Lecture 1: The Eleven Basic Roles in Production

1. **Producer (choregus):**
   The playwright made application to the archon eponymos for a chorus; plays were chosen one month after the festival in order to give eleven months for rehearsal. Discuss the liturgy such as choregeia (producing a tragedy/comedy), trierarchia (outfitting a trireme), etc. and the antidosis to which one charged with a liturgy could challenge any other citizen. In times of financial duress, co-producers, or sungchoregoi collaborated to foot the bill. Discuss also the publication of a written text after the performance (e.g. Ar. Clouds); the law of Lycurgus (330 B.C.) required an official text of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides to be kept in the Athenian archives and actors could not depart from the wording of these texts. Discuss the proagon and its relevance to understanding the plays.

2. **Director(rice) (didascalus):**
   Discuss (i) the architectural form of the ancient theatre: the scene building, machinery such as the crane (geranos, mechane) and the ekkuklema, (you might consider the effect caused by natural sunlight rather than by spot-lights, and the effect of the enormous spectator area on one's appreciation of events in the orchestra), (ii) staging, scenery, stage-properties (props) and production-techniques, (iii) masks and costume, (iv) dance and gesture, (v) music, (vi) the use of a chorus, (vii) the use of actors to play multiple roles, of male actors to play female roles, messengers, audience-address, and entrances and exits and (viii) aspects of production. Some modern production-methods might be considered, e.g. Peter Arnott's marionette theatre production.
   - G. Ley and M. Evans, "The Orchestra as Acting Area in Greek Tragedy," *Ramus* 14 (1985) 75-84.

3. **Stage-Manager (architecton or theatrones) and Prompter (hypoboleus):**
   The stage-manager was responsible for leasing the theatre from the state and selling tickets. He got to work the mechane and ekkuklema.
   Pericles (in Plutarch *Moralia* 813F) advised himself to "imitate the actors, who, while putting into their performances their own passion, character and reputation, yet listen to the prompter and do not go beyond the degree of liberty in rhythms and metres provided by those in authority over them." Could the property-altar on stage double as a prompter's box?
4. **Chorus Leader (chorephyneus):**

1. **Dance and Gesture:**
   
   Discuss the number of members of the chorus (15 in tragedy, 24 in comedy, 12 in satyr-play and 50 in dithyramb). Discuss the use of gesture in the dance; on the exaggerated nature of gesture on "the small screen" (about the size of a television set in contrast to movie-theatre screens), consider the marionette theatre of the later Peter Arnott. Stereotypic gestures were different in Greece from what they are among us: nodding up means "no" while nodding down means "yes", scratching the face was a sign of grief as was raising one arm above the head. Spontaneous dancing, like St. Vitus' dance, was associated with the worship of Dionysus; see E. R. Dodds, *Euripides: Bacchae*, 2nd ed. (Oxford 1960) xiv-xvi. Cf. Archilochus fr. 120 West, "I know how to lead the fair song of the dithyramb for Lord Dionysus when thunder-blasted in my wits by wine". Each dramatic genre had its own particular dance: *emmeleia* in tragedy, *kordax* in comedy and the *sikinnis* in satyr-play. Comment on the circular motion of the chorus moving in desis and withershins motion. Does this have anything to do with the circumpolar motion of the stars (east to west in the strophe) and of the planets (west to east in the antistrophe)?


2. **Music:**
   
   Music was crucial to tragedy (Modern Greek *tragoudhi* = "song"). Although it is not now preserved with the exception of a few lines (338-44) from Euripides' *Orestes* (there is a good reproduction in Feaver) the musical accompaniment of Greek drama was very important. We need only consider that Greek drama inspired modern opera to see that this is so. From the evidence available, consider the nature of the musical component in ancient drama. Discuss singing, instrumental accompaniment by the *kithara*, lyre or "guitar" and *aulos*, flute or more precisely oboe, and lack of harmony and counterpart. Modern opera knows of something between speech and songs - recitative, *Sprachestimme*; is there an ancient equivalent? One can listen to reconstructions of ancient Greek music on Gregorio Paniagua and Atrium Musicae de Madrid, *Musique de la grèce antique* (Harmonia Mundi 1978).

