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Ethical Aspects of Tragedy: A Comparison of Certain Tragedies by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Seneca and Shakespeare by Laura Jepsen

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formal classical satire as developed by Donne, Hall, and Marston. He makes some pertinent comments on the critical attitude of the Elizabethans towards satire and the satirist as reflected in Jonson's depiction of Asper, Macilente, and Carlo Buffone; but, in this connexion, might have said more on the conditions of authorship and the status of the writer. The chapter on 'Poetry and Music', which is slighter and more commonplace than the others, presumably was written before the publication of Mrs. Ing's work on this subject, which strikes nearer the heart of the matter. In the concluding chapter the heroic ideal, as presented in the poetry and critical utterances of Spenser, Harington, and Chapman, is related to the allegorical interpretation of epic during the Renaissance, which is traced back to the theme of 'Hercules' choice, or the Hero at the Fork of the Road'. Philosophical poetry is intentionally excluded and historical poetry is touched upon only incidentally in chapters ii and vi. Professor Smith's approach to his subject impels concentration upon content rather than form, though he finds room for some suggestive comments on style and versification, particularly in connexion with the sonnet. As a selective critical survey his book is clear, timely, and readable; it might have been even better with the addition of a general bibliography, the more desirable in view of the extent of the footnotes.

B. E. C. DAVIS

**Ethical Aspects of Tragedy: A Comparison of Certain Tragedies by Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Seneca and Shakespeare.** By LAURA JEPSSEN. Pp. ix+130. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1953. \$3.75.

Miss Jepsen's method is to take a number of ideas which she considers dominant in certain tragedies—Poetic Justice, Poetic Irony, Pathos, Romantic Irony, Stoicism—and to illustrate them by referring, generally, to one ancient and one Shakespearian play in each instance. It is always useful to bring together the tragedies of antiquity and of the Elizabethan age, for there is enough similarity in the attitudes they induce to justify the employment of a single label. But the tracing of resemblances should not lead us to an easy equation. Miss Jepsen considers the *Oresteia* and *Macbeth* under the heading of 'Poetic Justice': this over-simplifies perhaps the *Oresteia* and certainly *Macbeth*. It will hardly do to present any Shakespearian tragedy as a straightforward account of sin and retribution, for this takes away from the Elizabethan world-view, as presented in tragedy, its characteristic tension. So, too, in equating the *Hippolytus* and *Romeo and Juliet* Miss Jepsen does not take into account the intimate association of gods and mortals (each alike frail and personal) in Euripides and the quite impersonal fate that works towards disaster for Shakespeare's lovers. A consideration of resemblances should be a preliminary step to a recognition of difference.

But if Miss Jepsen equates ancient and Elizabethan too easily, she is also inclined to differentiate too sharply both between the Greek dramatists and between the separate tragedies of Shakespeare. This arises almost inevitably from her attaching particular plays to each of her chosen dominant ideas. She illustrates stoicism by reference to Seneca's *Hercules Oetaeus* and Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. This leads her to present Brutus as the perfect Stoic, as if he were

interchangeable with Chapman's Clermont, as if, in fact, he had nothing of Hamlet's dilemma, nothing of Othello's frailty. She can fall into such a *non sequitur* as 'Brutus . . . never acknowledges error and hence feels no guilt', which is doubtful in fact as well as faulty in logic. Because the *Antigone* and *Hamlet* are to illustrate Poetic Irony, she considers that in these plays 'the reward for heroism is ultimately disillusionment and death', which implies a perplexing view of Hamlet's final condition. Yet, despite her recognition that the dominant idea in a tragedy may vary from one writer or play to another, Miss Jepsen is convinced that both in Shakespeare and in the ancients there is 'little ambiguity either in their thinking or in their terminology'. So she must reject the notion of a 'villain-hero'. One would be glad to know if she finds an equal rigidity of thought in Shakespeare's contemporaries.

The book contains some elementary observations on the differences between the ancient writers of tragedy, useful perhaps for undergraduates 'majoring' in English. But with Miss Jepsen every dramatist and every play runs the risk of being too neatly pigeon-holed.

CLIFFORD LEECH

**Troilus and Cressida.** Edited by HAROLD N. HILLEBRAND. Supplemental Editor, T. W. BALDWIN. Pp. xx+613. (New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare). Philadelphia and London: Lippincott (for the Modern Language Association of America), 1953. \$17.50; £7 net.

The New Furness Variorum edition of *Troilus and Cressida* represents in the main the work of Professor Hillebrand, whose edition had reached its final stages when the tragic misfortune of a paralytic stroke prevented him from giving it a final revision. His basic material, completed in 1943, has since been supplemented, checked, and seen through the press by his colleague, Professor T. W. Baldwin, who has carried the record down to June 1949 (in general the terminal date for addenda).

The arrangement of material follows established lines: the Text (in this case the Folio, reproduced letter for letter and point for point), Textual Notes, and Commentary account for roughly the first half of the volume; the Appendix occupies the latter half.

The decision to reprint the Folio text was originally Professor Hillebrand's and was prompted by his conclusion that an editor had a clear-cut choice between two prints set up from different manuscripts, each containing revision not found in the other. As it has since been established that the Folio text was printed from a corrected example of the Quarto, the Quarto (since it was a 'good' text) clearly stands closer to Shakespeare in accidentals. The right procedure is therefore for an editor to reprint the Quarto and to correct its errors in the light of the Folio. Eclecticism of this kind runs counter, of course, to the general policy of the Furness Variorum edition and Professor Hillebrand's choice was possibly (as his colleague argues in a footnote to p. xi) for practical purposes the best solution.