

## Chapter 1 : Odes from the Greek dramatists, tr. into lyric metres by English poets and scholars, - CORE

*The loss of the greater and, as we may conjecture, the better, part Of the works Qof Pindar has raised these choral odes from the Greek dramatists to a position of greatly increased interest and importance, and there is a whole realm of Greek thought and of Greek religion to which they are our only guide.*

Aristotelian hypothesis[ edit ] The origin of the word tragedy has been a matter of discussion from ancient times. The primary source of knowledge on the question is the Poetics of Aristotle. Aristotle was able to gather first-hand documentation from theater performance in Attica , which is inaccessible to scholars today. His work is therefore invaluable for the study of ancient tragedy, even if his testimony is open to doubt on some points. According to Aristotle, tragedy evolved from the satyr dithyramb , an Ancient Greek hymn , which was sung along with dancing in honor of Dionysus. Others suggest that the term came into being when the legendary Thespis the root for the English word thespian competed in the first tragic competition for the prize of a goat hence tragedy. The Oxford English Dictionary adds to the standard reference to "goat song", that: Jane Ellen Harrison pointed out that Dionysus, god of wine a drink of the wealthy classes was actually preceded by Dionysus, god of beer a drink of the working classes. Athenian beer was obtained from the fermentation of barley, which is tragos in Greek. Thus, it is likely that the term was originally meant to be "odes to spelt ," and later on, it was extended to other meanings of the same name. Winnington-Ingram points out that we can easily trace various influences from other genres. How these have come to be associated with one another remains a mystery however. Speculating on the problem, Scodel writes that: First, somebody created a new kind of performance by combining a speaker with a chorus and putting both speaker and chorus in disguise as characters in a story from legend or history. Second, this performance was made part of the City Dionysia at Athens. Third, regulations defined how it was to be managed and paid for. It is theoretically possible that all these were simultaneous, but it is not likely. This was brief and burlesque in tone because it contained elements of the Satyr play. Gradually, the language became more serious and the meter changed from trochaic tetrameter to the more prosaic iambic trimeter. In Herodotus Histories [9] and later sources, [10] the lyric poet Arion of Methymna is said to be the inventor of the dithyramb. The dithyramb was originally improvised, but later written down before performance. The Greek chorus of up to 50 men and boys danced and sang in a circle, probably accompanied by an aulos , relating to some event in the life of Dionysus. As tragedy developed, the actors began to interact more with each other, and the role of the chorus became smaller. He answers the questions of the chorus and so evokes their songs. He answers with a long speech about his own situation or, when he enters as messenger, with a narrative of disastrous events Naturally, the transformation of the leader into an actor entailed a dramatization of the chorus. This took place in BC during the Dionysia established by Peisistratus. Other playwrights of the time were Choerilus , author of probably one hundred and sixty tragedies with thirteen victories , and Pratinas of Phlius , author of fifty works, of which thirty-two are satyr plays. At this time, satyr plays were presented alongside tragedies. Pratinas definitely competed with Aeschylus and worked from BC. Another playwright was Phrynichus. Besides introducing dialogues in iambic trimeter and including female characters for the first time, Phrynichus also introduced historical content to the genre of tragedy e. His first victory in a contest was in BC. At this time, the organization of plays into trilogies began. Aeschylus Aeschylus was to establish the basic rules of tragic drama. Trilogies were performed in sequence over a full day, sunrise to sunset. At the end of the last play, a satyr play was staged to revive the spirits of the public, possibly depressed by the events of the tragedy. So, for instance, in Aeschylus, Zeus always has the role of ethical thinking and action. Sophocles Plutarch , in the Life of Cimon, recounts the first triumph of the young talented Sophocles against the famous and hitherto unchallenged Aeschylus. Many innovations were introduced by Sophocles, and earned him at least twenty triumphs. Compared to Aeschylus, the chorus became less important in explaining the plot and there was a greater emphasis on character development and conflict. In Oedipus at Colonus , the chorus repeats "not to be born is best. Euripides Votive relief that probably celebrates the triumph of the Bacchae The peculiarities that distinguish the Euripidean tragedies from those of the other two playwrights are the search for technical