5. **Lead Actor (protagonistes)**
6. **Supporting Actor (deuteragonistes)**
7. **Third Actor (tritagonistes):**

0. **Actors:**

Discuss the terms *hypocrites*, *histrio*, the number of actors at various times (early tragedies require 2, later ones 3, comedy 4), the "stage directions" incorporated into the text of the plays and the set-speech or *rhexis*. The playwright Thespis, traditional inventor of the actor ("thespian"; literally, 'inspired speaker'), acted in his own plays. By 499 B.C. a prize for acting was introduced in the festival. By this point, presumably, the age of the actor-playwright was over. Consider the anecdotes concerning famous actors: e.g. Hegelochus' mispronunciation at Eur. *Orestes* 279 in which instead of saying "I see a calm coming over the waves" he said, "I see a weasel coming over the waves" (*Ar. Frogs* 303-4) [see S. G. Daitz, "Euripides Orestes 279 galen' > galen or How a Blue Sky Turned into a Pussy-cat," *Classical Quarterly* 33 (1983) 294-5]; Polus playing the role of the paedagogus in Soph. *Electra* holding an urn (cf. line 758) containing the ashes of his dead son (Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 6.4); and Callipides as a laughing-stock (*Ar. Nub. 64*, see D. M. Lewis "Aristophanes *Clouds* 64," *Classical Review* 20 [1970] 288-9). Other famous actors include Theodorus, who refused to allow anyone to come on stage before him (Aristotle *Politics* 1336b27), Thetelalus, Neoptolemus, Athenodorus and Molon (Euripides' leading actor according to *Demosthenes* 19.246). As actors grew in prominence, they developed the habit of interpolating lines into the texts of the plays to show off their skills to best advantage.


Note: Soph. *OC* can only be played by three actors if different actors take the title-role at different points in the play.

- D. J. Mastronarde, *Contact and Discontinuity = University of California Publications in Classical Antiquity* 21 (Berkeley 1979).
- D. Raeburn, "Greek Tragedy and the Actor Today," 15-38 in *ibid*.
1. **The Agon:**
Sometimes in tragedy and always in old comedy the first and second actors face off against one another in a formal, rhetorical debate or agon in which they give speeches of nearly equal length with the chorus serving as moderator.

2. **Stichomythia:**
When two or more characters speak in dialogue, they will usually speak in alternating single lines of verse (*stichomythia*) or couplets (*distichomythia*). When this pattern is interrupted, it is called *antilabe*.
- J. L. Hancock, *Studies in Stichomythia* (Chicago 1917).

3. **Messengers:**
The original function of the actor as messenger, who must relate murders and suicides offstage (see Horace *Ars* P. 188). The messenger (*angelos, nuntius*) remains a major role of the actor throughout the Classical period.
- A. Rijksbaron, "How Does a Messenger Begin his Speech?" *ibid.* 293-308.

8. **Set Designer** (*scenographus*):
0. **The Set:**
Discuss the significance of the opposite *parodoi* (e.g. left for city, right for country or sea-port (or vice versa), Pollux 4.126-7, Vitruvius 5.6.8). Was there a second stage-altar (*bomos*) to serve as a prop for altars and tombs, or did the real altar in the orchestra (*thumelē*) serve this function (see J. P. Poe, "The Altar in the Fifth-Century Theatre," *Classical Antiquity* 8 [1989] 116-39)? Discuss "mirror scenes" or "visual rhymes" (e.g. Clytaemnestra leading Cassandra into the house in Aesch. *Ag.* = Orestes leading Clytaemnestra into the house in *Cho.*), getting the last word, the address to the retreating back motivation for entrances and exits, cancelled entries = initial tableaux, the opening and closing of skene-doors, the role of servants (mostly unnamed in the texts, but indicated occasionally in plural numbers of verbs and the like), etc. Comment on the importance of things NOT available to ancient set-designers such as curtains, blackouts, and spotlights. Mary Renault, *The Mask of Apollo* describes an ancient dramatic production.

1. **Masks:**
Masks were part and parcel of the loss of identity implicit in the worship of Dionysus and their use helps to account for the prominence of disguise and recognition themes in Greek drama. The first masking involved dyeing the face purple; see Horace *Ars poetica* 276-7, Hesychius s.v. *hiereus Dionysou*, scholiast recentior ad Ar. *Frogs* 308a, scholiast ad Aristophanes *Acharnians* 499, and Sophron fr. 94 Kaibel. Discuss the theory found in Aulus Gellius *Attic Nights* 5.7 that masks (Latin *personae*) were used to amplify the voices that "sound through" (*personant*) them. You may want to consider the use of masks in contemporary Japanese No theatre. Discuss the use of masks in *DECAPITATION-SCENES* (according to Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibl.* the heads of the Aegypti were buried in different places from their bodies; is this relevant for Aesch. *Danaid* tetralogy?; Eur. *Bacch.*1165ff; despite repeated hints [Aesch. *Libration Bearers* 396, 883-4, 1047, *Eumenides* 592] Orestes probably did not decapitate Clytaemnestra; see also P. D. Kovacs, "Where is Aegisthus' Head?," *Classical Philology* 82 [1987] 139-41). Discuss possible *CHANGES OF MASK* for a single character (e.g. in the blinding-scene in Soph. *Oedipus the King*1185-1298; see W. M. Calder III, "The Blinding: *Oedipus Tyrannus*, 1271-4" *American Journal of Philology* 80
2. **Costumes:**


Consider the following passages and the implications that they have for costumes: Aesch. *Suppl.* 73-4 (foreign complexion), Soph. *Aj.* 1168-81 (haircut), Eur. *Hipp.* 219-220 (Phaedra's hair), *Bacch.* 455-6 (beauty of Dionysus), Ismene's hat, Euripides' rags.

