage. When he had a temple scene he had a statue of a god placed before it. Altars were often used on the stage as were obelisks in honor of Apollo. Horses and chariots were used in the theatre. Agamemnon and Cassandra approached his palace in a chariot in the play "Agamemnon". He talked to Clytemnestra, then dismounted and went in leaving Cassandra before the audience in the chariot. A device known as the "deus ex machina" was used by the Greek tragedians when a character had to disappear or appear in a supernatural manner. It was a crane with a pulley which could be raised or lowered with weights. The pulley was very strong as it could raise or lower two or three people at the same time and hold them suspended in the air. Sometimes a god was shown riding a horse or sitting in a chariot. Prometheus talked with Oceanus who descended on a winged horse and then rode away. Euripides often used a "god from the machine" in his plays. Medea left the palace in a winged chariot with the bodies of her children.

Another supernatural device was showing the gods stationary in heaven. A board was probably used, being

placed in the upper part of the back scene so it would be invisible to the audience, who could see the god apparently sitting in the heavens with balance scales in his hand weighing the fates of Achilles and Memnon. On each side of him stood the fathers of the two whose fates were being weighed supplicating for them.

In the early drama the gods played important parts in the action. They came down to earth and mingled with men. They might arrive or leave in a supernatural fashion but on the stage they moved about like ordinary human beings. As drama became more human they were excluded from a real share in the plot. If they did appear their presence was managed with more splendor and they did not appear side by side with humans except in a few instances. The intervention of the gods usually occurred at the beginning or end of a drama. In the prologues they made their appearance on foot. Euripides used Apollo to give the prologue in "Alcestis". He explains the situation--the fates have decreed that Admetus will not die if someone will consent to die in his place. Alcestis, his wife consents. As Apollo concludes his speech Orestes, the priest of the dead, approaches to claim his victim. At the end of a play the god disdains to tread the same ground with mortals and is shown by means of a machine. If it was necessary for a god to appear at the end of a play,

critics felt that the play was not constructed right, for the conclusion should be the natural result of preceding incidents.

Actors

At first Greek tragedy had one actor but he could play more than one part as he wore a mask for each character. There were never more than three actors in Greek tragedy at any time. Aeschylus introduced the second actor and Sophocles the third. Any number of mates and subordinate characters could be on the stage at the same time. Important characters of a tragedy were not limited except that only three could take part in a drama at a time.

The actors carried on the dialogue and action while the chorus sang odes during the pauses in the action, although their leader could take part in the dialogue, as time passed he and the chorus became less prominent.

As there were few actors and these were all men some of whom took women's parts the capacities of Greek drama were limited and there were awkward scenes, especially when a prominent character was played by a mate, when three other characters were required to talk. However, the dialogue gained in simplicity and clearness with three

actors. Greek tragedy was stately and dignified and a number of actors would have detracted from it. Usually the third actor was silent while the other two talked. The two carrying on the conversation changed but the three seldom carried on a conversation. The large, open air theatre required the actor to have a loud, clear voice so he could be heard.

The actor's profession was so important in Aristotle's time that the success of a play depended more on the actor than on the poet. Poets began to write plays to suit the talents of the actor and scenes having no bearing on the plot were often introduced so that the actor might have an opportunity to display his ability. Both Sophocles and Euripides did this although it was not so evident in Sophocles as in Euripides when he introduced a monody having no bearing on the plot to show what a fine voice the actor had.

The principal actor was the protagonist, the second, the deuteragonist; and the third, the tritagonist. The whole structure was arranged to bring out the protagonist and other characters existed to excite the protagonist and show his sentiments, but they must not outshine him. Generally a play was named for the protagonist as "Antigone"; "Electra", and "Oedipus King". The "Agamemnon" of Aeschylus is an exception as Clytemnestra is the protago-

nist of the play. The protagonist had to take parts of subordinate characters if he was needed, sometimes taking even the smallest parts. Consequently insignificant parts were played as well as the leading ones. The tritagonist, or third actor, had the heavy parts such as a monarch or a tyrant of whom dramatic ability was not required as such characters do not create pathos or show a conflict of emotions. He needed a powerful voice and ability to declaim. The deuteragonist had the parts between the protagonist and tritagonist and evidently did not play any certain type of characters.

Extra performers, such as mutes, minor characters, or a minor chorus were sometimes required. The mutes were usually crowds of people, attendants or a body guard. In "Oedipus King", the suppliants, who are extra actors, are kneeling at the altar before the king's palace. In "Agamemnon" servants are ready to spread the carpets for Agamemnon and Cassandra upon their arrival. Mute characters were also needed for touching scenes between parents and children. In "Medea" the sight of her children almost caused her to relent. Mute characters were used also when one of the leading characters was required temporarily to take another part. In "Oedipus Coloneus" the part of Ismene was played by a mute as the regular actor was re-

quired for another part. An extra chorus was required in "Alexander" by Euripides, but an extra chorus was unusual in tragedy, although they sometimes sang behind the scenes. Children also appeared as extra performers as a grown person could not play a child's part. Euripides was fond of introducing boys on the stage. In the "Alcestis" Eumelus bewails his mother's death in a pitiful manner. Another example is a dialog between Andromache and her son, Molossus.

Costumes

The immensity of the Greek theatre made it necessary that the actor be as impressive as possible. Aeschylus was the first to use a painted mask with awe inspiring features. They enabled actors to play several parts as the limited number of actors made it necessary for them to do. Men also played the parts of women. The characters were mostly types such as tyrants, weeping maidens or crafty statesmen so the masks were painted to represent these. Masks were usually made of linen although cork and wood were sometimes used. The white of the eye was painted but a small hole was left to enable the actor to see. The mouth was left open and the mask enabled the actor's voice to

have a resonance. The onkus, a prolongation of the forehead of the mask, gave impressiveness to the face. A tyrant had a large onkus and a woman a small one, the size varying according to the character. Characters changed their masks when occurrences in the drama changed their appearance. Oedipus appeared in the last scene of "Oedipus Tyrannus" blinded, with blood streaming down his face.

The principle features in discriminations in masks were the color of complexion, manner of dressing hair, eye expression and size of onkus. A tyrant had a tall onkus, black beard and hair and frowned. A girl in sorrow had her hair out to indicate it. The mask was so conventionalized that the audience knew the position and character of the actor as soon as they saw him.

Aeschylus devised another means to make actors more impressive. This was the cothurnus or tragic boot having a thick sole thus increasing the height of an actor and giving him an appearance of grandeur. The sole of the boot was painted in different colors. The persons of higher rank wore a thicker sole so his height would correspond to his rank. Servants wore thin soles. The audience determined the importance of the actors by their cothurnus. The thick, heavy sole made it difficult for the actors to walk on the stage and accidents sometimes occurred.

Since the onkus and cothurnus increased the height of the actor his bulk was increased by padding so his figure would be uniform. The garments worn by actors were similar to ordinary Greek dress, except they were more brilliant in color and their style was accentuated. They wore an undergarment or tunic and an overgarment called a mantle. The tunic was of a brilliant color having figures on it. Queens wore a purple tunic to designate their position. An ordinary tunic reached down to the feet but women's tunics often dragged the ground. Attendants and minor characters wore the shortest tunics. On the stage they wore long sleeves. The usual colors for tragedians were gold, purple, frog green or saffron. Mourning colors were dingy white, gray or yellow. Greeks seldom wore coverings on their heads unless they were on a trip. Ismene wore a hat when she arrived from Thebes in "Oedipus Coloneus". Ladies bound their hair with bonds.

The gods and goddesses wore their usual costumes and had some emblem so they would be recognized. Hermes carried his wand and Apollo his bow. Hercules had his lion's skin and club; Perseus wore his cap of darkness. The crowns and sceptres of kings distinguished them. They also wore a short tunic over the regular one.

The tragic costume produced an impressive figure on

the stage. His mask had clear and terrible features, the cothurnus increased his height, and his padded, brilliantly colored clothes made him magnificent. The size of the Greek theatre made a large actor necessary so that he could be seen. His clothes made much acting impossible as he was in danger of tripping if he moved about too much. The characters of Euripides were more human and more ordinary costumes would have been more appropriate for them, but the conservative Greeks preferred the form of dress already established. The attempt to show human nature made characters appear incongruous and inconsistent because of the superhuman magnificence of their personal appearance. The play had to have a dignified and elevated tone to correspond to the appearance of the tragic actor.

