

"Maybe you got somethin' there," agreed Deep Voice.

He took Snicker in his arms and walked down the street to a dark green bungalow. Saint Anthony followed, jumping from rooftop to rooftop, his lantern swinging crazily.

"Hi, Sally," Deep Voice called from the porch. "Look what I brought you."

Sally was a round woman who smelled like hot biscuits. She took Snicker in her arms and hugged him. Then she held him out and gasped: "This here, is the pup that lives across the street from where I works. The lady has been out of her mind over losing him. I'll go call her right away." She handed Snicker to Deep Voice and picked up the telephone.

Saint Anthony, who was hanging from a shutter, nearly fell to the ground in his excitement.

"They will be so happy," smiled Warm Biscuits from the telephone. "They thought he was dead."

Saint Anthony climbed down from his shutter and spoke to the lantern: "You boys can go back to sleep now, mission completed." The light went out as if it had been cut with a scissors. "Lazy loafers," smiled the Saint as he looked at the dark globe.

The little white figure strode down the street humming Adeste Fidelis. He stopped under a street lamp and looked at his compass. He spun the dial to "home," closed his eyes and swayed rhythmically. In the space of time it takes to complete a good sneeze, he was back in the crotch of the big oak tree. He put his lantern and compass on the branch and made himself comfortable. The little acorn swung silently over his nose. He watched it for a long while, nodding sleepily.

"Gee," he said, "it's a powerful long time between calls these days." Then he rolled his long beard into a pillow, put it under his head, and fell asleep to the music of the twinkling stars.

## Greek Tragedy

Clinton E. McCord

FROM an historical perspective the drama emerged as one of the earliest of the arts. A typical history of dramatic literature, Brander Matthews' *The Development of the Drama*, suggests that pantomime with dancing and vocal accompaniment may be older than language. The innate attraction to drama is borne out in the record of human experience.

This paper is concerned with one particular form of dramatic art which became a part of man's experience at a relatively late date. Civilizations had flourished and decayed before the phenomena of Greek culture divided history, and the first flute player within the framework of that culture created what subsequent history has considered the highest form of dramatic art. Tragedy was a Greek con-

cept. In her essay on tragedy, Edith Hamilton is emphatic on this point:

. . . Except for Shakespeare, the great three, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, stand alone. Tragedy is an achievement peculiarly Greek. They were the first to perceive it and they lifted it to its supreme height.

This has been a recurrent theme in my study and is the *motif* around which I have developed this paper.

Dionysus had come down from Thrace into Hellas, already established as the god of the vine, the god of luxuriant fertility. His reception was in the best spirit of the *guest-friendship* institution. Who wouldn't welcome such a fellow? Filled with his spirits, any gathering could become a joyous occasion. The god's popularity made it necessary for the defenders of orthodoxy to provide a genealogy commensurate with public opinion. He became the son of Zeus by Semele, the daughter of Cadmus, and was established as chief god of the groves, vineyards, and wild things (this seems to have included wild human impulses).

The hymns sung at the festivals of Dionysus provide an initial insight into the origin of Greek drama. These hymns, called *dithyrambs*, accompanied by a flute and dance, and corresponding to the passionate nature of his worship, celebrated the sufferings and actions of the god. In Corinth the ritual is said to have received its first semblance of artistic form. At Athens dithyrambs were sung twice in the year—at the Great Dionysia in the spring and at the Lenaea in the beginning of winter. The chorus was made up of fifty persons who stood in a circle around the altar.

Subsequent development of the dithyramb consisted of innovations in music and rhythm, providing stronger and more complete instrumentation, more variety, and a more secular character. Contests with prizes were the basis for keen competition between poets of the different tribes. The dithyramb expressed at one time exuberant joy, at another deep sorrow.

Thespis of Icaria is one of the best known personalities in the historic development of the drama. Poet, leader of the chorus, and actor, his pieces, according to tradition, consisted of a prologue, a series of choral songs connected with the action and dramatic recitations introduced between the choruses. The recitations delivered by a leader advanced the action of the play. The reciter was enabled to appear in different roles by the aid of linen or wooden masks. The masks are also said to have been introduced by Thespis. These innovations won the approval of the Athenian public, and thus became an important element in the Attic festival of Dionysus.

Thespis's followers developed Satyric drama and introduced an actor apart from the leader of the chorus. This prepared the way for true dialogue. From this background emerges Aeschylus, the first,



perhaps the greatest writer of true tragedy.

The significance of *tragedy as a Greek concept* cannot be strait-jacketed into a "History of Drama" approach. Created and developed by men of an historical period, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, the art form was affected by a cultural heritage—by what had been done in the general area; conversely the art form affected an historic period. As an emerging concept, tragedy so far exceeds what had gone before that we seem to perceive it like Athene, "full-grown." This is, of course, wrong thinking. Tragedy was related to other events occurring at the same time. Understanding then must relate to a knowledge of the Greek view of life, the spirit of the time, the traditions and institutions which had contributed to the general trend of thought. Understanding must also relate to a recognition of the poetic potential.