All female roles were played by males; a result of this is that transvestism was a pervasive fact of the Greek theatre, sometimes as in Eur. *Bacchae* or Ar. *Thesmophoriazusae* entering also as a theme.

- L. Ferris, ed. *Crossing the Stage* (London and New York 1993)

9. **Chorus-Member (choreutes):**

Discuss the use of the first person singular; the use of speech and song; the activity or inactivity of the chorus while not speaking; half or divided choruses. The chorus in Aesch. *Libation Bearers* 730 and Eur. *Ion* actually changes the course of the play by telling their mistress that her husband has fathered an illegitimate child; more typically the chorus fails to intervene in the action (e.g. Aesch. *Agam.* 1346-71, Soph. *Trach.* 588-9). The chorus very rarely leaves the orchestra during the chorus of the play, an event called metastasis – e.g. Aesch. *Eum.* 231, Soph. *Ajax* 814-66 (in both of which there is a change of dramatic locale), Eur. *Alc.* 746-816, *Hel.* 385-515, *Pr.* 283-397, on which see Griffith on *Pr.* 128-92, O. Taplin, *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (Oxford 1977) 256-62, and M. L. West, *The Prometheus Trilogy* *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (1979) 190-6, esp. 138-9 and Eur. *Phaethon*. In Eur. *Hipp.* Phaedra invites the chorus on stage to help her eavesdrop; they decline to do so. In such cases, it is necessary for the chorus to re-enter the orchestra by means of a song called an epiparodos (Pollux 4.108). A point to consider: the entire chorus of Aesch. *Nurses of Dionysus* was boiled. Consider the five-act division of later drama (see Horace *Ars* P. 189-90), the change of persona of a chorus that in Aesch. *Eum.* changes from Furies to Eumenides, that in Ar. *Frogs* from Frogs to initiates, and the decline of the chorus in the time of Menander. The
chorus in Shakespeare's *Henry V* and *Romeo and Juliet* was a single person; the multiple-member chorus has occasionally be revived, e.g. by T.S. Eliot in *Murder in the Cathedral*.

- M. Kaimio, *The Chorus of Greek Drama within the Light of the Person and Number Used* (Helsinki 1970).

10. **Extra/Spear-Carrier (kophon prosopon):**

Although the number of actors was at various periods strictly limited, there was a potentially unlimited number of unspeaking roles.


11. **Priest of Dionysus:**

Who attended the theatre (Citizens? Males? Everybody?). Who were the judges? What were their methods of judging? What were the categories in which prizes were awarded? What were the prizes?

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**Supporting Materials for Lectures**

**Lecture 2: Space and Time**

1. **The Architecture of the Theatre**

Discuss the old acting-area in the agora and the collapse circa 499 B.C. of the bleachers (*ikria*) that led to its abandonment. Discuss various features of the fifth-century theatre: the skene (where was it located? Did it move around from play to play? Did it have one front-door or three? Did it/they open inward or outward? [outward according to Eur. Or. Menelaus tells his servants to swing the doors outwards] were there inner doors as well as outer ones? [Mooney 11])

Discuss the back-door: Greek houses ought not to have back doors, but that of the skene is useful and its existence is acknowledged in Soph. *Phil.* 19 and Eur. *Cycl.* 706), orchestra (was it circular, polygonal [Dinsmoor], or rectangular [Gebhard])? Did it originate out of a threshing-floor for which the Classical Greek is *halos* hence English "halo", Mod. Greek *aloneia* [Gardiner]?, raised stage or *logeion* (did it exist? How high was it?, formal thrones, the passageway (*diazoma*), entrance ramps (*eisodoi, parodoi*), the altar in the orchestra (*thymele*) at which Aeschylus had to seek refuge after divulging the secret of the mysteries, *ekkuklema*, *mechane* roof or *theologeion*, seating-capacity (circa
14,000-20,000, less than Plato's "thirty thousand" [Symp. 175e6], acoustics, etc.; discuss the curtain (siparium, aularia) in the Roman theatre and the lack of a Greek equivalent apart from choral songs to mark the division of episodes. Discuss the scenae frons and scene-painting.