Chorus

The tragic drama of the Greeks developed from the chorus but it declined in importance until at the time of Euripides it occupied a very small portion of the play. In the "Suppliants" of Æschylus which is the oldest Greek tragedy in existence, it occupies three-fifths of the play. In all the other plays of Æschylus except "Prometheus Bound" it occupies about half. Sophocles used the chorus in about a quarter of "Ajax" and "Antigone" and reduced it

to a seventh of "Electra" and "Philoctetes". Euripides used the chorus from a quarter to a ninth in his tragedies. There was a tendency to decrease the importance of the chorus by not connecting it with the plot. In *Æschylus'* "Suppliants" the whole plot was the fate of the maidens and the other characters were not important. When Attic tragedy was at its height the chorus was so much in the background that it appeared as a sympathetic onlooker. When there was a pause in the action it sometimes moralized or gave hints on events to follow. Euripides had the chorus sing mythological odes which were in no way connected with the play. He had much of the music on the stage rather than on the orchestra where the chorus were.

Æschylus used twelve in his chorus and *Sophocles* used fifteen. Later *Æschylus* used fifteen which became the standard number for the chorus. Requirements of plays were not considered and the chorus was always regulated to fifteen. In the "Suppliants" of Euripides there were seven suppliants who were wives of the seven slain chiefs so female attendants completed the fifteen required in the chorus.

The costumes of the chorus were ordinary Greek dress suitable for the old men or maidens composing it. Masks were not spectacular and they wore a certain kind of white

shoe. Old men carried staffs and a chorus showing bereavement were dressed in mourning with suitable masks.

The chorus had a military formation on the stage which was symmetrical. The side toward the stage had the best trained members. The leader stood in the center front. He carried on the dialogue with the actors on the stage, started the choral songs and dances. A talented leader had much to do with the success of the tragedy.

The chorus used song, speech, and recitative. The lyric parts were always sung, certain parts were accompanied by the flute and given as a recitative. Dancing was by gestures, positions and actions. Different effects were portrayed by a special dance suitable to the species of the drama. The tragic dance was dignified and stately with very deliberate movements.

The music was simple and was secondary to the poetry as it was fitted to the words instead of the words arranged to suit the music. Quite often the lyrical poetry contained the most important ideas in the play so it was necessary that it receive more emphasis than the music. Aeschylus used simple and severe music but that of his two successors was soft and flexible and had much more variety. Each note of music corresponded to a syllable of the verse so the metre of poetry determined the time of the music.

The chorus chanted in unison so the audience probably understood them clearly. They sang with great precision uttering the words distinctly so they could easily be heard by the vast audience. Instrumental music was never permitted to predominate. As a rule a single flute or harp played the music note for note as in the melody.

Typical Scenes

The action on the Greek stage has been termed "action in suspension" as more comments and explanation took place on the stage than action. Murders do not take place on the stage but occur behind the scenes and are reported. Weeping and cries are heard behind the scenes intensifying the horror at the terrible deeds. Clytemnestra murdered Agamemnon and Cassandra off the stage. The audience had been prepared for the scene, as Cassandra had through her gift of prophecy revealed what was to follow when she was left on the stage with the chorus. Just after she enters the palace, the voice of Agamemnon is heard from within: "Ah, me! I am struck down with a deadly stroke."¹

¹Æschylus, Agamemnon, line 995.

Then later: "Ah, no, again! Struck down a second time."¹
 As Clytemnestra appears on the stages the corpses of Agamemnon and Cassandra are seen through the open door. She tells how well pleased she is to have killed them as they deserved it. Agamemnon had sacrificed Iphigenia and she had vowed vengeance on him. Then he returns from war with Cassandra, the seeress, and she resolved to murder them both.

In "Oedipus King" a messenger relates scenes to the chorus which are not acted on the stage. He tells them of Oedipus:

"Through two gates he leapt, and from the wards
 He slid the hollow blot and rushes in;
 And there he saw his wife had hung herself,
 By twisted cords suspended. When her form
 He saw, poor wretch! With one wild fearful cry,
 The twisted rope he loosens, and she fell,
 Ill-starred one on the ground. Then came a sight
 Most fearful. Tearing from her robe the clasps,
 All chased with gold, with which she decked herself,
 He with them struck the pupils of his eyes,
 With words like these--'Because they had not seen
 What ills he suffered and what ills he did,
 They in the dark should look, in time to come,
 On those whom they ought never to have seen,
 Nor know the dear ones whom he fain had known.'
 With such like wails, not once or twice alone,
 Raising his eyes, he smote them, and the balls,
 All bleeding, stained his cheek, nor poured they forth
 Gore slow trickling, but purple shower
 Fell fast and full, a pelting storm of blood."

¹Æschylus, Agamemnon, line 997.

Scenes such as this were omitted, but related from the stage in such a manner as to make them more terrible, if possible, than had they been acted.

Love scenes were never permitted on the Greek stage. The nearest to a love scene is in "Antigone" after Kreon has sentenced her to banishment in a rocky cave for burying her brother against the king's orders. Haemon, son of Kreon, is engaged to marry Antigone and pleads for her release to no avail. Kreon orders Antigone brought in so that she may die in Haemon's presence. Haemon rushes from the scene exclaiming to his father: "Now come what will, thou seest my face no more". Haemon in pleading for Antigone pleads justice rather than his love for her, but Kreon banishes her to a rocky cave where she will starve to death unless rescued by the gods.

Supernatural Elements

The supernatural element entered into the very heart of Greek tragedy and was most essential. Since each of the three dramatists had a different attitude toward it, it was used differently. Aeschylus, being very religious and being nearest to the religious origin of tragedy gave supernatural elements life and vitality. He created a world of mythical characters whom the familiar gods affect. The

Furies were the predominant supernatural characters of *Aeschylus* and he wove them into his plays with skill. He showed how crimes were the cause of the fall of the House of Atreus, and how the survivor is guiltless of the crimes he has committed as they were incidental to the evolution relieving the House of the curse. It was the reflection of the influence of the gods in overcoming evil with good in the mortal world. *Aeschylus* introduced the ghost as an innovation and most powerful agent. The character of the age and the genius of the dramatist caused tragedy to reach its peak, largely due to the use of the supernatural.

Sophocles put the supernatural in the background and used it as a thread in his plays in so far as it affected human nature. At first he introduced it to suit his convenience, without reference to its bearing on the play, but gradually he made it contribute to the action. His was an impersonal method and he lacked the intensity of *Aeschylus*.

Euripides used the supernatural still less than his immediate predecessor, *Sophocles*. He reduced gods to a mechanical state, had them deliver prologues and epilogues adding that much to the exposition of his drama. Their main purpose was to talk and his revelation of them in an unpleasant light showed that he had no reverence for them. They were used to relieve a situation which had been complicated and were of no value artistically. His gods were

merely mechanical and he was known for use of the "god from the machine".

There were three classes of supernatural beings in Greek mythology--the ordinary gods of mythology, new ones such as the Furies of *Æschylus* and ghosts. The Furies were the most original and impressive. *Sophocles* alluded to them rather than used them in his drama. *Æschylus* presented ghosts effectively. The ghost of *Darius* was to show an image of *Perseus's* past glory and to supply a knowledge of those glories. The ghost of *Clytemnestra* showed that her wrath was not dead; however, she was more a decorative than an expository character.

The chorus showed the presence of the supernatural before the actors were aware of it and displayed the emotion which the audience should feel. In this way it revealed and excited emotion at the action. Since the chorus was detached from the action it could comment on it thus revealing forces affecting it. As *Sophocles* was inferior to *Æschylus* lyrically, he could not make as powerful a supernatural agent of the chorus. *Euripides* used it less than his predecessors as his chorus was often not related to the plot.

The supernatural must be shown as an agent whose effect on the action is shown. *Æschylus* showed the effect on the

action as does the best work of Sophocles but Euripides, who was evidently in advance of his time, did not realize the necessity of making the supernatural an important element of his tragedies. However, he does write some tragedies that approximate those of his predecessors.

