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I saw all this and understood. (Job)
ARISTOTLE AND THE PARADOX OF TRAGEDY

BY JOHN MORSELL

The paradox of tragedy in simple terms may be stated thus: human misery is repulsive to us in real life, yet it somehow pleases us in tragedy. Indeed, tragedy is considered by many to be man's highest art form, and to classify a play as a tragedy is to predicate value of it. Why do we get pleasure from reading or watching drama in which our fellow human beings are portrayed as suffering? If anyone would object that we do not take pleasure in tragedies as in a stewed steak, let him substitute some other word. Why do we receive satisfaction from tragedy, or why do we want to see tragedy?

The oldest attempt to explain the pleasure of tragedy is contained in Aristotle's Poetics. Written in the fourth century B.C., this work has greatly influenced past thinkers on the problem, such as Milton, Cornelle, and Racine, and is still highly regarded today. It is the purpose of my paper to try to answer the question of why tragedy pleases by investigating Aristotle's theory, criticizing any shortcomings I may find in it, and using what is valuable in it to come closer to an answer.

Let us consider Aristotle's definition of tragedy:

A tragedy, then, is the imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; having for its object a series of movable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.

A tragedy, first of all, is the imitation of an action. Exactly what Aristotle meant by imitation is unsure; but we do know that he did not mean an exact copying of human actions, for the language is in verse and is embellished, there are music and song, and the stage is not made to be completely realistic. The tragedy may even produce its effect without being viewed, by merely being read. In both reading the play and in watching it, however, the words have a meaningful content; they reproduce in the mind sense images, ideas, and emotions. So in this way tragedy can imitate actions, by using language to create likenesses of actions in the mind of its reader and spectator. (Henceforth I shall use the word spectator to include both the play-reader and the play-watcher.)

Here, for Aristotle, was one source of pleasure, not only in the tragic poem, but in all poetry, the pleasure of imitation. The spectator in contemplating the likeness "finds himself learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah, that is he.' If he has not seen the original, the pleasure will come, not from imitation, but from "the execution, the coloring, or some other such cause." Man's instinct for imitating and enjoying imitations and his instinct for 'harmony and rhythm' were what led him to create poetry in the first place.

The other and proper source of the pleasure of tragedy, according to Aristotle, is "the incidents arousing pity and fear" whereby the tragedy accomplishes "its catharsis of such emotions." This phrase concerning catharsis is probably the most disputed in all the Poetics. Although some interpretations of it have made catharsis a process taking place within the characters of the tragedy, it seems fairly evident from the rest of the Poetics that Aristotle thought of it as taking place within the spectator.

To better understand what Aristotle meant by catharsis, we shall first investigate his idea of emotions. In the Nichomachean Ethics he defines emotions or feelings as "all states of the mind attended by pleasure or pain." Pity is a painful state caused by the threat of pain or destruction to a person undeserving of suffering them, evils of the kind that one might himself expect to suffer, and again if they appear to be dear to him. Fear is a mental state of pain caused by an imagination of an impending evil which will be destructive or painful. We do not fear all evils, but only those which promise major pain or damage to us, and even those only when they appear to be close at hand. So pity is for another's suffering; when similar pain seems imminent to ourselves, we fear.

There are several ways in which Aristotle's catharsis of these emotions has been thought to operate. Many see it as a psychic cleansing, similar to a physical purge, aimed at an unwholesome condition of the mind. John Milton viewed catharsis in this way:

"Tragedy (is) said by Aristotle to be of power by raising pity and fear, or terror, those passions, and such like passions, that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated."

This interpretation of catharsis as a homeopathic cure says that the emotions are aroused in the spectator by the incidents of the tragedy and that when the emotions are released, a pleasurable purge is effected wherein they return to a normal level. Another view of catharsis is that it operates as an atollopathic cure of excess emotion. Pity and fear are aroused and, as opposites, cancel each other. This latter interpretation seems invalid as Aristotle's meaning of catharsis, for in his mind pity and fear were not opposites and did not oppose the effect of one another. On the contrary, these two emotions reinforced each other and built upon one mother to heighten the total emotional effect.

Aristotle's probable meaning of catharsis was as a homeopathic cure. Let us now examine it in this light, keeping in mind his definitions of emotion, pity, and fear. Are pity and fear necessary to and characteristic of our response to tragedy? Certainly we do not react to tragic suffering exactly as we would if such misfortunes were happening to us or to those around us. In real life pity could lead us to try to stop the suffering, but in tragedy all practical action is ruled out. Some sort of feeling for the hero does seem necessary, however, for a total aesthetic appreciation of the tragedy. If our pity remains within the context of the play, it can be aesthetically valid; and theoretically, the more of our powers that enter into the aesthetic experience, the richer that experience will be. A merely intellectual understanding of the hero's suffering unaccompanied by sympathy seems a less full way to appreciate the tragedy than by using both our intellect and emotions.

But what about fear? Certainly fear does not always have to accompany pity; pity may exist alone. To pity another's pain I must know what pain is; and although the imminent prospect of pain to myself will arouse fear, it is not necessary, for the experience of pity, that I should experience or imagine fear. Does not the tragedian, moreover, set up the tragedy so that I will not experience fear? The characters are often set in the past, they are idealized, their speech is not ordinary, their clothing is different, there is music, and the scenery is not realistically, as was said before. The very fact that the spectator is at the theater or reading the book makes him aware that the action is not real and that there is no danger to him. All these factors help to establish a proper "psychological distance" between the action and the spectator. For if we, as spectators, thought that some suffering were about to strike us, as does the small child in watching the horror movie, our attention would no longer be wholly object-centered or aesthetic. We would turn to self-concern as does the child, in covering our eyes and screaming at the appearance of the twenty-foot tall fire-breathing armadillo in the horror movie. Fear is necessary, by a self-concerned emotion, hence opposed to the aesthetic attitude.