- S. Melchinger, *Das Theater der Tragödie* (Munich 1974).
- G. Ley and M. Evans, "The Orchestra as Acting Area in Greek Tragedy," *Ramus* 14 (1985) 75-84.

2. **The Left-Right Distinction**

The left parodos stood for exit to the city, the right for exit to the country (Pollux 4.126-7, Vitruvius 5.6.8).


3. **Dramatic Illusion and Metatheatricality**

The invisible "fourth wall" that separated the acting area from the spectators in the theatre was more or less respected in tragedy, but often broken for humorous effect in comedy. Scholars have dubbed the breaking of this fourth wall "metatheatricality".


4. **The Motif of the Single Day and Other Aspects of Time:**

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," said Jesus (Matthew 6.34) and this may be taken in many ways as an epigraph for all Greek tragedy. The Greeks spoke of man as "ephemeral" (Pindar *Pythian* 8.95) by which they did not
mean so much "short-lived" as "subject to what each day brings," e.g. one day a person may be a king and the next enduring his "day of slavery" (Eur. Hecuba 56), or one day be a wanderer and yet hope to see his "day of homecoming" (Odyssey 1.9). This is what they mean by saying that a "rhythm" governs human life (Archilochus fr. 128 West) and by the phrase, "count no man happy until he is dead" (Solon apud Herodotus 1.32.9, Soph. OT 1527, El. 651). In keeping with these views many plays of Sophocles and Euripides are explicitly tied to the course of a single day, e.g. Soph. Oedipus the King 438, 615, Ajax 131-2, 753-5, Philoctetes 82-5, Eur. Medea 340 = Sen. Medea 294. In the myth of Jason, Medea's drugs rendered him invulnerable to iron or fire for one day only. Ghosts must leave before daybreak: Thyestes in Sen. Ag. and Hamlet père in Shakespeare Hamlet. Consider these and other aspects of time in Greek tragedy.

One important aspect of time is the idea of "the nick of time" (kairos) and of being "too late" (cf. Admetus in Eur. Alc. 940, Deianira’s recognition-scene, and Aeneas’ in Vergil Aen. 6. and St. Augustine’s line quoted by W. B. Yeats, sero te amavi, o pulcritudo tam nova et tam antiqua).

It may be worth considering some later manifestations of similar concerns, e.g. the Roman notion of the dies fastus and the dies nefastus as well as the "seize the day" Epicureanism of Horace; and Castelvetro’s "three unities" along with their influence on French classical drama.

The regular alteration of episode and choral song gives the plays a particular rhythm that tends to defeat time, especially in that the songs often deal either with the past or with gnomic propositions that act to generalize the lesson pointed by the previous episode.

- B. A. Van Groningen, In the Grip of the Past (Leiden 1953).
- J. de Romilly, Time in Greek Tragedy (Ithaca, New York 1968).
- J. F. Callahan, Four Views of Time in Ancient Philosophy (Westport, Conn. 1979).

Supporting Materials for Lectures

Lecture 3: Dionysus and the Origin of Drama

Dionysus Although the Greeks may frequently have said of the tragedies they saw, "this has nothing to do with Dionysus," Polybius 39.2.3), the plays were performed in his honour and may reasonably be expected-perhaps at a deep level-to reflect his true nature. Consider the nature of this god and its possible impact upon the plays performed in his theatre. You may wish to consider his status as god of the whole liquid element (Plutarch, Isis and Osiris 35, 364a, quoting Pindar fr. 153 Maehler), and his consequent association with epiphytal vegetation such as ivy, mistletoe and the vine, the role of intoxication with wine and the concomitant experience of intensified mental power (mania), mob-psychology or "the Madness of Crowds" (this being the subtitle of Charles Mackay’s 1852 work, Extraordinary Popular Delusions 2nd ed, e.g. during the pannuchis or night-long revel) in contrast to the Apollonian principium individuationis or "principle of Individualization", covering the face with purple wine lees (Horace Ars P. 276-7) and later
with masks, loss of identity in play-acting, the role of Dionysus as a "kommender Gott" or a god who irrupts into the normal orderly life of the community (e.g. the myths of Dionysus and Lycurgus, the pirates and Pentheus). Discuss Dionysus as Liber. Consider the discovery of wine: Icarius gave it to his neighbours, who thinking that he had poisonous them, murdered him; cf. the story of Noah lying naked in his tent.


**The Origin of Tragedy**
The origin of tragedy has been sought (i) in the spirit of music (Nietzsche), (ii) in the "Year Daimon" alleged to govern the calendar of the agricultural year: agon, pathos, threnos, angelos, anagnorisis and apotheosis (Murray), (iii) the trance-dance of the shaman's ritual nome (Lindsay and Kirby), and (iv) in animal-sacrifice (Burkert; on a goat (tragos) as the price/prize for a song (aoidos), see Theocritus 7; note the central altar of the thumele in the orchestra). Discuss these rival theories.