If mortal characters were clearly depicted a gulf separated them from the immortal, yet the distinction must show the relation between the two worlds. The value of Greek tragedy depended on the way the supernatural elements were interwoven. The Orestea trilogy and "Oedipus at Colonus"¹ are considered the best examples in showing the two worlds in their own entirety with each element contributing to the power of the other.

ELEMENTS OF SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDY

Source of Plot

Unlike the Greeks Shakespeare did not use old and familiar plots. However he had such sources as biography as found in Plutarch's Lives and events in Holinshed's Chronicle; romance found in novels, many of which were

¹Whitmore, Charles Edward, The Supernatural in Tragedy, page 96.

translations from the Italian novel; and dramatic material taken from other plays. He took a character here and there, found various elements of plot and combined them in a play. The source was not difficult to recognize but Shakespeare made the story peculiarly his own by his development of plot and portrayal of character.

The plot of "Hamlet" was taken from a history of Denmark written in the twelfth century. The story, being popular, was told in French and there was an early tragedy of Hamlet written in English. There is much doubt as to the author of the English play but many authorities think it is Kyd. The play itself has been lost but a German translation has been found which is believed to be Kyd's tragedy. If this is true Shakespeare shows much improvement over his source.

"Othello" was taken from a French translation of an Italian novello by Cinthio. Shakespeare changed many details and raised the standard. He shows Othello as an admirable character but the Moor was not held in much esteem in the original. According to the novello the heroine was beaten to death with a stocking filled with sand. Shakespeare has her smothered which is a milder death. The bloody, long drawn out story of the novel is in contrast to Shakespeare's masterly handling of the

situation.

He used several sources for "King Lear" and added characters as he needed them. The chief sources were in accounts of Geoffrey of Monmouth; a poem, "The Mirror for Magistrates"; Holinshed's "Chronicles"; Spenser's "Faerie Queen"; and an old play, "King Leir", which was supposed to be the one acted in 1594. This old play ended happily and Shakespeare was the first to introduce a tragic ending. He also added Lear's insanity, the banishment and disguise of Kent, and the characters of the fool and Burgundy. The underplot was taken from the novel of adventure by Sir Philip Sidney, "Arcadia", which told of an old blind king.

"Macbeth" had only one source, Holinshed's "History of Scotland". Most of the events are taken from the history of the reigns of Duncan and Macbeth. Holinshed furnished the basis for other incidents such as the drugging of the grooms and the murder of Duffe, the ancestor of Duncan.

Class of People Represented by Characters

Practically all the important characters that Shakespeare uses in his plays belong to the nobility. Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark. Macbeth belongs to the royalty of Scotland and is in the line of inheritance for the throne,

Othello is a noble Moor in the service of Venice, and Lear is the King of Britain.

Modern critics say that Shakespeare had no sympathy for popular rights or a good comprehension of democracy. He often satirizes courtiers and laughs at royalty, but he is considered aristocratic in his sympathies. If he were not much in sympathy with royalty or to the leisured class, they would not be the vast majority of his characters. Although Shakespeare used common people in his plays this does not explain his evident dislike for democracy and lack of sympathy for them. Walt Whitman said Shakespeare was the poet of princes and courts.

The great plays belong to the Elizabethan "tragedy of blood" and present the downfall of princes in courts and battle, based on unreal stories always ending in slaughter. "Othello" is an exception as it does not show the downfall of a prince.

King Lear has been an imperious monarch and he brings about his own downfall by his foolish pride. It has been said of Shakespeare's characters: "Shakespeare's kings are not, nor are meant to be, great men--rather, little or quite ordinary humanity, thrust upon greatness, with those pathetic results, the natural self pity of the weak heightened in them, into irresistible appeal to others as the net result of their royal prerogative. One after another they seem to be composed in Shakespeare's embalming pages, with just that touch of nature about them making the

whole world akin".¹

Language

Shakespeare speaks in a language of his own, using both prose and poetry. His blank verse blends decoration and naturalness; and prose is used with it. Much is condensed in few words. It is dramatic in its expression of thoughts showing a person in varying moods and is crowded with pictures and thoughts. His style does not imitate natural speech but it adds clearness to stories difficult to picture. The curse of Lear on his daughter, Goneril, is an example of the power of language and shows Shakespeare's ability although a curse more terrible is difficult to conceive:

"Hear, Nature hear; dear goddess, hear.
Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
To make this creature fruitful,
Into her womb convey sterility
Dry up in her the organs of increase;
And from her derogate body never spring
A babe to honor her; if she must teem,
Create her child of spleen; that it may live,
And be a thwart dismatured torment to her;
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth;
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks;
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits
To laughter and contempt; that she may feel
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child."

¹Watt, L. M., *Attic and Elizabethan Tragedy*, page 277.

In the sleep walking scene in "Macbeth" most of the conversation is in prose. The Doctor and gentlewoman are in a room in the castle discussing Lady Macbeth's peculiar actions. She enters carrying a taper and rubbing her hands together as if she was washing them and saying: "Out, damned spot! out, I say! One; two; why, then 'tis time to do't:--Hell is murky! Fie my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account? Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" In subsequent speeches the Doctor learns the crime preying on Lady Macbeth and the scene closes with his speech which is the only poetry in the scene:

"Foul whisperings are abroad; unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles; infected minds
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.
More needs she the divins than the physician--
God, God forgive us all! Look after her;
Remove from her the means of all annoyance,
And still keep eyes upon her:--so, good-night.
My mind she has mated, and amazed my sight.
I think, but dare not speak."

Macbeth's speeches are full of meaning and full of poetry, yet poetry is more of a tool for the playwright than an accomplishment. There are few long speeches in "Macbeth" and a single line or two: "Here's the smell of blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!"

There is little detached delivery in "Macbeth" like Hamlet's soliloquy. The speeches exist for the sake of the play. Lines are unadorned and bare, yet most effective, such as "The raven himself is hoarse that croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan under my battlements".

Rising couplets are few and when they occur they heighten an exit speech.

"But shift away: there's warrant in that theft
Which steals itself, when there's no mercy left."

Thus, they are used for emphasis and for the benefit of the actor.

Emphasis of Character

The Greek dramatist used the fate tragedy showing human panic in face of the mystery of fate's origin, purpose, and destiny. Aristotle placed plot as the soul of tragedy.

Brunetiere has expressed the idea of Shakespeare with

character as the soul of tragedy: "Drama is a representation of the will of man in conflict with the mysterious powers or natural forces which limit or belittle us; it is one of us thrown living upon the stage, there to struggle against fatality, against social law, against one of his fellow mortals, against himself, if need be, against ambitions, the interests, the prejudices, the folly, the malevolence of those who surround him."

A famous saying of Hamlet is:

"There's a destiny that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will."

This was evidently Shakespeare's philosophy in his characterization. He felt that the individual molds his own destiny so he is held to strict moral account for his actions. So tragedy, being a drama of the psychological individual showed how destiny is the result of human

character and human will. His individual personalities are taken from a large range of life. Each actor receives the touch of truth. Great actors are cast in large moulds to show the courses of master passions. Triviality and smallness of horizon are not found. His subjects are always crises that try men's souls. Mere incidents such as manner or time are forgotten as revenge, jealousy, ambition or irresolution seize their prey. The power of human nature, the will and responsibility of the individual remain.

Although Hamlet is a dreamer he has a will of his own and knows what he wants to do even though he is not sure just how to do it. He loved his father deeply and is disgusted with his mother's almost indecent haste in marrying his uncle:

"Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked meats
 Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
 Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
 Ere I had ever seen that day, Horatio."

Then the ghost who appears in the shape of his father says his uncle murdered him so that he might marry Hamlet's mother and tells Hamlet to avenge his murder. Hamlet must be sure that this is really a messenger from the other world. In order to mature his plan for vengeance he decides to act insane and tells his close friends. Polonius says he is mad and they decide it is for love of Ophelia; but Gertrude, his mother, says:

"I doubt it is no other but the main,--
 His father's death and our o'er hasty marriage."