How could such fear, moreover, be a source of pleasure? Let us pretend that after returning home from watching one of the Oedipus tragedies, our friend Aristotle went to bed and began to dream. In his dream he had killed his father and mother and was now gouging out his eyes. Would such a dream give the old Philosopher pleasure or aesthetic satisfaction? No. He may have enjoyed such suffering in the tragedy and he may even enjoy telling his friends about the
The baker yawned when he handed me the change. I had bought a loaf of Italian and a brown, round loaf of light rye. It looked like a worn, old-fashioned sofa cushion.

He was friendly, and I remarked at his yawn. Running a bakery in Wreckport. I had asked for French bread; he replied, “No, Got Italian. Same thing.” Then he yawned and gave me my 16 cents.

The lady in the liquor store across the street. Gray-haired, wearing a drab grey sweater, slacks, and was watching TV in the back room when I came in. No Portuguese rosl. I bought a quart of concord and a fifth of Lake Country Red and left, having asked directions onto 81. Headed East with bread and wine. Twilight.

On the road at sunset, the sky was swirled in orange cirrus. On the horizon a wall of gray cloud sat, rooking up the light. I pulled onto the shoulder and got out, headed up the bank of earth toward the brush on my right. Having stepped into the tangled, dead undergrowth I pissed comfortably. The road was empty. I didn’t know I had taken the wrong turn some miles back.

When night comes trees show themselves. All the delicate netting of their twigs stands black and etched against the last brightness. Like a woman standing undressed and waiting, they are most honest, most peaceful at this time. They do not care that they are austere; nor do they know. When I arrived in the city I didn’t think of them any more.

RAY PAVELSKI

It is 8:30.

You walk along the sidewalks that are half-lit and drying in the wind of morning. Small branches cast lines that look like cracks in the dark cement. You smoke a pipe into the fresh, wet air, and your face is awash in the time of early morning.

Lights are on here and there in the houses where you live. People rising to brush teeth in blue taffeta robes and gray, worn wool. Scratching heads and feet that shuffle on the predawn floors, a yawn behind each of the lit windows.

On the streets you pass at perpendicular they are rectangles of light, thinner as they move down the street, punch holes in an old computer card programmed: morning.

You go home and do the work you have to do before the day.

RAY PAVELSKI
in no god's land
in no god's land

Maneuvering in operational time
Between the twin cosmic whispers
Of religion's forgotten dream.
Within the plastic citadel snaked
Between the wheels of the reel.
Lies the twilight of the trimal vision.
The cycle of image, silhouette and projection.
The Land of the Painted Mirror.
Here: the Children of Mist and the River.
The alchemical delta of angelic clay.
Silted between brimstone and sound.
Between sound and light: the Enigma.
Here: the Mystic of Corn and the Sunflower.
The looking glass mystery of vision in tension.
Pressed between question and pain.
Between pain and response: the Word.
Here: time is no more than a torrent of rhythm.
A pale strain in the moment of toying.
A pale force in the moment of strain.
A pale strain in the strain of the hour.
Here: life is no less than a funeral procession.
A random phantasm of beauty and pain.
A march of death parading through
The pregnant pageant of consciousness.

And I come to the fields and spacious palaces
Of my memory, where are the treasures of immeasurable images... 

Augustine
Confessions

german dark, window of moments
night the lane of crossing thought
when you move the furniture of your mind
and moonlight blueprints the pain.

purgatory
the hour glass
unquiet as flame
flame in the hour of wax.
dumb lips, blind words, a tea cup soul
numb with a sense of tomorrow
narrow with the vacant hour.
the goblet and the faded flower,
voices, tongues and words of wood
in drifting waves of mood
the flux of weak-smiled resolution
the narcotic of counter-feit reflection
when you pulse against the universe
unquiet as coiled glass.

lent of thought, penance of time
years of nerves defined in rhyme
a palpable cohesion
of moments and sound.
moonlight and pain.
the unquiet rain.
a garden of faces
numbed in circumstance.
the blasted laughter of carelessness
that grasps upon the face
the temple of dust and change
that veins the plasm of chance.

crypts and caverns of thought
fountains of wasted emotion
barren effusion of doubt
cold remembrance of death affection
that chisels that brittles that cracks
the marble of moments hushed in passion,
hunger—the beating of eyes
numbness of tongue—closed lips—
clapped words of love
a vision of winds in warfare.
love in the sapphire hour
the chequered hour of love.
the thundersnap of love.
the dawnbreak corpse of love
love.
love—deep love.
moonlightning my soul:
love unaffecting.

lost pages of happier days
beauty worn at the edges
soft as chanced fingernails.
hard as roulette smiles.
loved, rouged and gone with the sound
of newspapers.

question-and-answer breakfast, fillmore
afternoons, and evenings dwindled with small talk
drawing room lunks, lamp of regret.
sahara of question and doubt
questions begging like caravan thieves
the riddle of leaves and apple trees
when stuffed animals skewered alive.

speculation, conclusion
the imperson of partial knowledge
the half answered ash on the grave
the silhouette of old age
shadowed on curtains off stage.

skrapes of ancient hymnsmen
songs beyond bunched of knowing
sound without word
words without song
thought without lyre
no miracle of word when sound is a skull
no mistake circling the fingers
the empty flute of sound

a twang of wind in the field:
where there word for sound and blood for bone
where there wind to tongue the air in prayer
stars to sing their fire
wires these stars
word and blood and wind
were there ears to hear to hear the procession of thoughts
thesandspoon of moments
harped on skeletal ribs.

strains of innocence
scared with kisses
lyrics of darkness—
the chalice, the furnace
the music of betel's events.
in the last analysis
past the sum of possibilities
the area of yesterday's
perhaps awareness—
the pressure of stars in the distance.
perhaps in the last analysis
perhaps awareness
the wilderness of violins
in the silence.

skrapes of ancient hymnsmen—
notions of vision, blindness, sin
sin laughter at old men
the wind blowing as though they had not been
the wind heavy with question
mutations of words attempting to form
monuments, thoughts, sounds unaffecting
the wind heavy with light.

