LO MY EYE HAS SEEN ALL THIS AND MY CAR AND HEARD UNDERSTOOD
ARISTOTLE AND THE PARADOX OF TRAGEDY

BY JOHN MORELL

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 tragedy as in a soaking 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; it also has complete and admirable accessories, such 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, merely being read. In both reading the play and watching the play, 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 hearing 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 such other 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 close at hand. 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, terror which 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 analgesic 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 another 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 accompanied 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 really realistic, 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-centered as does the child, by covering her 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 Wrecoport, 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 road. 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, robbing 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 5:30.

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, punchholes 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 twain cosmic whispers
Of religion's forgotten dream
Within the plastic citadel snaked
Between the wheels of the reel
Lies the twilight of the trinal 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 angels clay
Silted between brimstone and sound
Between sound and light: the Enigma.
Here: the Mystic of Corn and the Scarecrow
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 Joys
A pale strain in the moment of strain
A pale strain in the strain of the horse.
Here: life is no less than a funeral procession
A random phantasy 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 innumerable
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 teacup 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 quiver magic coalescence
of moments and sound.
moonlight and pain.
the unquiet rain.
a garden of faces
limpid in circumstance
the plastered laughter, of carelessness
that graces upon the face
the temple of dust and change
that veils the plasim of chance.

crypts and caverns of thought
fountains of wasted emotion
barren effusion of doubt
cold resemblance of dead affection
that chisels that brittles that cracks
the marble of moments etched in passion.

hunger— the beating of eyes
sorcery of teetling-drip
clapped words of love
a vision of want in searse
love in the sapphire hour
the cleaned hour of love
the thundery lap of love
the downard corpse of love
love
lip deep love.
omniana nightingale
love unquiet.
lost pages of happier days
beauty worn at the edges
soft as channeled fingernails
hard as roulette smiles
loved, cragged and gone with the sound
of newspapers.

question- and answer breakfasts, formless
afternoons, and evenings dwindled with small talk
drawing room lunches, fumes of regret
sahara of question and doubt
questions begging like caravan thieves
the riddle of leaves and apple trees
when stuffed animals skinned alive.
speculation, conclusion
the prison of partial knowledge
the half answered ash on the grave
the silhouette of old age
shadowed on curtains off stage.

skraps of ancient hymnies
song beyond tuche of knowing
sound without word
song, without speech
thought without lyric
no oracle of word when sound is a skull
no mistake circling the fygurers
the empty flute of sound
a cawing of wind in the fild
were there word for sound and blood for bone
were there wind to tongue the air in prayer
stars to sing their fire
were there stars
word and blood and wind
were there ears to bend to hear
the perscription of thoughts
the backbone of moments
harped on skeleton ribs.

strains of innocence
sacred with kisses
lyrics of darkness—
the chalice, the furnace
the music of hegel's events.
in the last analysis
past the sum of possibilities
the scene of yesterdays
perhaps awareness—
the pressure of stars in the distance
perhaps in the last analysis
perhaps awareness

tenderness
the wilderness of violins
in the silence.
skraps of ancient hymnies
notions of vision, blindness, 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
moments, thoughts, sounds unequiet
the wind heavy with light.

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

Night's soft corners 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, unfulfilled, 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.

by Trinon

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
Mzmovr L'David

Those who hate persecute me even now
I have no arms
Yet I lie down to sleep
They flunk me on all sides
in full arrainment.

Like a winter's storm they assault
"We will make sure he never arises"
Yet in you 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

THE 2/4 WALTZ

Sient Cervus Desiderat

Now gentle does the dawn shyly appear
The silver tresses of the moonlit hand
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 tender eyes reflect the strong
Life, breaking in shadows the fullest light
She fears to know. Burning beneath this shroud
Replentious 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 VORHASY

The savage soil
Screams to be exploited
Unwillingly, my hands plunge downward
Laden with their burden they rise moist.
The pleasure, I marvelled 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
Boy wonder bred  
In twelve different classrooms  
One day finds that it isn't all in the books  
Can this darling damsel of his  
Shaves 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  
Regeneration 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  
But the male sex can't keep its  
Mouth shut  
And nobody  
Likes a lousy reputation.

Jim Coleman

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PORTRAIT OF A LITANY

Great minds have sought you—looking somewhere else,
You have been second always. Tropical?
Edna St. Vincent "Portrait of a Lady"

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

With your ghostblown hair
And your heartbeats eyes
With your beculli checks
And your language lips
With your necklace teeth
And your girrile face

With your sunburn hands
And your moonspring arms
With your turchong chest
And your spintime waist
With your chinesswung hips
And your hexistrung legs

With your steelwhip bones
And your starfish nerves
With your wineshine flesh
And your pulsstream heart
With your tonguebead blood
And your prayerframe womb

With your skyspun satch
And your fashbeau rose
With your waebeau gown
And your charmeur ring
With your timecoll belt
And your hanffing cloak

With your lesicross glance
And your windilush trance
With your glassbute voice
And your dawnfruit breath
With your rainfruit talk
And your dustdrift walk

With your downsound psalms
And your wordcurve rhymes
With your cashmere songs
And your seargold poems
With your windskull chants
And your woulght hymns

Now and at the hour of our death.