Hamlet plans the play within a play at which he is assured of Claudius' guilt when at the time in the play poison is poured in the king's ears Claudius leaves. Evidently Claudius decided then that Hamlet knew too much for his own safety so plans are made to send him to England. He decided to murder his uncle, yet he must find some means to show Claudius' guilt to justify his murder of him. So he has to devise some means of doing this. He was able to defeat the king's plan to have him assassinated in England. Claudius prepared the poisoned cup for Hamlet and the queen drank it unaware of the poison. Hamlet kills Claudius and dies as Fortinbras appears. Hamlet has avenged his father which he was destined to do, and his character developed in meeting all the situations through which he passed. The situations are similar to those of most people in life at various times.

Macbeth was a man of action and was strong and resourceful when action was demanded, but was weak and vacillating when he was inactive and had time to think. Suspense unnerved him. He was living in an age of superstition. Banquo doubted superstition with an open mind, Lady Macbeth ignored it and Macbeth accepted it. He had no inner life and accepted the belief of the age. There were

three salient factors in the life of Macbeth--capacity for action, intolerance of suspense, and tendency toward suspicion. In four stages the activity of Macbeth is developed; first by the murder of Duncan which is a result of long meditation; second by the murder of grooms which is an impulsive act; third by the murder of Banquo, deliberate enjoyment of murder; and fourth by an orgy of crime. At first he was a successful hero of war and on returning home he meets the three witches who say he will be king. There were no fixed rules of succession so this was not an astounding promise and he begins thinking:

"This supernatural soliciting
 Cannot be ill, cannot be good: if ill,
 Why hath it given me earnest of success,
 Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:
 If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
 Against the use of nature? Present fears
 Are less than horrible imaginings:
 My thought whose murder yet is but fantastical
 Shakes so my single state of man, that function
 Is smothered in surmise; and nothing is
 But what is not."

One crime leads to another. Suspense is intolerable and at first he reasons with it but later plunges headlong in deeds. Superstition affects him until he can no longer distinguish between it and reality. Suspense tortures him. Crime draws him from hesitation (Duncan), impulse (grooms), satisfied acceptance(Banquo) to headlong crimes, until the

end of his career.

King Lear has been compared to Oedipus in Greek tragedy. Oedipus, by his impetuous actions, made himself a tool of the gods and ended in destruction. Lear was a proud, imperious king who humored his daughters until their ambition and love of worldly possessions overpowered any affection they may have had for their father. The tragedy was threefold showing rebellion of brother against brother, of children against parent, and of a parent against his children.

Lear has been a dignified and proud king but as old age crept on him he was subject to whim and fancy and was so desirous of being rid of his burdens he decided to give portions of his kingdom to his daughters according to their affection for him. Cordelia, the youngest daughter after hearing her elder sisters tell their father of their extravagant love for him, although she loved him more, cannot tell him so in words. So her portion is divided between Goneril and Regan. Kent pled for Cordelia to no avail. Lear was adamant and would listen to no one. Finally he was driven out with his hundred knights from both his daughters and as he realized his plight his reason left him. Cordelia who had loved him faithfully came to comfort him and he realized he had been deceived.

The characters of the play are skillfully portrayed but are subordinated to Lear who is the protagonist. He is grandly passive being influenced by nature and society. At last he is freed of his imperious will and learns what true love is, in the person of Cordelia and he passes from sight yearning for love which he had at last found and lost forever.

Lear is shown as "a man walking in a vain shadow; groping in the mist, committing extravagant mistakes; wandering from light into darkness; stumbling back again from darkness into light; spending his strength in barren and impotent rages; man in his weakness, his unreason, his affliction, his anguish, his poverty and meanness, his everlasting greatness and majesty."¹

"Othello" is pure tragedy with no mixture of lyric and no revenge. Although it is purely English it has some of the stately massiveness of those found in Greek dramas. The plot is carefully made by Shakespeare and the characters are carefully shown. Othello is sometimes considered the most romantic of Shakespeare's characters. He is of royal descent, has had strange adventures and done brave deeds. Although he is a Moor he has risen to prominence amid European people because of his character and ability in military affairs. He is independent, yet eager for friendship. Iago appeals to him as an honest man and he trusts

¹Dowden, Edward, Shakespeare, His Mind and Act, page 230.

him, as he sees no reason for Iago's intrigue. But Iago is angry because Cassio has risen above him and is determined to destroy Cassio and Othello as well. He contrives to convince Othello that Desdemona has been unfaithful to him and is in love with Cassio. Desdemona is a frank, open girl and so much in love with her husband that it never occurs to her that he might think she had any personal interest in Cassio when she intercedes for him. Othello would have had implicit faith in her if Iago had not planted the seed of suspicion. The losing of the handkerchief, Desdemona's first gift of the Moor, and Iago's placing it in Cassio's room when it is found by Othello, deepens the distrust. Finally Othello is convinced of Desdemona's interest in Cassio when he hears Cassio talking of Bianca and thinks it is of Desdemona he is speaking. Even when Othello accuses her she is astonished and dies endeavoring to defend the husband who has killed her. She does not understand the change in Othello but she pardons him because of her love for him.

Shakespeare sympathizes with his characters because he understands them. Iago may be impressed on spectators because of his cunning but Othello is the central character because of his massive nobility. He is made jealous by cunning of Iago and goes forward to do his duty which is to murder an unfaithful wife. Then he must cease to live

after he ceases to have faith in goodness and purity which to him are the best things in the world, Iago is able to live in a world which has no beauty or virtue. He is the embodiment of numerous impulses of people.

Shakespeare's tragedy is personal. Men and women grapple with tremendous problems which shake them to the depths.

Purpose and Ability as a Dramatist

Shakespeare was not a reformer and did not attempt new methods but his ability so far surpasses that of any dramatist of the age that he stands alone. He did not attempt originality but portrayed people as they were. His methods were distinctly different. Boas says of them: This distinctively Shakespearean note depends on a combination of characteristics, partly of style, partly of thought and motive, but its dominant feature is a majestic common sense, an unfaltering eye for the true proportion of things, a fidelity as constant as it is unobtrusive to the eternal, underlying principles of morality. Shakespeare is supreme and unique, not because he lacks every fault or possesses every excellence but because the circle of his vision is so completely concentric with the orbit of the world's forces: he seems to stand at the core of circumstance and touch truth at its source."¹

¹Boas, Frederick S., Shakespeare and His Predecessors, page 156.

Description of Theatre and Stage

Shakespeare's theatre was circular in shape. It had three stories which formed three galleries for the audience. The lower of these was above the level of the ground while the pit where the lower class of people stood was sunken. The galleries were roofed and sealed while the pit was open to the sky. It was estimated that a theatre would hold fifteen to eighteen hundred people. There were two boxes on either side of the stage on the first balcony for the wealthy patrons. There were cheaper boxes and the three balconies were filled with seats, many of which had comfortable cushions.

The stage was divided into two parts known as the front and rear stage. There was no permanent line of demarcation and they were often used at the same time. The rear stage could be shut off from the spectators by curtains and the front stage projected out into the pit, for curtains were used between two doors on either side of the inner stage and completed the house made by the projecting galleries above. The inner stage served as a dressing room. There was a room above it called the "hut" which was on a level with the top gallery. From the bottom of this a roof,

supported by two columns extended out over much of the stage. The projecting roof and hut were designated as the "heavens". The outer stage since it projected out into the pit had three sides and could not be curtained off from the spectators. In both front and rear stages were traps out of which ghosts or apparitions could rise and into which properties such as the cauldron in the witch scene in "Macbeth" could sink. A mechanical device in the hut above raised or lowered actors representing gods or spirits.

The rear stage was really an alcove in front of which curtains were drawn, but it was not so small as the designation alcove might imply. It was about half as wide as the front stage and a quarter as deep. There was a rear door through which an actor could enter without being seen if the curtains were drawn. There were also side doors. The doors at each side were for such entrances as could not be made from the rear stage. Since the front stage could not be concealed from the audience, the heavy properties were usually kept on the rear stage and this served for scenes which needed such properties. Many times both stages were used.

The space between the top of the back stage and "heavens" made a balcony which could be used as it was or curtained off if the occasion demanded. On each side of it

over the doors leading to the front stage some theatres had window-like openings, probably not on a level with the balcony but like doors below them, set at an oblique angle. These served for balcony scenes as in "Romeo and Juliet". So Shakespeare had three fields of action--a front, rear, and upper stage.