- W. Burkert, "Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 7 (1966) 87-121.

**The Origin of Comedy**
The word "comedy" is related to several other Greek words. (i) It suggests *komos* (Athletic or military) victory celebration, or carnival. Discuss the nature of the carnival-world (i.e. topsyturvisness, e.g. women in power in *Lysistrata: Women Celebrating the Feast of Demeter and Women in the Assembly*, escape-valve, e.g. from war in *Peace*) and how it is preserved in ancient comedy. (ii) The word is also related to *kome*, which, according to Aristotle *Poet.* 1448a 35ff is a word for "village". Consider the comic nature of village life with its rusticity or non-urbanity and its relaxation of the laws of the city, especially as regards sex (cf. Hamlet's punning reference to "country/count-ry matters" in Shakespeare*Hamlet* 3.2.116). (iii) The word is also, perhaps, related to *koimao* "to sleep" and *koma* "a deep sleep", thereby suggesting the oneiric or dream-like, wish-fulfillment quality of comedy as well as the nocturnal setting of the Dionysiac ritual, the pannuchis. (iv) the word recalls *enkomion* or "praise" and hints that
comedy involves an ambiguous relation to its characters, at once glorifying the eiron and deriding the alazon. Discuss also the politically conservative nature of comedy.

- E. Segal, "The Eymologies of Comedy," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 14 (1973) 75-81.

Supporting Materials for Lectures

**Lecture 4: Turning Points**

1. Dramas of Choice
   1. Choice
       The question, "What shall I do?" (Greek *ti draso?*, Latin *quid facerem?*) is common in drama - in fact the word "drama" is related to the word *draso*. Those tragedies that do not, like Aristotle's beloved *Oedipus the King*, enter on an ignorant character's recognition of himself or another, involve instead a moment of dilemma and choice and hence some such question as this. Consider these moments of choice. Relate this topic to the moment of crisis in epic as discussed by J. Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness* (Toronto 1976). Consider the possibility of repenting one's choices, as in the nurse's line in Eur. *Hippolytus* 436, "in this world second thoughts, it seems, are best." *Oedipus* chooses to know the truth, however painful; compare the character in *Missing* who says, "the worst thing is not knowing". If persuasion can manifest itself as temptation or seduction, can choice manifest itself as conversion?


   - B. Snell, *Aischylos und das Handeln im Drama* (Leipzig, 1928) 13, 32f, 131f.

2. Persuasion

   In those tragedies in which the tragic action hinges upon the deliberate choice of the main character, that choice is often brought about as a result of the persuasion (*peitho*) of another character. Consider the nature of this persuasion. You might contrast persuasion on the one hand with brute force (*bia*), e.g. in Aesch. *Supp*. between the Argives and the Egyptians, and on the other with cunning guile (*dolos*) and note that persuasion usually occurs in *stichomythia* while deception takes the form of a set-speech, *rhesis*. Compare the Platonic opposition of philosophic dialectic versus sophistic rhetoric.


3. Warning

   The opposite of persuasion is the warning figure (*nouthetes*), e.g. Oceanus in Aesch. *Prom. Bound* 307-20, Ismene in Soph. *Ant.* 1ff, Croesus in Herodotus, and the "restrainer" on the Boston *Oresteia* crater.

1. Error

In his Poetics 13.5 (1453a 8-23) Aristotle says that tragedy presents a great man brought low by a *megale hamartia* (his examples are Oedipus and Thyestes). The phrase is taken to mean very different things by different people: either (i) a moral failing or character-flaw (German *Schuld*; Harsh) or (ii) an intellectual error in judgement or even a mistake about the identity of a person (Van Braam, Breme) or (iii) some kind of combination of the two (Stinton). Which of these views is closest to describing the central problem of Greek tragedy? Comment on the possible relationship of the term *hamartia* (rarely used by the tragedians themselves) with *ate* (see Dawe and Golden). Is *ate* itself just a fancy term for "the Devil made me do it"? If so, why do those who plead *ate* accept their punishment like Agamemnon in the *Iliad*? (See J. Stallmache, *Ate* [Meisenheim am Glan 1968] and R. E. Doyle, *Ate: Its Use and Meaning* [New York 1984].) Consider the Latin term *culpa* as applied e.g. by Vergil to Dido (*Aeneid* 4.19; Moles).