Jim Hare

Lament Christ!

In its own way,
the candle costs constant light.
It burns all day,
and is best seen at night.

From Marks

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
Have warmed and wind and autumned a self
So danced and dawed and formed (like Plato)
And bleeding an act of oblivion.
The time in thy throat
The breath on thy hands
The sad hours secretly move.
Like Hecuba, an old woman who
With knowing eyes
Went, wept for beauty lost
And feared tomorrow's face

Silent as curtain and sunbeam
Your flames have wedded the wind.
But retina-poised in nighted 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 Ephelides of ashes
In the melting heart of words.

My words are flames— you are a told old tail of a comet
My words are vapors— you are a rinsed old skull of a sound
My words are colors— you are a crumpled old ball of a poet
My words are tears— you are a frozen old Proteus of a god

The pages of your gaze
Quicken camera cadence
The fragments of your eanted ways
Fuse pined frescoes
Your memories suspended by dreamed yesterdays
Pendulum bundled events
Your partial visions pressed between crossed Gethsemanies
Monole symbolized 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 starved
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 fed, spared Babylonian tongues
You had beautiful things to say
From the halo of your stained force— humble chapel words
You had beautiful things to say
From your mitered martyrdom of glances— sterner rubric lines
You had beautiful things to say
You were the instant prophet in this chant of dust
Your poems oddling, your words our relics
Your staff the wand of our wonder.

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

The flash of a Chinese lantern tongues the prism of music
A violin bow across your nerves.
The bugle of desire calls lit the lyric of your lotus
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 treacle 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,
riddles the statesman
oppresses the philosopher
strains the theologian
confounds the scientist,
mocks the smiling promise
of a youthtime given to lights,
stiffles 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 seized ultimate hope,
whose symbols all
proclaim
that death's not all
nor life . . . here . . .

To Him
death is never
untimely!

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 churning scientific pacemakers
with memorial mounds of Seamless 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 temps of gas smoke.

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

We are all turning khaki green
from pulling dead toes of coagulated votes
from singing the song 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 seagull 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 jealous combatives
and drowned in ten cent comic books.

Thomas Hughes

JOE RUFFINO

C. Amann
COITUS POETICUS

A poem is abstract biology.
Devin Gosot

Of the poet

A rather blessed trinity.
The Cornman

An obscure feeling
In the quiet-colored end of evening
When the winch birth of wrinkled vision tongues
The beating darkness
And leaves my universe singing with cells of song
On fire with innocence
And the world-without-end hour
And act of dawn:

Bequeathed with child yet chaste.
Chaste in motion timeless
Chaste in perfume formless
Chaste in instant dumbness
Chaste in limbo sadness
Chaste in dreaming ageless
Chaste in chanting silence
Chaste in frosted presence
Chaste in ardent patience
Silking shivering tenderness
From evening's past caress
Carving marble out of stillness
I merge a Parian dress
Melting ancient strangeness:
Words.
Words my chiming harren:

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
Enholled 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 tools 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 sights
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 flaring falter.

N. YOKICH

My soul is a meadow soul
I wrap my soul in rose leaves
My soul is a patchquill soul
I wrap it with an opera cape
My pantomine of words hiding
A soul cradled with sound seeking
Through my crystal ball music
And my telescope lines
Seeking seeking an alien princess.
An angel cradled 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 canioned leaves will be her gong
The glowing lush of green undone.
Flowing toward a flooding dawn
A champagne moon will be her gown
Embraced 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 prayer sung 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 stilettos radiance:

Jesus drunk on poetry.

THE WIZARD OF VELOEEN

A marriage is a night sacrament
A metaphysics of darkness
A shortcut to truth
As the Bird flies.

Author: Full Issue
Published by Fisher Digital Publications, 1968
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 manured his fields. The yield was scanty, so the following year he scattered the stones about the fields again. The yield was worse. 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. So he took a knife, and with a swift surpise movement he relieved his body of its "stones." His wish was granted—and then some. All lust was gone, but so were the benefits that the stones provided. Soon his body became flabby, his hair lost its lustre and strength, his voice piped shably where once it had boomed vigorously, and the world no longer took him seriously (there is no place in the world for a puny, as it seems). His work began to suffer, he quarreled with his colleagues, he fell into fault with his church's doctrine, and he fell embittered and refted.

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 stones he'd received, and wept afresh in the memory. His father had sternly demanded he read and study when his childhood body yearned for play. His tutors had beaten him, often inermessly, 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 constant, devising 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. Pitiably the teacher found himself a suffering brute, he preached; and he reserved his harshest anathemas for the teachers who opposed 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 who saw schools of education were rising everywhere, 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 if ever men used them, really. "Useless" courses were eliminated and replaced with others (some have even amusingly termed basket-weaving and "Here we Go Loopy Loo."") Of course a reposing slogan went along with the system: "We teach the student, not the subject." The educational jargon was long and unimpressive, but it suffered, and was very, very quotable.