The stage of Shakespeare was not bare. Scenes were symbolic and a few objects represented the scene necessary. If there were a few trees upon the stage the audience imagined other objects in a forest, if there was a throne they could see a room in a palace. A realistic picture was not presented but enough was shown or suggestions given so that the audience could visualize the scene. If the Elizabethans had painted scenery it was painted cloths of a simple kind and not pictures painted in perspective. Their effects were from solid stage properties such as trees, tombs, altars, beds or wells. These were usually on the rear stage but were sometimes brought forward during a scene. Torches served as lights.

Setting and Costumes

Scenes were not localized so characters met and played their parts on neutral ground, which was the bare stage,

using the space behind the arras, or the gallery above, if remote scenes required them. The arras was a tapestry hung over the back of the stage from the gallery. Polonius was hidden behind the arras when Hamlet talked to his mother. Hamlet, knowing a man was hidden in the arras, thought it was the king and struck him with his sword and killed him. He was surprised to find Polonius but felt he met a just fate as his curiosity was too great. Shakespeare's text gave stage directions and Brabantic enters "above", meaning from the gallery in "Othello". If Shakespeare desired a certain place visualized he described it as Dover cliff in "King Lear":

"There is a cliff whose high and bending head
Looks fearfully in the confined deep:
Bring me but to the very brim of it,
And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear
With something rich about me: from that place
I shall no leading need."

Or Dunsinane castle in "Macbeth":

"Hang out our banners on the outward walls;
The cry is still, They come: our castle's strength
Will laugh a siege to scorn: here let them lie
Till famine and the ague eat them up:
Were they not forced with those who should be ours
We might have met them dareful, beard to beard,
And beat them backward home."

It was not necessary for the spectators to know where the scenes took place.

The trap door served for the ghost of Banquo to go through when he appeared before Macbeth at the Banquet.

There was sufficient time between his four appearances for him to make changes necessary, which Macbeth mentions each time he sees him.

The costumes used by Shakespeare's actors were very elaborate though they were not characteristic of any historical period. It was two centuries later before Macbeth and Julius Caesar appeared in costumes appropriate for their periods. There was some attempt, however, to use costumes appropriate for different nationalities. Henslowe's diary records that they paid about four pounds, fourteen shillings for a pair of hose and twenty pounds for a coat. A playwright rarely received more than eight pounds for a play. The comparative prices show the elaborateness of the costume. Another time Henslowe mentions eighty-seven garments most of which are silk or satin trimmed with gold lace and fringe, belonging to one company of actors.

Soliloquy

The chorus of the Greeks often interpreted the circumstances of the play to the audience when there were explanations which the character could not make. Shakespeare's soliloquy served much the same purpose, and showed the thoughts of the player.

Perhaps the most famous soliloquy in literature is that of Hamlet. He is angry at the false culture of his age which makes him conceal his feelings after the interview with the ghost. When he thinks of the crime he turns to suicide but is uncertain. There is a conflict between religious belief and desire for self destruction. He fears future punishment so the sense of duty masters fear of mortal discomforts. He voices his feelings:

"To be, or not to be,--that is the question:
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The stings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 And by opposing end them?--To die,--to sleep--
 No more; and by a sleep to say we end
 The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to,--'tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wished. To die,--to sleep;--
 To sleep! perchance to dream:--ay, there's the rub;
 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
 Must give us pause: there's the respect
 That makes calamity of so long a life."

When the witches have said that Banquo will be greater than Macbeth, Macbeth plans the murder of his rival and reveals his feelings in the following soliloquy:

"Our fears in Banquo
 Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature
 Reigns that which would be fear'd, 'tis much he dares;
 And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,
 He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
 To act in safety. There is none but he
 Whose being I do fear: and, under him,
 My genius is rebuk'd;

 When first they put the name of king upon me,
 And bade them speak to him; then, propheticlike

They hailed him father to a line of kings:
 Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,

 No son of mine succeeding. If't be so,
 For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind;
 For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered;
 Put rancours in the vessel of my peace
 Only for them; and mine eternal jewel
 Given to the common enemy of man,
 To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings.
 Rather than so, come, fate, into the list,
 And champion me to the utterance!"

The moving cause in "Hamlet" is the passion of Claudius for Gertrude which prompted him to murder his brother in order to marry her. In the soliloquy where Claudius tries to pray, he shows honesty of which great minds are capable; for self deceit was beyond him.

"O, my offense is rank and smells to heaven;
 It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,--
 A brother's murder!--Pray can I not,
 Though inclination be as sharp as will:
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
 And, like a man to double business bound,
 I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
 And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,--
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
 To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
 But to confront the visage of offense?"

The soliloquy seems unnatural but it was the method Shakespeare seemed to prefer in showing the thoughts of his characters.

Typical Scenes

The scenes in Shakespeare reflect the spirit of his age.

The people demand a different type from those of the Greeks. The murders of the Greeks occurred behind the scenes while Shakespeare's occur on the stage. Othello murders Desdemona on the stage by smothering her. It is a scene where the spectators are in sympathy with Desdemona for they knew she is innocent yet Othello will not believe her. She protests that she did not give the handkerchief to Cassio, but Iago has convinced Othello that she did and he does not believe Desdemona and resolves to murder her. Afterward he learns of her innocence and Iago's perfidy and there is nothing to live for, so he stabs himself and falls upon Desdemona.

There is one scene in Lear which would not have been performed on the Greek stage. It is the scene where Cornwall plucks out the eyes of Gloucester and sets his foot on them. Such a scene is most to horrible to read, much less to see. In the "Oedipus King" of Sophocles, Oedipus appears on the stage, after he has plucked out his eyes, with blood on his face.

A very sad scene is the one where Lear after his bitter experiences appears on the stage with Cordelia dead in his arms. His speech shows the change from imperiousness:

"Howl, howl, howl, howl!--O, you are men of stones:
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so

That heaven's vault should crack.--She's gone forever!
 I know when one is dead and when one lives,
 She's dead as earth.--Send me a looking-glass;
 If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
 Why, then she lives."

Edgar and Kent are present during the scene. Lear adds later:

"A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!
 I might have sav'd her; now she's gone forever!--
 Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!
 What is't thou say'st?--Her voice was ever soft,
 Gentle, and low,--an excellent thing in women--
 I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee."

When it is too late Lear appreciates Cordelia for her true worth.

In the last scene of Hamlet four deaths occur, rapidly following each other. Hamlet mortally wounds Laertes with his rapier, the queen drank the poisoned drink which the king had prepared for Hamlet. As she dies she realizes she has been poisoned and warns Hamlet. Laertes also tells him the situation:

"It is here, Hamlet: Hamlet, thou art slain;
 No medicine in the world can do thee good;
 In thee there is not half an hour of life;
 The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
 Unbat'd and envenom'd: the foul practice
 Hath turn'd itself on me; lo, here I lie,
 Never to rise again: thy mother's poison'd:
 I can no more:--the king, the king's to blame."

As Hamlet looks at the rapier he says:

"The point envenom'd too!--
 Then venom to thy work."

And he stabs the king, who says he is but hurt, and asks

his friends to defend him, but he dies. Laertes asks Hamlet to exchange forgiveness with him for his own and his father's death. Hamlet's dying speech:

"O, I die Horatio;
The potent poison quite o'ercrowns my spirit;
I cannot live to hear the news from England;
But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras: he was my dying voice;
So tell him, with the occurrents more and less,
Which have solicited.--The rest is silence."

Hamlet's revenge is complete, although his life is also sacrificed.

Use of Supernatural

Shakespeare employs the supernatural in his plays, especially in "Macbeth" and "Hamlet" where ghosts are indispensable to the plot. The ghost in "Hamlet" is the revenge type ghost who sets the train of events in motion. The ghost does not say anything or answer questions when he first appears. Bernardo says of him: "In the same figure like the king that's dead." The ghost appears again but will not answer questions. The third time it appears it beckons to Hamlet whose friends advise him not to follow it, but he does not heed their advice. The ghost tells Hamlet to listen carefully to what he says:

"I am thy father's spirit;
 Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
 And, for the day, confined to waste in fires
 Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
 Are burnt and purg'd away

List, list, O, list! --
 If thou didst ever thy dear father love,--
 Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder."