Compare the paradoxical words of Prometheus in Aesch. Prom Bound 266, "willingly, willingly did I do wrong," Antigone's claim that she knew what she was doing, Socrates' statement, "no-one does wrong willingly" (Plato Prot. 345d, cf. Simonides apud Gorg. 509e, etc.) And that of St. Paul, "the good I see I do not..." (Romans 7.15). Medea says video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor (Ovid Met. 7.21, cf. Eur. Hipp. 380-1 with the comments of E. R.Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* [Berkeley and Los Angeles 1951] 186-7). Does Dawe's equation of *hamartia* and *ate* with its implication that the Gods are to blame undermine the equation of *hamartia* and *culpa* or does the concept of "overdetermination" account for this? See G. Calogero, "Gorgias and the Socratic Principle ofhamartia and ate with its implication that the Gods are to blame undermine the equation of hamartia and culpa or does the concept of "overdetermination" account for this? See G. Calogero, "Gorgias and the Socratic Principle

2. Dramas of Error
2. Recognition

In plays of homecoming and in plays where the central character makes an intellectual error, there is often a scene inherited from the epic in which the returning character is recognized (Odysseus, Orestes) or in which the victim of hamartia recognizes the truth (Deianira, Admetus); in a famous case where both are true the homecoming victim recognizes himself (Oedipus). Consider the nature of these recognition-scenes (anagnorises, Latin cognitio). Does anagnorisis relate in any way to the Platonic doctrine of anamnesis? Lichas recognizes Encolpius by his penis in Petronius Sat. 105. On recognition that comes too late, see the motif of the single day. Jesus was recognized after meeting his disciples on the road to Emmaus and breaking bread with them; he offers his wounds to Thomas as recognition-tokens.

2.1 Recognition in Homer

- A. Auerbach, Mimesis (Princeton 1953) 3-23.
- S. Murnaghan, Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey (Princeton 1987).

2.2 Recognition in Drama in General

- F. Solmsen, Electra and Orestes: Three Recognitions in Greek Tragedy (Amsterdam 1967).

2.3 Recognition in Aeschylus Libation Bearers 205ff (for recognition by means of footprints, see M. Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn chapter 4)


3. Deception

A number of heroes and heroines, particularly in Sophocles, are led to commit acts of hamartia because they are the victims of deception or apate. Apate involves active distortion, e.g. through suppression or ambiguity concerning motive as distinct from objective falsehood concerning facts (lying, pseudos such as Phaedra's letter in Eur. Hipp.); in this respect, deception is closely linked to IRONY. Consider these scenes: e.g. Aesch. Pers 352ff, Oedipus the King 123-5 and 783-5 and Trachiniae 248-90, 569-77 and 610-3, Electra 680-763, Ajax 644-92 (Does Ajax deliberately lie to his friends or has he unintentionally misled them?) And Philoctetes 343-90, Eur. Medea 964-75, Vergil, Aeneid 2.57-75. Note the artful word-order in Lichas' speech and the creative invention in the paedagogus' speech in the Electra.

Consider the theological aspects of deception. Note that gods are capable of deception in Homer (Iliad 2.1-15, 14.153-352) and Aeschylus (fr. 350 Nauck² = Plato Republic 383 A) but not in Herodotus (1.90-1) or in Sophocles, with the possible exception of Athena in the Ajax. Pindar and Plato react to Xenophanes' charge that the gods commit adultery, like and deceive one another by emending the relevant myths. Deception seems to escape censure in the Bible (Laban and his daughters; the blessing of Jacob).

Deception is present in comedy, as when Xanthias claims to be a god (Ar. Frogs) or the Spartan woman claims to be pregnant (Ar. Lysistrata), but it becomes crucial to the plot only in New Comedy, e.g. the claim that the house is haunted in Plaut. The Haunted House. (See R. Z. Burrows, "Deception as a Comic Device in the Odyssey," Classical World 59 (October 1965) 33-6.

3. Reversal

1. Reversal

The perfect tragedy, according to Aristotle Poetics 1450a 37, 1452a 23 does not march on relentlessly toward doom, but rather presents a reversal of fortune (peripeteia) by which the apparently fortunate hero is suddenly brought low. Consider this process. A tragedy with a simple plot has a gradual development from joy to sorrow (e.g. Aesch. Pers.) or vice versa (e.g. Aesch. Eum.); this development is called metasis. A tragedy with a complex plot has a sudden reversal from joy to sorrow (e.g. Soph. OT, Eur. Her.) or vice versa (e.g. Eur. Alc.). Such a tragedy often involves the allegedly desirable coincidence of peripeteia and recognition. There are plays without any reversal at all (e.g. Aesch. Supp., Prom. Bound), although these may be structurally incomprehensible divorced, as they now are, from the tetralogies that originally contained them.

In comedy, reversal may be a tool in the joke that operates through defeat of expectation (para prosdokian).

- A. C. Coolidge, Jr., Beyond the Fatal Flaw (Lake MacBride 1980) chapter 3.

