

TRAGEDY is:

- a) the imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude;
- b) in language embellished by artistic ornament;
- c) in the form of action, not narrative;
- d) through pity and fear effecting the purgation of these emotions;
- e) having different parts, some using the medium of verse alone, others with the aid of song.

Every tragedy has Six parts: Plot; Character; Diction; Thought; Spectacle; Song.

Tragedy is the imitation of an action and of life. Character determines men's qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse. Therefore, dramatic action is not with a view to the representation of character (which is subsidiary to the action).

The incidents and plot are the end of a tragedy...and the end is the chief thing of all.

Without action there cannot be tragedy; there may be tragedy without character. (speeches expressive of character, however well finished in Diction and Thought, do not produce the essential tragic effect so well as a plot which has artistically constructed incidents.)

The end of tragedy is pleasure, understanding of the universal and the purgation of emotions.

Elements of emotional interest in tragedy are : Anagnorisis (Recognition) and Peripeteia (Reversal)..

It is best if they coincide.

Therefore, in order of importance the elements of a tragedy are;

1. Plot, 2. character, 3. Thought, 4. Diction, 5. Song, 6 Spectacle.

PLOT

1. It must be a whole, with a beginning after which the middle and end follow naturally on each other.
2. It must be of a certain magnitude.. neither too large nor too small.
3. It must have unity, but unity of plot is not just unity of hero. The unity of the plot consists in the structural union of the parts which are so arranged that, if one part is removed or displaced, the whole will be spoilt. (If the part removed does not make any difference, it is not an organic part of the whole.)
4. Poetry is more philosophical than history, which relates what has actually happened, while poetry expresses what may happen. Poetry is more universal, History more particular.
5. Plot must be imitation of action inspiring fear or pity; this effect is produced best when it is surprising. It is heightened when they follow as cause and effect.
6. Complex plots will contain Reversal and Recognition. It is best when these coincide (as in OEDIPUS TYRANNUS).
7. Another element in tragedy is the scene of suffering.
8. The best tragedy should concern a man renowned and prosperous, who is not eminently good and just, but one whose misfortune is brought about not by vice, but by some frailty or error (Hamartia).
9. Fear and pity may be aroused by some spectacular means, but it is better if they result from the inner structure of the play.
10. Actions must be those of people who are not naturally enemies; (if an enemy kills an enemy, no pity is excited except in so far as the suffering is pitiful in itself.) The best type of plot is when e.g. a brother kills a brother (or intends to), a son his father , etc.
It is not tragic if a bad man comes to a bad end (no pity).
It is not tragic if a bad man becomes good by Reversal . (more like Comedy)

CHARACTER

1. It must be good. (Even a woman, in this context, can be good.)
2. It must aim at being appropriate.. the right type e.g. a man should be brave, but a woman should not necessarily be brave, neither should she be unscrupulously clever.
3. It must be true to life...realism.
4. It must be consistent. The poet should aim at either the necessary or the probable so that it is credible.
5. The 'deus ex machina' should only be used for events external to the drama: for antecedent or subsequent events or those beyond the range of human knowledge.
6. The poet should preserve the type , but ennoble it.

THOUGHT

This consists of every effect which has to be produced by speech; proof and refutation, excitation of the feelings, suggestion of importance or its opposite .

Thought is one of the causes of action...it covers the mind's activities from reasoning, perception and formulation of emotion.

Thought is expressed in speeches and is therefore closely linked to

DICTION

This covers language and its use..the way command, request, prayer, statement, or question is expressed.

Aristotle turns to study Rhetoric and analysis of word, sentence, letter, syllable, connecting word, case (inflection) or phrase; each is technically examined.

He also examines metaphor (e.g. light and darkness in the OEDIPUS TYR.) and lyric poetry especially in choral odes.

DICTION, SONG and SPECTACLE

are concerned with the production of the play. They are therefore essential parts of tragedy, but concern the poet less than the first three elements.

N.B. Refer to Functions of the Chorus

THE CHORUS

should be regarded as one of the actors and even of greater importance because it must be integral a "sine qua non" and it is therefore unifying.

N.B. In the earliest tragedy we have, Aeschylus' "Suppliant Women", the Chorus are the subject of the tragedy.__(eponymous)

(They are on the stage from nearly the beginning until the end.)

RECOGNITION

There are four different methods:

1. By signs (bodily marks) least artistic.
2. Invented at will by poet ... e.g. Orestes in the "IPHIGENIA".
3. By memory being awakened.... e.g. by an object.
4. By a process of reasoning... e.g. as in the "CHOEPHORI".