In his next speech the ghost describes his murder. He does not demand merely personal revenge, but desires to save his country from Claudius, and to preserve his widow from her unlawful second marriage. He desires Hamlet to "regard the work of revenge as the execution of impartial justice but Hamlet sinks to revenge from a wholly personal motive. The ghost appears again to recall him to the nobler course, when he is talking to his mother:

"Do not forget: this visitation
 Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
 But, look, amazement on thy mother sits:
 O, step between her and her fighting soul,--
 Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works,--
 Speak to her, Hamlet."

Hamlet is excited and the Queen is bewildered at his conduct. The ghost does not appear again. His vengeance is not obtained and the play ends in general slaughter, where the death of the king is an incident and Hamlet also dies.

The ghost is essential to the play as no one else could have given this information. His appearances are led up to skillfully and allusions are native in tone conforming to traditions of conduct of disturbed spirits.

Supernatural agencies influence events as they influence persons. Much of the supernatural is concerned with future events, as the event is predicted and the knowledge of the future is supernatural. Banquo addressed the witches:

"If you can look into the seeds of time,
And say which grain will grow and which will not
Speak then to me."

So power to read the future is implied and the future apparently is brought about by natural causes.

The witches make a threefold prophecy concerning Macbeth and the first two parts are fulfilled as he becomes thane of Glamis by his father's death, and thane of Cawdor as he overcomes the present occupant of that position and received his title. These two occurrences make him believe in the witches and he decides to remove the obstacles leading to the third prophecy, which is, that he will be king.

The forecast for Banquo is ambiguous:

First Witch: "Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.
Second Witch: Not so happy, yet much happier.
Third Witch: Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none;
So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo."

Macbeth resolves to murder Banquo, and the night he sends me to murder him he gives a banquet in the palace. Banquo's ghost appears before him four times--as a guest, filling his chair at the head of the table, next with

bloody locks, then with twenty gashes in his head and last as a corpse.

This is an example of a selective apparition as Banquo's ghost appears only to Macbeth. It is not the revenge ghost, for the powers that raised Macbeth will cause his downfall and Banquo will be revenged without taking any action himself.

Superstition has guided Macbeth and ruined him so he goes to the Weird sisters and from then on takes refuge in the supernatural. Their oracular prophecies are ambiguous. The apparition of a bloody child says:

"Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth."

The apparition of a child crowned with a tree in his hand says:

"Be lion-mettled, proud; and take no care
Who chafes, who frets; or where conspirers are:
Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be, until
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him."

Such prophecies as these gave Macbeth confidence. If man of woman born would not harm he had no reason to fear any man, particularly Macduff, who at that time was causing him unrest. Then if no harm could befall him until Birnam wood should come to Dunsinane hill, why should he fear? Who ever heard of a forest going up a hill?

It was the succession of Macbeth's evil deeds that caused the conspiracy that wrecked him. The tragedy of Macbeth lies in the attempt of a mortal to control the powers to which he has yielded himself and in the irony in which their promises turn to his undoing. The central idea shows the fearful strain of the protagonists, Lord and Lady Macbeth. This culminates in Lady Macbeth's speech:

"These deeds must not be thought
After these ways, so, it will make us mad."

Macbeth's sanity is saved in face of supernatural elements and he meets death from the outside. But Lady Macbeth sees the danger and cannot escape her thoughts, as she is not occupied, shown in the sleepwalking scene and she at last dies by her own hand.

Shakespeare uses the revenge type ghost in "Hamlet" and in "Macbeth" shows how supernatural forces can affect a whole life which is given over to them.

ELEMENTS OF MODERN TRAGEDY

Source of Plot

The tendency toward realism in modern drama has caused everyday life to be the source of plot. Plots develop from experiences of dramatists as well as from their interests.

Ibsen conceived a truth and made a play to portray it. "Ghosts" is an example of this. Since Ibsen is a philosopher he assails popular ideas and shows the truth about them. "Brand" is the tragedy of a priest who clings to an impossible ideal. "Peer Gynt" is an adventurer who determines to get on by compromising. In his early plays Ibsen used folk lore and legends of his country as sources.

Strindberg's abnormal emotional temperament may be the source of his tragedies. His antipathy toward Ibsen gave some rise to some of his plots, as he gave another viewpoint.

Eugene O'Neill has travelled extensively in various capacities which has enabled him to see and know all kinds of people and their environment. He went to Princeton, prospected for gold in Honduras, was a seaman on the American line, has been actor, clerk and reporter in New York. While in a hospital for tuberculosis he began writing plays using his own experiences for sources of his plots.

Masefield had varied early experiences similar to those of O'Neill which furnished him material for plays. His "Tragedy of Man" is his best play.

Class of People Represented by Characters

A different type of drama has developed. There are no longer minute differentiations but a mingling of types. A tragedy may have some elements of comedy and melodrama. As Sir Philip Sidney says, a tragic comedy shows a "mingling of kings and clowns". This means that the conflict of majestic characters was no longer emphasized but problems of people belonging to everyday life occupy the prominent position. Common people were now attracting attention as characters on the stage. Instead of using forces of fate and destiny, environment and heredity were used. Science has caused a new idea of tragedy so the dramatist must conform to the change.

Ibsen's tragedies are those of the soul with the soul as protagonist, and with the setting in modern middle class apartments. He does not have royalty in his dramas but his characters are those having experiences common to most people.

Many of O'Neill's characters are from the lower strata of society. Yank, the leading character of "The Hairy Ape", is a stoker on an Atlantic liner. Chris, the father of Anna Christie, is captain of a coal barge. Nina, the main

character in "Strange Interlude", is the daughter of a college professor and her friends belong to the same class as she does.

Language of Plays

When common people became the important characters on the stage sentiments were of a lower type and the dignified language used by kings and princes was not suitable. Prose was used instead of poetry. Common people would not speak in the lofty manner of the nobility. The language of Ibsen is poetical prose. He uses it as a mirror with many changing lights. In his later plays his language flows naturally showing emotion and character. His characters speak naturally using phrases, half uttered sentences or exclamations revealing their real thoughts. In "Hedda Gabler" there are many such examples of this, such as:

"Løvborg. Thea--our book will never appear.

Hedda. Ah!

Mrs. Elvsted. Never appear!

Løvborg. Can never appear.

Mrs. Elvsted. (in agonized foreboding)

Løvborg. What have you done with the manuscript?

Hedda (looks anxiously at him) Yes, the manuscript?

Mrs. Elvsted. Where is it?"

Sentences are short and incomplete revealing involuntary feelings of the characters.

Pinero uses very precise, exact conversation in his

dramas and his characters are effective. O'Neill uses the dialect of sailors, stokers, or educated people as he needs it. His characters speak naturally and without restraint according to their position.

Masefield who has had similar experiences to those of O'Neill portrays his characters skillfully by their language in "The Tragedy of Man". One instinctively feels Man's superiority over any other character in the play because of her language as well as what she says.

Synge's "Riders to the Sea" is prose in form yet has rhythm of poetry. It shows the life of simple fisher people on an island off the coast of Ireland. There is a rhythmic choral song of the weeping women. At the end Marya accepts conditions in truly Greek manner: "No man at all can be living forever, and we must be satisfied."

Type of Plays

Ibsen introduced ideas in drama and made them the most important element. There is a drift toward ideas because people are thinking and demand them. Ibsen is considered the most able writer of this type. He impresses certain truths which he thinks should guide people and creates characters who are both natural and realistic, accenting truths which facts show. His characters are thinking ones.

All of them, even servants, are "thought-directed and thought-energized". Their strength as well as weakness portrays them as reasonable beings. While the action is relatively unimportant, emphasis is placed on their impulses and motives for action. As with the Greeks, tragedy is a personal one, brought on by the soul of the character or condition which serves as the protagonist of the drama. Ibsen conceives a truth and puts it in a drama. "Ghosts" is an example of a truth which serves as protagonist. The past life of Chamberlain Alving influences all the characters, although he is dead. The protagonist in "Rosmersholm" is Beata, who has committed suicide before the play begins, yet she is the one who influences the characters by living in the brain of her unhappy husband. Only a skillful artist could make people who do not appear in the play the protagonists.