Am I worthy of the ghosts of the dead
Am I guilty of innocent blood

*The last poem in TIME TRILOGY: The feast—"Fasting Half Pressure" was printed in the ANGLE in spring, 1967; the second—"Easy Wednesday" was printed in the ANGLE in spring, 1967; and now this. 

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to Christine

you look out a window
and into another
and you look out that window
but you see another window this time
and there's always another window
and if you look closely
and can see through all that glass
you can make out a vague image
of a girl running

by Tronon

There is a dark fear in me
That the brightest of our young ripe
Pleasure cannot cure.

On those black nights
When I toss tired, sick, road wearily,
I fear that fast approaching sleep,

When I might meet
A tireless guardian
Whose towering self-righteous hand

Might not pause this time
To keep me where I am,
Or pass to let me in.

FRAN MURPHY

Easter 1966

The German found the body
And the Pope cancelled Easter
But the chocolate industry protested
So Hallmark made "Spring Bunny Day"
And Jesus saved became the byword,
Other than that, the routine remained unbroken
Except
a few men
stopped
having children.

FRAN MURPHY

Night's soft corners rock me, rock me, rock me
Warm and dreamless in its arms. And this earth
That cradles soft in crisp ing autumn
Sings dry of leaves, whispers in the still air,
Heavy with the scent of soil, unfilled, waiting.
Oh my pale Christ, dimly lighting this land,
Tracing across the sky every image,
Every rounded corner of this strange rest
Yet never reflecting here my presence
Give answer to my prayer. What is this night
Burning so within me that my hands, warm,
Should press so eager in these quiet shadows
For secrets, long ago remembered,
And with each breath draw in such troubling love.

JOHN VORHASS
Those who hate persecute me even now
I have no arms
Yet I lie down to sleep
They fling me on all sides
in full arrangement.

Like a winter's storm they assault
"We will make sure he never arises"
Yet in my heart never hurries its pace
You whisper in the warm breeze
They melt away
They stream back in terror
"There is no help for him in a God"
"We have never seen one"
He opens his hands
I am filled
they have taken all that I loved
It was then he became as a brother
I awake in the morning refreshed
Yet they are exhausted with apprehension
"O people why do you utter nonsense
There is no breath in your mouth."

Will a torrent protect you against thousands
What missile will stop the worlds end
Let the tears of your eyes awaken you
the soil of pride be fertile for love.

SUE CONNOLLY

Silen Cervus Desiderat

Now gentle does the dawn shyly caress
The silver tresses of the moonlit land
Blushing away her paleness with the press
Of silent kisses. Warm, radiant, his hand
Awakes the air, filling with winged song
The stretching corners rising in his sight.
Liquid her trusting eyes reflect the strong
Life, breaking in shadows the fullest light
She fears to know. Burning beneath this shroud
Resplendent glows a goddess filled with day
And trembling arms reach to a sun, noon proud,
In blazing brilliance night alone will stay.
Who's known love in the open plain, once, well,
Waits not his call in a softer citadel.

JOHN VORBÄM

THE 2/4 WALTZ

The savage soil
Screams to be exploited
Unwillingly, my hands plunge downward
Laden with their burden they rise moist.
The pleasure, I marvailed at its mystery!
I returned often to my soil
To taste its musty odor,
To watch the seasons change it,
To watch the sweat of the night vanish in the morning sun.
One day, knowing roots stave erosion,
And fearing loss above all,
I placed a seed within.
I built my home around that seed
And leisurely I tended it,
For with the sage sky dispensing its gifts,
I knew the soil would keep it.

FRAN MURPHY

IMAGE

Into the eyes of my words you gazed,
I left my face on your veil.

JIM HALL

https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/angle/vol1968/iss1/29
Boy wonder bred
In twelve different classrooms
One day finds that it isn't all in the books
Can this darling dunce of his
Shoves his breast into his harmless hand
And says
Love me not love.

Jim Coleman

And the overcast came underneath
The underpass, just like they
Knew it would, silently.
And I was waiting under bridges for
Something to happen while others
Were on the bridges happening.
And the overcast came underneath
The underpass, blinding security
And making waiting risky.
And the overhauls came underneath
The underpants, just like they
Knew it would, silently.
And the sun shone through the
Overcast and found the underpass
Empty, and clothes left behind
Covered with fig leaves and dew drops.
And the overcast left as the people on
The bridge evaporated and it was
My turn to pay the toll and cross
The bridge and take off my clothes
And be seen.

Jim Coleman

The German romantics have it
That on the instant of touch
Repulsion begins
That anticipation is greater
Than the act.
This philosopher has it
That on the point of touch
Wonder begins.
The two different interpretations
Seem to depend upon
How much you touch
But in reality
The diverse consequences
Come from what you
Touch
First.

Jim Coleman

Love lies somewhere behind
Battened barred bosoms,
When the love is finally barred and free
It fights, of necessity, with respect
Which usually wins the battle
Can
The male sex can't keep its
Mouth shut
And nobody
Likes a bouncy reputation.