2. Surprise

A possible ingredient in reversal is surprise. How can we speak of surprise in a play whose story is known to everyone in advance, as is the case with all surviving tragedies?


Supporting Materials for Lectures

Lecture 5: People On Stage and Off

1. Dramatis Personae

1. Character

Do tragedians bother to create consistent characters (ethe) for the figures in their plays? If so, by what means? Are the characters three-dimensional and does such three-dimensionality arise from consistency or inconsistency? What is the essential nature (or "spine") of certain characters in Greek tragedy? Is there a Greek word for "will" and the concept to match? Discuss the role of nature and nurture in producing character, esp. in Soph. Phil. Discuss the use of "foil" characters. Contrast the tragic idea of a distinct individual person with the comic idea of a stock, easily replicated type. Persons can change and grow, while types can only repeat their distinctive actions; in lieu of growth
they can at best be expelled from society. Particularly interesting are the minor characters who are transformed by a few strokes from mere ciphers to living, breathing people (e.g. the watchman in Aesch. Ag., Cilissa in Cho. and the guard in Soph. Ant.).

1. **General**

2. **Aeschylus**

3. **Sophocles**

4. **Euripides**
   - S. Flygt, "Treatment of Character in Euripides and Seneca: The *Hippolytus*," *Classical Journal* 29 (1933-4) 507-16.

5. **Seneca**

2. **Hubris (and Sophrosyne)**
   Tragic characters are frequently led into error through the feeling of "hubris" (originally a Greek word), meaning one who has gotten too big for his britches and who, in consequence does not know himself.
3. Irony (and Alazoneia)

Consider the question of dramatic irony as it is used by the Greek tragedians (particularly Soph., e.g. Oedipus the King) and the relation of this device to the sequence of error and recognition. Irony is sometimes involved in deception whereby one character misleads the other without actually uttering a falsehood (e.g. Ajax in the Trugrede). Often it involves ambiguity. Consider the role of the audience's foreknowledge of ready-made plots and/or plots divulged to the audience at the outset by a divine prologue-speech and of Freudian slips like Oedipus' "robber" for "robbers". Discuss the word eiron, both in its role in comedy (in contrast to alazon) and in connection with Socrates (who preferred truth over appearance and who was the inspiration for a whole genre of quasi-drama, the dialogue. The eiron operates by means of questioning and cross-examination (elenchos); this makes him similar to the persuader.

F. Ahl, Sophocles’ Oedipus (Ithaca, NY 1991) 63 speaks of "a kind of reverse dramatic irony, where something known to the character in a play or epic is withheld from the audience". Is there any scope for this in Greek drama?

0. Irony

- G. G. Sedgewick, Of Irony: Especially in Drama 2nd ed. (Toronto 1948).
- B. L. States, Irony and Drama: A Poetics (Ithaca 1971).

1. Ambiguity

- W. B. Stanford, Ambiguity in Greek Literature (Oxford 1939) 66.
2. The Audience

1. Imitation

In the tenth book of Plato's *Republic* Socrates enunciates his theory that poetry is an imitation (mimesis) of reality, and on this basis he develops his rule about which artists should be allowed into the idea state (namely, only those who imitate noble actions). This idea of imitation is taken up by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, who holds that the ideal work of art should be the entelechical expression of what it seeks to represent or imitate, yet Plato's idea of imitation (that seeing bad actions inspires people to act badly) is opposed to Aristotle's notion of catharsis (that seeing bad actions frees one from the desire to act badly). How does this view of art accord with its true nature? Why do we enjoy a representation of something that in real life disgusts us?

- J. Tate, "'Imitation' in Plato's *Republic*," *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1928) 16-23.
- L. Golden, "Is Tragedy the 'Imitation of a Serious Action'?," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 6 (1965) 283-9.

2. Catharsis

Aristotle says in the *Poetics* 1449b 28 that the function of tragedy is to provide a katharsis of the emotions of the spectators. Modern scholars have claimed that the term katharsis refers to (i) PSYCHOLOGICAL PURGATION whereby tragedy acts as a homeopathic cure for the "disease" of fear and pity, using the make-believe terror and pity vicariously experienced of the stage to drive out the real terror and pity from the minds of the audience viewed as consisting of four humours that must be balanced in order to produce a good temperament, an interpretation which recalls the etymological connection of "drama" to "drastic" [but do we feel this way about violence on television?] (Bernays); (ii) MORAL PURIFICATION whereby a proper discipline is placed on the audience's reaction to pity and fear (Aristotle *Nic. Eth.* 1106b); (iii) EXONERATION OF THE TRAGIC HERO (Else pages 224-32, 423-47); and (iv) INTELLECTUAL CLARIFICATION whereby tragedy imitates by mimesis pity and fear and so allows the audience to understand them better (Golden 1976). Explain this idea and consider its merits. Discuss also the comic catharsis of (antisocial) wishes and hopes (Reckford).