August Strindberg was in advance of his age as he used ideas not understood during his life, having more imagination and being more clairvoyant than most people. A German critic quoted by Dickinson says he stood with one foot on naturalism, the other on expressionism. Strindberg claims to be a naturalist, but he went beyond external influences on life, portraying inner motives. His chief interest was in showing causes for external and he discarded the idea of

external actions without some concealed motive underlying them. He discarded the form of drama being used at the time and made one of his own. He featured the one act drama, and was the originator of it. Strindberg did not use romanticism in dramas but avoided all references to it studiously. He distrusted men and his plays show him as a pessimist, yet he discovered the subconscious and used it skillfully in his dramas.

Strindberg showed remarkable versatility and his plays defy classification. He wrote fifty-six plays varying in length from one act plays to trilogies with range from extreme realism to symbolical stories. His own interests affect the type of his plays more than dramatic expression. Although Strindberg is famous for his naturalism, about half of his plays show historic influence since he wrote historical romances, dramas of biography of new psychology, fairy stories, religious plays, and plays of symbolism.

Strindberg had the qualities of a mystic as well as of a scientist. His science led him into fields of speculation and he was analytical of conditions. Ibsen's ideas and methods did not suit Strindberg and it is possible they served as stimuli to urge him on with his own ideas, as he seemed to desire to counteract the influence of Ibsen. Strindberg began his career as a naturalist with "The

Father", probably his best known play. The theme served him in future plays. He shows individual responsibility one step beyond that shown by Ibsen in "Ghosts". Ibsen shows the responsibility of individual to future generations. Strindberg shows that man must live beyond himself and is not sufficient unto himself. But woman has the power more than the man for she has borne the child. This idea, the tragedy in relationship of man and woman, Strindberg uses in subsequent plays using variations.

Strindberg's idea of personality is made up of impressions. He says, "A personality does not develop from itself, but out of each soul it comes in contact with it sucks a drop, just as the bee gathers its honey from a million flowers, giving it forth eventually as its own."¹

Action is compelled by a complexity of motives. Again

Strindberg says: "My souls are combinations of past and present stages of culture, shreds of books and journals, fragments of men and women, pieces of Sunday attire that are now rags."² His conception of character is farther

explained as he says: "The person who has achieved a fixed temperament or adapted himself to a certain role in life, who in a word had ceased to grow, was supposed to have character; whilst one who developed, the skillful navigator on the stream of life, who does not sail with close tied sails, but who knows when to tack before the wind, was deemed deficient in character.....I do not believe in simple character in the theatre."³

¹Dickinson, Thomas K., An Outline of Contemporary Drama, page 188.

²Ibid, page 188.

³Ibid, page 189.

These ideas changed the analysis of character, showing that life is lived on many rather than on one plane of consciousness. The limit of action disappeared as did the plot with its prescribed intrigue. Interest in human relationships developed with their new complexity. Two conventions disappeared--the single idea enveloping the whole and the "single stage of action". Thus Strindberg's conception led to a new idea of the drama known by the term "expressionism" which was not used until after his death but which has had a potent influence on the dramatists of the world.

Eugene O'Neill, America's great dramatist, has been so successful in writing plays that he has won an international reputation, although he is comparatively young. He portrays life in sordid surroundings showing struggle of individuals with developing character.

Alan D. Mickel says of O'Neill: "Here, apparently alone amongst living dramatists, is one who knows how to use Nature's methods, how to kindle and throw the great light. Eugene O'Neill just picks out from a certain class a number of people. They are just as we all are, inherited temperaments and emotional beings, under cover of slightly differing anatomical appearance, moulded to differing individualities by the pressure of external circumstances. There are vast numbers of just such people in the world. The streets and houses of great cities teem with them. A little different they all are; some are more passionate, some not so passionate.....But just as all the blades in a cornfield are approximately the same height, so these people, both inwardly and outwardly, are approximately alike. Then O'Neill arranges circumstances, kindles his light, and throws its strong beams on the

certain number of them he has chosen, and, as it were, by contrast, settles about them a circle of darkness. In this circle they stand forth clear and distinct for all to see. We see them in their immediate environment, angry, happy, depressed, exalted, jealous, disillusioned, hoping, fearing, living out a phase of their lives. And we see something more. All the time of the play, we are aware of a presence in the background, a vast, malignant, mocking, demonic presence, against which all the actions of the people in the play make instinctive, unconscious war. In the end this Beyond-power will be victorious. All these people will have to give in and go the way it wills. Fate must win."¹

Realism has been an important factor in contemporary drama in showing human life, thoughts, and feelings.

Use of Unities and Form

Ibsen used the three unities in a liberal way to create a unity of tone in his dramas. When unity of place preserved impression he used it, but if it did not serve his purpose it was not considered. The scenes in "A Doll's House", "Ghosts", and "Hedda Gabler" take place in one room. "Rosmersholm" has scenes in two rooms of the same house. The "Master Builder" takes place in two rooms and on the porch of the same house. There may be a change of immediate place but never of locality.

Many of his plays begin after most of the causes have already occurred, and he showed only effects, consequently

¹Mickle, Alan D., Studies on Six Plays of Eugene O'Neill, page 21.

the play occupies only a short space of time. The action in "Ghosts" occurred in sixteen hours; in "The Master Builder", less than twenty-four hours; in "Hedda Gabler", thirty-six hours; and in "Rosmersholm", fifty-two hours. "Ghosts" showed most compression of time. Ibsen followed the unities more than any other contemporary dramatist, perhaps because of his use of the analytical method. Strindberg's "The Father" occurred in twelve hours with one room as the scene. O'Neill did not observe the unities.

Ibsen divided his plays into acts but did not use scenes. Strindberg is interested in abolishing acts. In the preface to "Miss Julia" he says: "I have tried to abolish the division into acts. And I have done so because I have come to fear that our decreasing capacity for illusion might be unfavorably affected by intermissions during which the spectator would have time to reflect and to get away from the suggestive influence of the author-hypnotist. My plays will probably last an hour and a half, and as it is possible to listen that length of time, or longer, to a lecture, a sermon, or a debate, I have imagined that a theatrical performance could not become fatiguing in the same length of time.....My hope is still for a public educated to the point where it can sit through a whole evening performance in a single act."

Strindberg is known as the father of the one act play thus proving in a measure its success. Synge, one of Ireland's best dramatists wrote six one act plays which have won recognitions. "Riders to Sea" is considered his best one. Other well known dramatists have written successful one act plays.

O'Neill has tried an experiment in form in "Strange

Interlude", a long play published in 1928. It has nine acts which are not divided into scenes. However, his latest play "Dyamo" published in 1929 has three acts which are divided into ten scenes.

Purpose of the Drama

About says the stage is "a magnifying mirror, in which are reflected the passions, the vices, the follies of each epoch."¹ Henderson adds, "in a deeper sense, the drama is not only the mirror which reflects: it is itself the image of the time, of the philosophical, social, political, and religious aspirations of the sport."² If the stage is a magnifying mirror of the epoch the dramatists' purpose must be to show the ideas which they consider most important. Ibsen is considered a dramatist of ideas, with a realistic tendency which avoided intellectualism. His criticism of life surpassed those of other dramatists in being thoughtful and systematic. Ideas were presented to him and around them he built a drama. Ibsen presents a man of will power showing conflict between heredity and environment. Oswald Alving is a type showing power of heredity. Morals are clearly shown but always artistically. Ibsen himself says of the play, "Hedda Gabler": "It was not my desire to deal in this play with so-called problems. What I principally wanted to do was to depict human beings, human emotions, and human destinies upon a groundwork of certain

¹Henderson, Archibald, The Changing Drama, pages 253-254.
²Ibid, page 254.

of the social conditions and principles of the present day.¹ Hedda has been described as a characterless personality. Her only positive act was shooting herself.

Strindberg analyzes the human spirit by his doubting tendencies. He was unhappy and discontented and expressed his views in the dramas he wrote. They are influenced by the various reactions he felt toward circumstances. His married life was unhappy and women are portrayed unsympathetically. Eventually overcome by his prevalent weakness which he called "sensitiveness to pressure" he decided that life in consciousness is composed of a combination of interaction and that a person as part of the world has no personal rights to happiness. Although he was prejudiced by various occurrences in his life his works are essentially moral in nature.