Jim Coleman
PORTRAIT OF A LITANY

Great minds have sought you—looking someone else.
You have been second always. Tropical?
Elsa Fisch
"Portrait d'Une Femme"

I am always sure that you understand
My feelings, always sure that you feel,
Sure that across the gulf you reach your hand.
T. S. Eliot
"Portrait of a Lady"

With your ghostblown hair
And your heartless eyes
With your bonnet cheeks
And your language lips
With your necklace teeth
And your girlish face

With your sunken hands
And your moonspring arms
With your toothless chest
And your spineless waist
With your chinesewang hips
And your hexistrung legs

With your steelwhip bones
And your starfish nerves
With your winsome flesh
And your pulsistream heart
With your tongueblood blood
And your prayerframe womb

With your skypun scarf
And your fastness rose
With your waveburn gown
And your charnarung ring
With your timecull belt
And your haefting cloak

With your delicious glance
And your windilush trance
With your gnoatite voice
And your dauntshoot breath
With your rainspur talk
And your dustdrift walk

With your downsound psalms
And your wordcurve rhymes
With your cashmere songs
And your scargold poems
With your windskulc chants
And your woodlight hymns

Now and at the hour of our death.

Jim Haik

Lament Christ!

In its own way,
The candle casts constant light.
It burns all day,
And is best seen at night.

From Mark

Mike Goodwin three seeds, two flowers, two farmers
ELEGY FOR EZRA POUND

Who is there now for me to share a joke with?
Upon hearing of Eliot’s death

Youth has flickered from youthful words
And self-sprung estuaries of rhythm
There was a washed and wined and autumned self
So danced and dawned and forming (like Plato)
And bleeding in an act of oblivion.
The time in thy throat
The breath on thy hands
The sad hours secretly move,
Like Helen, an old woman who
With knowing eyes
Wept, wept for beauty lost
And feared tomorrow’s face

Silent as curtain and sunbeam
Your flames have weded the wind.
But retinas-paired in sighted skies
One tear shall hear from listening eyes
Shall hear and shall stare, shall flicker and stir
Shall bid and shall buy, shall quicken and try
The self-conceiving Ephiepts of ash.
In the molting heath of words,

My words are flames—you are a tolled old tail of a comet
My words are waves—you are a rinsed old skull of a sound
My words are colors—you are a crumpled old bill of a poet
My words are tears—you are a frozen old Protes of a god

The pages of your gaze
Quicken camera cadence
The fragments of your canted ways
Fuse pained fragrances
Your memories suspended by dreamed yesterdays
Pendulum bundled events
Your partial visions pressed between crossed Gethsemanies
Mosaic symboled silence.

You are the lost Odyssey
In your own litany
You are the re-occurring weariness
Of your own pain

Where children lotused over broken walls
To wind themselves through labyrinths of pleasure
You saw the bondage of action
The heritage of pain, the corpse of time.
Your community of years stalked
The ribbed voice of afternoon thought
The legacy of weary-eyed love
And starved the ghost by inches.

Your aging is a redemptive act:
The minutes are splinters of pillars
You are your own embers:
The Fred, spared Babylonian tongues
You had beautiful things to say
From the bale of your sainted force—humble chapel words
You had beautiful things to say
From your mitered martyrdom of glances—stern rubric lines
You had beautiful things to say
You were the instant prophet in this chant of dust
Your poems existant, your words our relics
Your staff the wand of our wonder.

Bishop of Tradition
An evolving god
You are the plastic Christ
The Wording vision of your antique world

The flash of a Chinese lantern tongued the prism of music
A violin bow across your nerves.
The jingle of river sailors lit the lyric of your litany
Within your dialect of horns.
The trumpet sounds scarlet no more.
Along the notes, across the seconds, out of the West coasts
The swan goddess; There for you to share a Joke with.
Summon home the swan to sing.

Through my formulation of metaphor, false labor pains of meter
I twine paint and stumble probe your sheer white song of mind
And blind I find I know thee
And I, too, participate in thy dying

Jim Hall
FOR TOM WAY  
KILLED VIETNAM, OCTOBER '67  
JIM MAYS

The spoken
and unspoken “whys”
will not be answered . . .

To men
death is never timely . . .

In battle . . . and violent . . .
and paling the full flush of youth,
it abhors the sensitive,
ridicules the statesman
oppresses the philosopher
strains the theologian
confounds the scientist,
mocks the smiling promise
of a youthtime given to lights,
strikes with all-engulfing darkness
a youthtime given to lights
. . . and joy . . . and hope

And yet
how better bear
the burden of penultimate despair
than summon Him
whose death seizes ultimate hope,
whose symbols all
proclaim
that death’s not all
nor life . . . here . . .

To Him
death is never untimely!