- J. Tate, *"Tragedy and Black Bile," Hermathena* 50 (1937) 1-25.
3. Terror and Pity

According to Aristotle, the function of tragedy is to arouse in the spectators feelings of terror (phobos) and pity (eleos), yet Phynicus was fined for his Sack of Miletus because it reminded the Athenians of their own suffering, and all the pregnant women in the audience of Aesch. Eum. miscarried. Consider the emotional response of the audience to tragedy. Compare the appeal for pity in forensic oratory, on which see Carey on Lysias 7.41. A handbook on this subject was written by Thrasymachus (Plato Phaedr. 267c, Aristotle Rhet. 1404a 14).

- W. B. Stanford, Greek Tragedy and the Emotions (London 1983).

Supporting Materials for Lectures

Lecture 6: The Basic Plot Types

The plots of Greek plays seem in general to fall into four categories, (i) sacrifice-plots, (ii) supplicant plots, (iii) homecoming-plots, and (iv) quest-plots. Consider each of these four types. Discuss the kinds of plot types that do not exist, such as love-stories like Romeo and Juliet, Dido and Aeneas, and Twelfth Night or stories of spiritual salvation, such as passion plays, Faust or Parsifal.
1. **Sacrifice Plots**


Compare the story of Japheth's daughter (Judges 11). Note that literal blood-sacrifice never takes place during any extant play except for the sacrifice of the wine-skin in Ar. Thesm.; sometimes awkward interventions are necessary to avoid having it take place (e.g. Ar. Peace 1017, Birds 848, Acharnians 241). Sacrifice is sometimes for the good of the state (Polyxena, Menoeceus, Iphigeneia) and sometimes for that of the family (Antigone, Alcestis). Old men are never the victims, young men seldom so, virgins almost always. The sacrificial victim is almost always a volunteer and in a religious context would be a martyr.

- W. Burkert, "Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 7 (1966) 87-121.

2. **Suppliant Story-Pattern**

See Aesch. *Suppl.*, Eur. *Suppl.*, Heracleidae. The suppliant or supplicant was the ancient world's equivalent of the refugee. Those most often in need of refuge are women and children, and they sought sanctuary by means of touch, either of chin (gonos), knee (gonu) or altar.

3. **Homecoming-Story-Pattern**

The revenge-tragedy that is so familiar to students of Elizabethan theatre, e.g. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, is found in the classical drama (see A. P. Burnett, "Medea and the Tragedy of Revenge," *Classical Philology* 68 [1973] 1-24, and R. Meridor, "Hecuba's Revenge," *American Journal of Philology* 99 [1978] 28-35), but usually as a component of the homecoming (*nostos*, origin of the English word, "nostalgia") story-pattern. The homecoming is often linked to (i) revenge: e.g. *Odyssey*, Aesch. *Sept.*, Ag. *Lib. Bearers*, Soph. *El.*, OT, Eur. *El.*, *Bacchae*, (ii) when the person returning kills those at home, as when Theseus forgot to change the colour of his sails or with the hero who cannot leave his work at the office, e.g. Soph. *Aj.*, Eur. *Heracles*, W. B. Yeats, "Cuchulain's Fight with the Sea" and J. Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam* (New York 1994), (iii) when the person returning is killed by those at home like Agamemnon or finds his home in ruins like Theseus in Eur. *Hipp.*, or (iv) sacrifice like Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11.29-40, *Beauty and the Beast*). Note that we all get together to throw things at victors: the tickertape parade and its ancient forerunner, the *phylllobolia* "throwing of leaves" where the leaves are a harmless substitute for more lethal weapons such as stones (See W. Burkert, *Homo Necans* [Berkeley 1983] 5). Is the person who returns the same as the one who went away (cf. *Le retour de Martin Guerre*, *Summersby*)? Note the relation of homecoming to choice (with disguise and recognition) and error (with subsequent recognition).

- U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Homerische Untersuchungen* (Berlin 1884) 114 and 162 note (on "the return of the hero at the new moon").
- C. A. Sowa, *Traditional Themes and the Homeric Hymns* (Chicago 1984) 95-120.

4. **Quest Story-Pattern**

This story-pattern is typical of comedy. The *eiron* is on a quest to ride the *alazon* out of town, as in a western. Sometimes instead he goes to bring somebody back to the community, e.g. Ar. *Peace* in which Trygaeus flies to heaven on a dung-beetle to seek Zeus's help in ending the Peloponnesian war, and *Frogs* in which Dionysus goes to Hell to bring back the recently dead Eupirides.