Socrates, referring to the "tragedians and Homer, who is at their head . . ." substantiates this approach. As we discussed in class, Aeneas provided an embodiment of virtue for the Roman—a symbol, an image. Odysseus, perhaps in a lesser degree, served a similar function for the Greek. Man needs a symbol. When the symbol is not provided by an historical personality, mythopoeetry rises to the occasion. That, perhaps, is what makes many theological issues irrelevant. Jesus of Nazareth has an importance for my life that is in no way dependent on historic detail, event or action. In *Dr. Schweitzer of Lambarene*, Norman Cousins evaluates Schweitzer in terms of symbol:

. . . The greatness of Schweitzer—indeed the essence of Schweitzer—is the man as symbol. It is not so much what he has done for others, but what others have done because of him and the power of his life and thought [that] is the kind of inspiration that can animate a generation. He has supplied a working demonstration of reverence for life. He represents enduring proof that we need not torment ourselves about the nature of human purpose. . . . Thus, Schweitzer's main achievement is a simple one. He has been willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for a moral principle . . . and because he has been able to feel a supreme identification with other human beings, he has exerted a greater force than millions of armed men on the march.

Tragedy, then, relates to Homeric Epic by way of reflecting the dignity, significance, nobility and grandeur of human life. William Faulkner in responding on receiving the Nobel Prize expresses the relationship *in purpose* of all poets:

. . . It is easy enough to say that man is immortal simply because he will endure; that when the last ding-dong of doom has clanged and faded from the last worthless rock

hanging tideless in the last red and dying evening, that even then there will still be one more sound: that of his puny inexhaustible voice, still talking. I refuse to accept this. I believe that man will not merely endure: he will prevail. He is immortal, not because he alone among creatures has an inexhaustible voice, but because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart, by reminding him of the courage and honor and hope and pride and compassion and pity and sacrifice which have been the glory of his past. The poet's voice need not merely be the record of man, it can be one of the props, the pillars to help him endure and prevail.

Within the framework of a society permeated by an anthropomorphic religious hierarchy, a Greek poet makes an evaluation. Set against his vision of man, the gods are found wanting. The poet recognizes his topic.

If the grandeur of human life is the concern of tragedy, it remains to discover how that grandeur is revealed by the dramatist. Here again, Edith Hamilton provides insight:

. . . The great tragedies themselves offer the solution to the problem they propound. It is by our power to suffer, above all, that we are of more value than the sparrows. Endow them with a greater or as great a potentiality of pain and our foremost place in the world would no longer be undisputed. Deep down, when we search out the reason for our conviction of the transcendent worth of each human being, we know that it is because of the possibility that each can suffer so terribly. What do outside trappings matter, Zenith or Elsinore? Tragedy's preoccupation is with suffering.

Miss Hamilton pointed out that there are degrees of suffering, but not all suffering is tragic. Tragedy belongs only to the true aristocracy of this world—those who have the capacity for Life.

. . . Tragedy's one essential is a soul that can feel greatly. Given such a one and any catastrophe may be tragic. But the earth may be removed and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, and if only the small and shallow are confounded, tragedy is absent.

How does all this relate to the poet's vision of man and the revelation of that vision? The answer is bound up in the concept of separated man, in the spirit of intellectual honesty and with moral courage seeking reunion with some organizing principle basic to his

existence; for human grandeur best expresses itself in the quest for wholeness. The Greeks called this Knowledge The Christian, at a later date, Love. One may stumble at a positive relation between Socratic "Knowledge" and Christian "Altruism." Yet, similarity and relationship does exist in the suffering experienced by human beings who have allowed themselves to be controlled by the implication of either concept.

Negatively, *Tragedy as a Greek concept* is comprehended in a modern culture's oscillation between good and evil. Within this culture the creative energy needed to realize something better is spent in maintaining what exists—the semblance of integrity. This is the human condition, but historically the degree of intensity has varied. I am suggesting that it was an absence of struggle which allowed the Greek to concentrate his creative powers and show history the full stature of man—it was freedom.

## "THE TOWER OF BABEL ARTICULATE"

There is a God who speaks in many tongues—  
 "Pleni sunt coeli et terra gloria tua . . ."

### I

In the sensuousness of nature:

through sun-etched edges of leaves, in light-traced line  
 engraved upon a plate of cobalt sky  
 by sun incisent illum'ning chartreuse skin  
 soft stretched 'cross spreading sinews' strong relief . . .

in scented vessels of flowers, blossom mouths  
 and petal chalices catching daylight dew  
 wherein the bee, for honey diving, dips his wing . . .

in stars, the gem-garbed courtiers of heaven's halls,  
 whose twinkling gestures of homage to Him  
 do fill with whisp'rings cosmic and secret sighs  
 celestial caverns and universal night . . .

the quiet quest of night that, heralded by  
 a copper-doubled jester (squatting near,  
 then nearer, Western rims, to keep his place  
 now thrusts orange-cloaked areas away from him;  
 his trick now failing, his footing lost, he sinks  
 to oblivion . . . sudden, soft, and slow),  
 does fill and coat the wounds of creation—vales  
 and mountains—with blackening balm . . .

the snowflake, crystal confection, intricate web  
 of threads too frail for spiders' sport, instead  
 does weave a cloak to cover the shame of an earth