C. AMANN

SITTING ON CANNON SQUARE WHEN YOUNG

We are all turning khaki green
from washing our clothes in red cross puddles
from sitting on cannon square when young
and smashing scientific pacemakers
with memorial mounds of caduceate cement

We are all turning khaki green
from cutting naked army mess lines
from playing taps on civilian coat hangers
and thinking soldiers are only stunt men
in summer runs of gunsmoke

We are all turning khaki green
from an unbroken state of kill
from an unshored G I kill
and sweating alcoholic history
in antiseptic volumes of suburban libraries

We are all turning khaki green
from pulling dead toes of congelated votes
from singing the goulash of conscience
and cooling our tired feet
in a bucket of programmed poker cards

We warm our hands in our armpits
waking up stung from a wet dream of peace
asking with our dark eyes
to the G I Joe
when his black hand will freeze the air

We warm our hands in our armpits
staring in horror through reflecting windows
asking with our dark eyes
to the G I Joe
when he will send his soggy package of care

We warm our hands in our armpits
we gather our shrinking skin
we wait
we wait on the complacent rattle of natural causes
we wait for the homecoming of a wasted generation
we wait for generals to melt their stars
and recast a cannon plaque to
: his reign was mild

All war hero museums
should be treated as jealously combusted
and drowned in ten cent comic books

THOMAS HUGHES

JOE RUFFINO

10
Bequeathed with child yet chaste.

Chaste in motion timeless
Chaste in perfume formless
Chaste in instant dunnness
Chaste in limbo sadness
Chaste in dreaming ageless
Chaste in chancing silence
Chaste in frosted presence
Chaste in ardent patience
Silking shivering tenderness
From evening's paste caress
Carving marble out of stillness
I merge a Parian dress
Melting ancient strangeness:
Words.
Words my chiming harem:
Hot
Train yard rhythm
Quick
Dark heated syllables
My words cascading pinwheels:
Kites in a cosmic funeral
Balloons in a plastic whirlpool
Images falling down winter's wound
Music springing up summer's sound
Welded in my random mind
Enfolded by intensity
In broken alley phantasy
In lifted paper agony,
Rampant in a diamond fever
In rampant canticle of color
A rebel robed in crepe paper
I bow to tool a halo jewel:
To rainbow phantom beauty through
The prism of glassless language
Releasing emblem mystery through
The prison of guardless words.
From anthems of our faded sighs
I chant out God in neon fog
Before His prayer stained altars
From gems of lovers' jaded eyes
I sapphire stars carved out of chalk
Before my flagging falters.

My soul is a meadow soul
I wrap my soul in rose leaves
My soul is a patchquilt soul
I wrap it with an opera cape
My pantomine of words hiding
A soul churning with sound seeking
Through my crystal ball music
And my telescope lines
Seeking seeking an alien princess.
An angel erasing with radiance
Fringed with fragile fragrance
Fallen from the flowered branch.
Rubied like a hymn lit noon
A candle tree will be her throne
The chanting tree of ghosted song.
Caromed through my channelled dream
The canyoned leaves will be her gown
The glowing hush of green undone.
Flowing toward a flooding dawn
A champagne moon will be her gown
Enamelled with a liquid sun.
Her cheeks in love with peppermint
Her eyes on fire with velvet
Her laughter hallowed in starlight
Her thoughts will burn the dust
Her secrets blossom at nightfall.
My soul's mirage will burnish within
The gold unbridled intensity in
Her Holy Communion eyes.
Her motion is my search
My search my inspiration
The fugitive poet she will not hurt:
My poem.

Sainted words in litany sleet:
Organ prayering whiskey heat:
My crucible heats in lava tide:
Coal breeds the diamond mind:
These sequins in a cemetery:
Their granite glow of eternity:
My life in steepled cadence:
Its metal stiletto radiance:
Jesus drunk on poetry.
By their fruits ye shall know them.  
Mark 7:20

There was once a man who bought a farm in Scotland. The farm was located in a region of poor soil and severe weather. Scattered all over the fields of oats and barley were stones of various sizes. It appeared as if the stones had been set in their places purposely. The new owner first removed the stones, then seeded and sown his fields. The yield was scanty, so the following year he scattered the stones about the fields again. The yield was poor, so he repeated the experiment, with the same results. He concluded that either the stones acted as a wind-break for the grain, or the stones contributed some fertile element to the soil, or else the sun's genial heat (reflected from the stones) raised the soil temperature a few critical degrees. In all probability, the three acted in concert, and the stony field proved superior to the smooth.

There was once a man who wanted to live a perfect life, free not only of sin, but from temptation as well. He took a knife, and with a swift surgical maneuver he relieved his body of its "stones." His wish was granted—and then some. All lust was gone, but so were, and with it went his appetites and lust's voice piped ably where once it had boomed vigorously, and the world no longer took him seriously (there is no place in the world for a dunce, it seems). His work began to suffer, he quarreled with his colleagues, he found fault with his church's doctrine, and he fled embittered and rejected.

There was once a religious view of whose after-effects are too easily seen how many stones in culture. There were bad print, sales of things sacred, superstition, levity in the churches during the liturgy, casual additions to the liturgy itself, too many saints and angels, and indeed too many gods. The church and the people, they concluded, needed to be purified and made perfect, conforming with their ideas. So they began to gather up the stones and form neat piles (which they called logic), and soon the clergy and the people lost their smiles, exchanging their friendships payments for decent bread. The churches were stripped to the bare walls; the liturgy was reduced to some prayers and hymns, and an extremely dull and lengthy sermon. The Trinity was purged. Even the Christ who loved sinners was transformed into a Christ who hated all mankind. Indeed, Christ was no longer Christ, the money of God's mercy; his metamorphosis was Satan, the instrument of God's justice. With all the stones removed, the church should have been perfect; and perhaps it was. Outward sin certainly disappeared in this perfect church, and when sin did rear its ugly head, the sinner was punished frenziedly. The church founded on a Stone had become, thoroughly petrified. Freedom became a forgotten word; there was no longer free will, freedom of conscience, free speech, free anything. The totally repressed Saints began to turn uglier and uglier. One day the first innocent old hog was stoned to death by a mob returning from a leaving-than-sinning sermon.