The system was called "progressive" to contrast it with the old.
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 prophecy. Though only slightly schooled, it is reported that Mr. Cayce was able to recommend cures for terminal diseases, predict the future, and foretell personal affairs, while in an apparently comatose state. 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 material with which to practice an unauthorized psychosynthesis in the face of verified facts and to discover alternative philosophies. The wife includes the project a mental world by systematically adding of acquaintances’ belief researching digested magazines falsely saturation and strange dreams of significance and in the flurry of mysticism generally being wrack 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 claims is an art form and authority generally ludicrous. The older generation is concerned with the company, their progeny no longer openly flirt on street corners or post the behinds of automobiles in their enthusiasm in publicly appointed places, but are seeming to live 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 singing Noel in a Lithuanian beer garden across a young couple from the college who were just about to become third grade teacher and Xavier public relations and soon over improbable formal attire for the Senior Ball at which they planned to announce their engagement. He stopped them quite drunk. A substitute for their happiness told them he was young and quite happy once and set there saying to the somewhat amorous young man you lucky s.o.b. I love you. Stared at the mirror over the bar and recited:

You lucky s.o.b.
I love you
So paste my gray temples

On the stop sign
Named you!
And stay

Scoring the player piano
And his yellow blues.

I rushed not having meanwhile forgotten my date with an otherwise beautiful girl to see phrases at the movies and spent the night instead outside the movies 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 excursions, overreaching waves in gentle copulation stir with every new obscenity bloated by the young and intertwine their salted beards in into wounded worms upsetting perfect couples in a sucking dive for bottom worms, uproot the darker life and pull into their rough love the blinded creatures and that any voyager who watches this robust must satisfy the now, green lust

by tapping his dry body into the wetted bridal bed and gloomdream awakes and adores last night of gloomdream gloomdream waking in lost nights grey roller shading yellow on the glow deep day gloomdream, the glow worm’s night fighting bug night lashing scenes from tailend hurricane from soft spread moon gloomdream no longer gloomdream seen through chandeliers new moon crystal

The airy
now wall of first tastes ripe red life young skin stretching to love hopeless of a future it does not need wrapping huge outrage coats of himself around bumped into people roaming the night behind water stained volumes of instinct

In Atlantis

where the six percent spots of night blinked yellow spots of purple diabolical as the indifferent arms of love latched the wild shire of dawn and the nasty slash of unseen and sharpen fixing an eternal thunderstorm to reflect a blue kiss of divine harmony

In Atlantis

which was still

and breathed into the mouth of the purple sounds of sunset leaving a screaming feedback and a glowing blush of wind.
"COR AD COR ..."

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.

CLARENCE AMANN

Bussy Bysshe—

Busy Byshe 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 Byshe 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 require
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 Byshe's at a cocktail rite!
No high-toned critic ever will indict
A Byshe work as "... Yet another blight
On literary art's escutcheon!" nor slight
It cleverly as "... so much Byshe Viely;!
But still I say, Bene, Busy Bysshe!

HARRY ACETO

had
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 did think that fear should be 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 means 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. In 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? Does pity and fear build up within a person when they are not exercised? Do people suffer from an excess of these emotions? Even if a person were heavily inclined to pity, would not the exercise of this emotion in the tragedy make him more, instead of less, compassionate? Upon seeing suffering in the real world after viewing a tragedy, would he not be more inclined to pity? And what about the person whose emotions are well-balanced? By Aristotle's definition he would 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.

If such a catharsis of pity and fear did take place, should it not be 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 any 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 civic festivals, which were religious and patriotic affairs, the great occasions of the Greeks' communal life. The Greeks did not adopt an isolating attitude towards these tragedies. To the great tragic poets, the creation of art and the creation of the public, the life of art, the life of war, the life of the city were so closely linked that it would be a mistake to say that the Greeks had a separate art form for tragedy.

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 polemizing of the purgation 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 encroached unethically on the soul by feeding the passions instead of starving them. Aristotle, in refuting Plato's polemic, tried to show that the tragic effect did justify 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 amiss. Aristotle's defense of the social worth of tragedy was a masterpiece. 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 purgation 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'âme 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'âme, is not broken in his defeat. On a higher spiritual level the hero is victorious, and his unconscious spirit wins. The grandeur d'âme is the great occasion of the Greek's communal life. It seems that hero 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'âme. 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 men and women are traditional responses to emotion. It seems that hero is the source of our pleasure in tragedy—our enlightenment about and admiration for the almost sublime human spirit of the hero.
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 mock 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

ST. JOHN FISHER COLLEGE

1968

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

Editors: JIM COLEMAN JOHN BERNUNZIO TOM BRADY JIM HALL TOM HENDRY
TOM HUGHES (ed.) JOHN MORREALL FRAN MURPHY BOB SHEA JOHN VORRASI
REV. LEO A. HETZLER (mod.)

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"

TOM BEERS cover drawing