experimentation, and increased attention for feelings, as a mechanism to elaborate the unfolding of tragic events. The hero described in his tragedies is no longer the resolute character as he appears in the works of Aeschylus and Sophocles, but often an insecure person, troubled by internal conflict. The tragedy usually begins with a prologue, from *pro* and *logos*, "preliminary speech" in which one or more characters introduce the drama and explain the background of the ensuing story. Some plays do not adhere to this conventional structure. Language[ edit ] The Greek dialects used are the Attic dialect for the parts spoken or recited, and a literary Doric dialect for the vocals. For the metre, the spoken parts mainly use the iambic trimeter, described as the most natural by Aristotle, [8] while the choral parts rely on a variety of meters. Anapaests were typically used as the chorus or a character moved on or off the stage, and lyric metres were used for the choral odes. These included Dactylo-epitrites and various Aeolic metres, sometimes interspersed with iambs. Dochmiacs often appear in passages of extreme emotion. Mimesis and Catharsis As already mentioned, Aristotle wrote the first critical study of the tragedy: *Katharsis*, on this reading, will denote the overall ethical benefit that accrues from such an intense yet fulfilling integrated experience. Exempt from the stresses that accompany pity and fear in social life, the audience of tragedy can allow these emotions an uninhibited flow that Aristotle asserted that a play must be complete and whole, in other words, it must have unity, *i*. The philosopher also asserted that the action of epic poetry and tragedy differ in length, "because in tragedy every effort is made for it to take place in one revolution of the sun, while the epic is unlimited in time. In ancient Greek culture, says Nietzsche, "there is a conflict between the plastic arts, namely the Apollonian, and non-plastic art of music, the Dionysian. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed. March Learn how and when to remove this template message

Greek tragedy as we understand it today, was not merely a show, but rather a collective ritual of the polis. A spectator of a Greek dramatic performance in the latter half of the fifth century B. Below him, in the best location in the theatre, is the throne of the priest of Dionysus who presides in a sense over the whole performance. The theatron is large-in fact, the one in Athens, in the Theatre of Dionysus, with its seats banked up on the south slope of the Acropolis, seated approximately 17, persons. The spectator sees before him a level circular area called the orchestra, which means literally the "dancing place". In the centre of the orchestra stands an altar. A part of the dramatic action will take place in the orchestra, as well as the manoeuvres and dance figures performed by the Chorus as they present their odes. To the right and left of the theatron are the *paradoi*, which are used not only by the spectators for entering and leaving the theatre, but also for the entrances and exits of actors and the Chorus. Directly beyond the circular orchestra lies the *skene* or scene building. In most plays the *skene* represents the facade of a house, a palace, or a temple. The *skene* normally had three doors which served as additional entrances and exits for the actors. Immediately in front of the scene-building was a level platform, in the fifth century B. This was called the *proskenion* or *logeion* where much of the dramatic action of the plays takes place. Flanking the *proskenion* were two projecting wings, the so-called *paraskenia*. It must be remembered that the *skene*, since at first it was only a wooden structure, was flexible in its form, and was probably modified frequently. Tragedies can discuss use the Greek mythical past as a metaphor for the deep problems of current Athenian society. In the Athenian democracy wealthy citizens were required to fund public services, a practice known as *liturgy*. During the *Dionysia* a contest took place between three plays, chosen by the archon eponymous. This procedure might have been based on a provisional script, each of which had to submit a tetralogy consisting of three tragedies and a satyr play. Each tetralogy was recited in one day, so that the recitation of tragedies lasted three days. The fourth day was dedicated to the staging of five comedies. At the end of the performances, the judges placed a tablet inscribed with the name of their choice inside an urn, after which five tablets were randomly selected. The person who received the highest amount of votes won. The winning author, actor and choir were thus selected not purely by lot, but chance did play a part. The passion of the Greeks for the tragedy was overwhelming: Athens, said the critics, spent more on theatre than on the fleet. Seven of these have survived, including the only complete trilogy which has come down from antiquity, the *Oresteia*, and some papyrus fragments:

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### Chapter 9 : Odes from the Greek dramatists, - CORE

*- Greek dramatists were very economical in the number of events and character traits they included. They paid little attention to the physical and sociological aspects of characterization, concentrating instead on the psychological and ethical attributes of their personages.*