There was once a teacher who was extremely well educated. He was revered by many, in fact, as a great philosopher. One day while philosophizing, he glanced back over the path he had trod in life and saw it had been studded with stones (and a constant uphill climb, at that). He also began to recall the hours he'd received, and wept afresh at the memory. His father had sternly demanded he read and when his childhood body yearned for play. His tutors had beaten him, often mercilessly, and most of his teachers had been harsh and demanding—True, he had become one of the world's best-educated men; but had it been worth it, after all? He began on the instant to devise a system of his own that would remove the stones, and all would be sweetness, light, and freedom of the human spirit. His would, of course, be the perfect system. Pipilh attacked the teacher, suffering brutes, he preached; and he reserved his harshest anathemas for the teachers who appoited him (many did at first.) He attacked the entire educational system as outmoded and old fashioned, with petrified notions and ideas; as indeed it was. He outlined his plan to others who had suffered and soon when schools of education were rising every where, and in each he was saint and savior. He and his disciples began to prune the schools' curricula of any subject matter that was not clearly practical: what need of classics, languages, sciences? who ever used them, really. "Useless" courses were eliminated and replaced with others (some have tone and may have tone and may have tone and may have tone and may have tone and may have tone) said basket-weaving and "Here we Gooby Loo." Of course a roasting slogan went along with the system: "We teach the student, not the subject." The educational jargon was limited and unitative, but it sufficed, and was very, very quotable. The entire system was called "progressive" to contrast it with the old.

There was once a thriving civilization that began to chafe under the restrictions imposed by prosperity. The laws were much too harsh: criminals, for example, were being imprisoned; murderers were being eliminated; longer were finding it extremely difficult to make a decent living; things like that. Little by little, reformers changed all that. Soon things were suitably rearranged: criminals were tearfully blessed and told to go sin some more; ill-advised good samaritans who went to the aid of their neighbors being attacked openly in the streets were arrested, prosecuted, and beggared; cheats were fully protected in the law courts, and their victims were deprived of the fruits of their honest toil (the law, for a fee, even collected for the cheats); lawyers knew no law, but had all the loopholes memorized, or could punch one out at a need; things like that. Few collections were empowered to harass and bully taxpayers and strip them of everything. Traitors were given triumphal processions; patriots became obscene words; deserters held their heads high and even formed unions; the country's enemies were given a place, and encouragement to kill off her soldiers; things like that. Education was all but eliminated though the forms were piously retained; honest labor was demeaned; children were neither supervised nor corrected; honesty became a vice; things like that. The pursuit of natural pleasures had pulled, and once more pleasures were sought without, instead of the cage; male coupled with male, female with female—and why not; male dressed and acted like females, women dressed and acted like men; where once one could find retarded warriers and athletes, there were few nearly discontented, heavily smoked fops; effeminate, spangled dandies; gangs of children and young adults roamed the countryside to beat and gouge and stomp and terror; things like that. Protest became fashionable; riots were like "in." burning; and looting were the normal order of the day; hatred was beautiful; things like that. People were no longer content with these few, and ten years of life and began to yearn for physical immortality, though they hadn't the humor to note the irony of immortality to :ijth, corruption, pollution, decadence, and constant fear of sudden annihilation from a hundred diseases—immortality in a world filled with crust, hysterical unbelief in any life after death, and endless confusion. Everyone appeared on the scene, each with a stone grasped in either hand like a stone-age savage arm, and the civilization perished. One thinks of Jane Austen who looked satirical at her own epoch, effeminate times and summed up the Regency Period. "No stones," she said—or something to that effect.

Stones have many virtues, and are the most magical single element on earth. In a sense, then, they are marvels per se. The stones of life are the faults and hardships we suffer as we progress through that life. The stones bruise us, true, but they radiate a genial warmth as well; and the colder life threatens to be, the more necessary their warmth. Like a man's own "stones," their presence exerts a reassuring (rather than an extreme) pressure, reminding us that we are still vital and potent and whole. When the stones are gone, all is smoothness and coldness and sterility. When life becomes smooth, cold, and sterile, then it is truly absurd. We absolutely require a few faults to balance our fatal urge to perfection.

The ultimate in irony, however, is a certain cathedral that has taken forever to build, may never be completed, and was intended to last forever. It is constructed almost entirely of stone, and embedded in the walls are stones from every corner of the globe. In this case, there are altogether too many stones: the builders sought and sought and found new stones and stones to be had that the intermediate ones were needed. There is a lack of warmth, a chill in that pile. There hasn't been a scandal in that cathedral since the first stone was put in place, and there it stands: fashionable, cold, and empty. So very, very empty.

If you have any questions or need further assistance, feel free to ask! The quality of my response is dependent on the clarity and specificity of your instructions. Please provide more details if you need a deeper understanding or a different perspective.
CURBED

the argument

During this century a man lived in Florida by the name of Edgar Cayce. An enterprising journalist was able to investigate claims that this man possessed the pulp paper power of, etc. Though only slightly schooled, it is reported that Mr. Cayce was able to recommend cures for terminal diseases, predict the future, and foretell personal and religious events in an apocalyptic way. He also claimed the lost city of Atlantis still exists and in his journals gives many accounts of its advanced civilization. The capitalizing journalist's books are widely distributed among middle-aged professionals. The men have found the subject adequate conversational vendettas upon which to practice an unapologetic evangelization in the face of verified facts and to discover alternative solutions. The wife provides the report a moral certainty by adding of acquaintances' belief researching digested magazines finally convincing and strange dreams of significance and in the flurry of mysticism generally being safer about the house.

Among the younger set Cayce's remedy for mysterious stomach ailments is unknown, his name appearing occasionally in N.Y. Times Book Review. A new hope has come to the land in experimental use of marijuana and cocaine is an art form and authority generally ludicrous. The younger generation is concerned with the company's morals, since their progeny no longer openly flirt on street corners or stop the birds of automobiles in their enthusiasm in publicly appointed places but are seeming to lire in a vacuum of their own disinterest and are not becoming productive members of society.