O'Neill's plays are psychological and generally contain some form of protest. His life has been a protest as he ran away from home and has had varied experiences. In his plays he shows protest toward authority, the tendency of a child to place himself among those who are his inferiors so that he may occupy an exalted position. Most of the protests are social. In early plays he showed resentment against

¹Henderson, Archibald, *European Dramatists*, page 145.

conditions, showing how people resent things they cannot understand. Chris showed resentment toward "ol' davel sea" because of lack of understanding. One group of plays is based on a mistaken idealism. "Dif'frent" is an example of this type as are "Beyond the Horizon" and "Anna Christie".

O'Neill's purpose seems to be to show life and ideals of people especially those of lower and middle classes. He analyzes character and shows their reaction to circumstances.

The Stage, Scenery, and Costume

Ibsen made his plays so realistic that he said they could be acted in a room, with the fourth wall removed so people could see the occurrence. The stage often represents a room in a play. It is possible to use such a setting since the stage which extended into the auditorium has been cut back until there is only a narrow strip between the curtain and the foot lights. This strip is used only in vaudeville. The stage is called a "picture frame" stage as it looks like action within a frame when the curtain is rolled up. Scenery is painted and may give an outdoor scene with a forest in the background or an interior setting. The lighting arrangements have illumined the stage so that everything can be easily seen and the actor does not stand

at the front but has a natural position anywhere on the stage. Instead of so much dialogue they use motions, gestures or facial expression to reveal their thoughts, as people have various ways of expressing themselves without words. There has been also a tendency to simplify scenery. Ibsen's plays usually take place in a room or two in the same house. This would necessitate furniture for only two rooms. Elaborate scenery and stage properties are too expensive and are not necessary if the play is to present a realistic scene which is carefully planned. Costumes are not elaborate but are suitable for the character. In O'Neill's "The Hairy Ape" and "Great God Brown" masks were used to show the difference in appearance of people, just as masks were used by the Greeks.

Soliloquy

Shakespeare's use of the soliloquy appears artificial to modern dramatists whose purpose is realism. People are not inclined to relate their ideas aloud. The picture frame stage in removing the player from the audience has been a factor in the abolition of the soliloquy. Other means have been devised to inform the audience of action which has previously taken place. In the first act of

"Hedda Gabler" the characters tell the circumstances in the conversation. As the action proceeds in "Ghosts" the audience learns what has previously occurred. Although Ibsen seldom uses a soliloquy there is one in "Hedda Gabler" which is horrifying. Hedda is burning the manuscript of Lovborg.

Hedda. (Throws one of the quires into the fire and whispers to herself) Now I am burning your child. Thea!...Burning it, curly-locks! (Throwing one or two more quires into the stove) Your child and Ellert Lovborg's. (Throws the rest in) I am burning--I am burning your child.

Eugene O'Neill uses a soliloquy quite different from any used by other dramatists. His characters talk to themselves and reveal their most intimate thoughts. In this way the audience is enabled to understand motives of people for their actions.

In "Strange Interlude", Gordon Evans expresses his opinion of Dr. Darrell who has returned from a far country just in time for his birthday. Gordon. (Thinking as he plays--resentfully) I wish Darrell'd get out of here!.... why couldn't Mother let me run my own birthday?..... I'd never had him here, you bet!.....what's he always hanging 'round for?.....why don't he go off on one of his old trips again.....Last time he was gone more'n a year..... ..I was hoping he'd died! What makes Mother like him so much?....she makes me sick!.....I'd think she'd get sick of the old fool and tell him to get out and never come back!I'd kick him out if I was big enough!....it's good for him he didn't bring me any birthday present or I'd smash it first chance I got!.....

This is a new type of soliloquy originated by O'Neill. It is natural for people to think without being rhetorical. They merely talk to themselves on the stage and other

characters apparently do not hear their thoughts.

Ibsen used the confidential friend to reveal thoughts and motives. This served the same purpose as the soliloquy of Shakespeare or chorus of Greeks. Mrs. Elvsted is the confidante of "Hedda Gabler" and Dr. Herdal of "The Master Builder". Pinero uses Cayley Drummle as the friend to whom feelings are revealed in "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray".

Typical Scenes

Cries, tears, and bloodshed are rare on the modern stage. Hedda Gabler goes out of the room and a shot is heard. Tesman thinks she is playing with the pistols again and throws back the curtains to reveal her, lifeless, on the sofa. Her husband is horrified and Judge Brock, half-fainting, says people don't do such things. The Master Builder does not fall from the top of the tower in sight of the audience. The curtain falls when Oswald is calling for the sun, yet the audience knows the end from previous conversation.

No gruesome scenes take place on the stage as the desired effect is given without them. Most scenes are such as are witnessed every day and there is nothing unusual about them.

Supernatural Elements

The revival of tragedy has brought with it a revival of supernatural elements. These are quite different from those of the Greeks or Shakespeare as they are not concrete. Since tragedy is an analysis of the mystery of existence seeking to show the sources of human action, the supernatural will reveal the cause of the actions and portray inner impulses.

Ibsen painted the life of his time and of his country showing unrest of the people during the period. In two of his dramas mystical promptings are evident. The "white horses" of "Rosmersholm" are symbolical. The play shows the struggle of men to make their lives conform to their convictions. Ibsen has penetrated deeply into conscience to portray Rosmer and Rebecca West who is under a curse of the past which the "white horse", frequently referred to, represents.

"The Master Builder" shows Ibsen's clairvoyant powers in picturing a guilty conscience. Solness is moody and cross and has subjected everyone to his will. Hilda's manner is simple and by her intensity she gains control of him, persuading him "to reach the heights" again. Great

things cannot be done alone but a person must be aided by mysterious powers within his being. Hilda stimulates these in Solness and he climbs to the very highest pinnacle to place a wreath on it, and falls to his death. But he has won the victory over conscience even though death results.

Strindberg claimed to be a realist, but he went beyond external facts of life seeking motives for them. He was not interested in surface symbolism. In his series of fairy and dream plays he showed his mysticism. In "The Dream Play" he shows unusual ability showing how envelopment of destiny affects a daughter of the gods on earth. Strindberg is difficult to understand because of his peculiarities.

CONCLUSION

The tragic elements are representative of the period in which they are employed. There has been a constant change in the tastes of people who demand dramas to fit situations.

The Greek tragedy developed from mythological sources and was used to celebrate a religious festival. The same plots which were familiar to people were varied according to the ideas of the three dramatists of the age. Shakespeare used history, novels of various countries, and old plays as sources for his plots. He combined them and

changed them to suit his fancy, emphasizing character and its conflict with opposing forces. Modern dramatists use any plot and do not have any definite sources. Ideas develop and they make characters to illustrate the ideas, emphasizing to some extent the inner springs of character.

Instead of using majestic characters as the Greeks and Shakespeare did, characters are common people who speak an every day language. Poetry has disappeared in favor of prose such as ordinary people use in carrying on a conversation.

The Greeks observed unity of action; Shakespeare did not observe any of the unities. Ibsen used the three unities of time, place, and action in many of his tragedies. Other modern dramatists do not use them, however.

With the modern tendency toward realism theatres are smaller, the stage has a natural setting, frequently of a room. Characters dress to represent their parts and speak in ordinary tones and language, using actions as well as facial expressions as much as possible since stages are illuminated and actors can be seen anywhere.

The soliloquy which served Shakespeare to acquaint the audience with the feelings of the character, as the chorus served the Greeks, has been discarded as unnatural. Eugene O'Neill has made a different kind of soliloquy, where the

actor talks to himself and shows his own feelings in a natural manner. Instead of ghosts and other supernatural elements of previous tragedies modern dramatists seek to show inner motives for actions.

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LIST OF TRAGGIES READ

(Greek)

Aeschylus

Agamemnon

Euripides

Antigone
Oedipus King

Sophocles

Alceste
Medea

(Shakespearean)

Shakespeare

Hamlet
King Lear
Macbeth
Othello

(Modern)

Galsworthy

Strife
Justice

Ibsen

Ghosts
Hedda Gabler
Rosmersholm
The Master Builder

Masfield

Mrs. Harrison
The Campden Wonder
Tragedy of Nan

O'Neill

Dif'frent
Desire Under the Elms
Dynamo
Strange Interlude
The Hairy Ape

Pinero

The Second Mrs. Tanqueray

Strindberg

The Father

Syngs

Riders to the Sea

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