Just last May I heard a machine worker of twenty-five years saying West in a Lithuanian beer garden accross a young couple from the college who were just about to become third grade teacher and secretaries, public relations and women over inescapable formal attire for the Senior Ball at which they planned to announce their engagement. He stopped them quite drunk. A subpoena for his happiness told them he was young and quite happy once and sat there saying to the somewhat amused young man, you lucky s.o.b. I love you. Stared in the mirror over the bar and wept.

You lucky s.o.b.
I love you.
So paste my grey temples
On the stop sign
Named me!
And stay!
Soothing the player piano
And his yellow blues.

I rushed not having meanwhile forgotten my date with an otherwise beautiful girl to see Rooses at the movies and spent the night instead outside the movie on the sidewalk on a warm evening of people enjoying the good weather with the girl whom I now live with, sitting on the curb.

In Atlantis the lost city claimed to be lost still hunted for its color and expenses, overreaching waves in gentle copulation stir with every new obscurity blotted by the young and intertwine their salted beards in into wounded worms upsetting perfect couples in a sucking drive for bottom worms, uproot the darker life and pull into their rough love the blinded creatures and that any voyager who watches this ruin must satisfy his owen sense host by tapping his dry body into the wetted bridal bed and gloomstream awakes andMaker last night of gloomstream gloomstream waking in last nights grey roller sliding yellow on the glow flesh day gloomstream, the glow worm in lightning bug night lashing scenes from tailend hurricane from soft spread moon gloomstream no longer gloomstream seen through chandeliers new moon crystal.

In Atlantis where the six precess do of right blinks yellow spots of purple disbelieve as the indifferent arms of love latched the wild flame of dawn and the rusty blaze of summer and chased fixing an eternal thimbleton to reflect a lone kiss of divine harmony

In Atlantis which was still and breathed into the mouth of the purple sounds of summer leaving a screaming feedback and a glowing blush of wind.
There is a poetry not in the books
and I would teach that:
how to read in the eyes, in the looks
the secretest yearnings of souls
that lips will not speak
or can not speak
or may not even know,
the need that lies at
the heart's core
and knows
no door
of lip
or scrip
nor any sure transmission:
save the soft and certain pulsing
that sometimes
swift and sure
in silence struck
unsummoned seize
an equal-beat
some kindred cord
unsuspecting...
And then response
will not be taught
but come
still... still.

**BUSY BYSSHE—**

Busy Bysshe was a truly hapless wight
Who liked to—though he really couldn't—write.
It isn't that he wasn't very bright;
He was. In fact, his brains were the delight,
The pride, of all his friends.

By day, by night,
Poor Bysshe strove with all his main and might,
Laboring by fluorescent light
(Endangering already feeble sight),
In order that he might, just once, indite
A really worthwhile work that would requite
His Herculean efforts.

But the fight,
Alas! was lost 'ere it began. The right
Words and phrases never came. The bite
Was missing from his prose, which was a mite
Too wishy-washy.

Too, he lacked insight;
His divine afflatus reached a height
Sufficient (just about) to raise a kite
A foot or two above the launching site:
Hardly what you'd call a stirring flight
Of fancy.

Sad to say, no one will ever cite
A work of Bysshe's at a cocktail rite!
No high-toned critic ever will indict
A Bysshe work as "...Yet another blight
On literary art's escutcheon!" nor slight
It cleverly as "...so much Bysshe Viuly!"
But still I say, Bene, Busy Bysshe!

**HARRY ACETO**
dream on the following morning, but he did not enjoy the suffering when it was so immediate to him in the dream. In the former two cases the necessary element of distance separated the spectator from the pain, making an aesthetic attitude possible; but in the latter this element of distance was absent, making both an aesthetic attitude and a pleasurable experience impossible.

Even if we were to invent a new meaning for Aristotle's word fear and say that in tragedy we fear "for the hero," such an emotion would still not be necessary to and characteristic of the ideal tragic response. For the hero's fate in the tragedy is necessary and the ideal spectator is aware that what will befall the hero must happen. But Aristotle himself, as thinking a person as done, which of course nobody does when things are hopeless."

The person who knows that what will happen is inevitable does not fear. So fear, even "for the hero," of the inevitable would be impossible in the ideal spectator, and therefore could not properly be part of a definition of tragedy.

Aristotle's idea of catharsis as the function and proper pleasure of tragedy, like his notion of fear, leads to many difficulties. As was said before, catharsis as Aristotle saw it was probably a homeopathic cure of emotion. In a person's emotional states there are mean conditions in which the feelings are in a proper balance. Sometimes, however, the emotions build up like water behind a dam and demand release. Enter tragedy. By viewing a tragedy the person's emotions of pity and fear are released in a controlled and pleasurable way, thereby restoring them to a healthy, balanced level.

Is this view acceptable? Do pity and fear build up within a person when they are not exercised? Do most people suffer from an excess of these emotions? Even if a person were to get into the habit of feeling, would not the exercise of this emotion in the tragedy make him more, instead of less, passionate? Upon seeing suffering in the real world after viewing a tragedy, would he not be more inclined to pity and fear? And what about the person whose emotions are well-balanced? By Aristotle's definition he should not seem to be able to fully enjoy the tragedy, or else he might come out "in the red" with not enough pity and fear. It seems strange that a definition of tragedy would not assume normal states of mind and feeling in the spectator.

Even if such a catharsis of pity and fear did take place, would it serve the function of tragedy to re-establish healthy emotional states in its spectators? Certainly a person who went to see a tragedy for the expressed purpose of having his emotions purged would not have an aesthetic attitude. Should not the definition of an art form define that art form without making some incidental benefit the function of the art? Must tragedy or any other art have a function?

Perhaps our difficulty in understanding Aristotle's definition lies in our taking him out of his immediate situation and assuming that he had or should have had a totally aesthetic attitude. The Greek tragedies, which were all that Aristotle knew, were performed exclusively at annual dr?Festivals, which were religious and patriotic events, great occasions of the Greeks' communal life. The Greeks did not adopt an isolating attitude toward these tragedies. To the great tragic poets, the chastity of art was not the supreme consideration; they took for granted that art exists for life's sake. The doctrine that art should be considered exclusively as an art form would have bewildered them.

The attitude that tragedy like all art must have some use has continued throughout art's history right to our own day. Is it any wonder that we find Aristotle in the fourth century B.C. with a less than perfect aesthetic attitude?

Another factor in Aristotle's postulating the purging of pity and fear as the function and proper pleasure of tragedy is his relationship to Plato, who had charged in the Republic that poetic drama encouraged madness in the soul by feeding the passions instead of mastering them. Aristotle, in refusing to show that the tragic effect did justifiy its social worth, that it did more than just stimulate our idle feelings. He argued that our harmful emotions are best controlled by a periodic release of them, and that tragedy, by providing a healthy relief of excess emotion, is not harmful but rather very useful. After being purged of pity and fear in the tragedy, we will be less troubled by these emotions on real occasions of misfortune. Plato's charge, in concentrating on the effects of tragic poetry upon its spectators, had been unfruitful. Aristotle's defense of the social worth of tragedy was a more fruitful one. The trouble is that Aristotle included this unesthetic and, as was previously shown, inaccurate element of catharsis in his definition of tragedy as its function and proper pleasure. To have mentioned the purification of pity and fear outside the definition as a possible beneficial side effect of tragedy would have been an acceptable place for such a statement. But to make catharsis the characteristic and necessary function of tragedy seems to me to be incorrect and unesthetic.

Even if Aristotle's approach to the pleasure of tragedy is not completely correct, however, let us see what worth it does have in helping to answer our question. Aside from the pleasure of imitation common to all poetry, what is the unique tragic pleasure? The emotions, at least pity, seem to be part of the answer, as was shown before. But perhaps Aristotle's shortcoming is the stress he places upon the emotions in the tragic pleasure without considering sufficiently the role of the intellect. Without the intellect's operation, the emotions mean very little. Is not our objection to the shallowness of melodrama based on the fact that its appeal is almost solely to our emotions, without a corresponding and complementary appeal to our intellect?

Let us investigate further the operation of the intellect in the aesthetic appreciation of tragedy, and especially its relationship to the emotions and to the tragic pleasure. In the tragedy the spectator witnesses a conflict between the power of inevitable fate, the physical necessity of the hero's fate, and the reaction of the hero's self-conscious effort to the necessity. If the hero merely suffered as a passive animal, all we could do is pity him. Do we not complain when a "tragedy" is nothing more than a passive character suffering assorted hardships? Indeed, we see such a play as merely a cruel story which appealed to nothing but our sense of pity. We almost instinctively realize that this type of drama is incomplete, that the more release of pity is a waste of time. If tragedy were no more than the expenditure of unpleasant emotion, it would indeed be a needless suffering on our part.

What must be added to the hero's unavoidable suffering to make the play worthwhile is his conscious response to his fate. This response shows forth the hero's great human spirit in the face of his suffering; it is the nobility or the grandeur d'ame of the hero that appeals to our intellects. We know that necessity will win out over the hero on the physical level; he must suffer and probably die in the end. Hence we can pity him. But we can also understand that his noble human spirit, his grandeur d'ame, is not broken in his defeat. On a higher spiritual level the hero is victorious, and his unperverted spirit is a model for us all. It seems that here is the source of our pleasure in tragedy—our enlightenment about and admiration for the almost sublime human spirit of the hero.

It is evident that our admiration for the hero's response to his suffering could not have come about unless he actually suffered. His nobility is shown only in the context of his trials. Here is where the emotions come in. Our emotions, especially pity, support our admiration of the hero's grandeur d'ame. Without a sympathy for his suffering, our appreciation of his noble spirit would be as shallow as is emotion unaccompanied by intellect. Without the emotions the meaning of tragedy would be superficial and fleeting. Intellectually enlightened emotions are more novel, evoked by them would be something imposed from without. But together, the somewhat painful emotions and the enlightened intellect achieve a meaningful, satisfying, aesthetic experience.
TO TIRZAH

Whate'er is Born of Mortal Birth
Must be consumed with the Earth
To rise from Generation free:
Then what have I to do with thee?

The Sexes sprung from Shame and Pride,
Blow'd in the morn; in evening died:
But Mercy chang'd Death into Sleep;
The Sexes rose to work & weep.

Thou Mother of my Mortal part,
With cruelty didst moulder my Heart;
And with false self-deceiving tears
Didst blind my Nostrils, Eyes, & Ears:

Didst close my Tongue in senseless clay,
And to me Mortal Life betray,
The Death of Jesus set me free:
Then what have I to do with thee?

W. Blake, *Songs of Experience*

THE ANGLE

WITH ALL THE SERENITY
WE DO NOT WISH TO EXPRESS
THIS ANGLE IS
ALLEN GINSEBERG'S

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I must create a system or be enslaved by another Man's;
I will not reason and compare; my business is to create.

W. Blake, "Jerusalem"