

Elements of Classical Tragedy  
as shown in some  
Middle and Late Egyptian Stories

by

**Ahmed A. Galal**



## Elements of Classical Tragedy as shown in some Middle and Late Egyptian Stories

As a literary form, tragedy has been analyzed in various critical studies including its main characteristics and the artistic methods with which these characteristics were achieved.<sup>(1)</sup> However, a study of the tragedy relationship to earlier literary works, as those of ancient Mesopotamia and Pharaonic Egypt, has not been comprehensively presented, either by Aristotle, who first investigated classical tragedy, or by modern critics<sup>(2)</sup>.

The discussion of this literary relationship between ancient Near Eastern and Greek narratives depends on certain literary considerations which will be investigated in this critical essay.

For the majority of scholars who work in the field of ancient literatures, neither Mesopotamian nor Pharaonic narratives are critically regarded as true narrative works in the wider sense of the term. According to them, the principal aim, which these narratives served was to commemorate archaic mythical concepts and political events concerning the creation of the universe and its cosmic deities, and the origin of kingship, and how ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian monarchs did their best to establish spiritual emblems of their divinity.

Although this view of the object of ancient Near Eastern narratives can be generally accepted, a question, here, may arise. If these works

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(1) K. Beckson and A. Ganz, Literary Terms, 3rd ed., New York, 1990. pp. 283 ff.

(2) A. Nicoll, The Theory of Drama, New York, 1980, pp. 103 ff.; B. Ford, The Age of Shakespeare, Vol. 2, Harmondsworth, 1983, pp. 240 f.; R. Kirkpatrick, English and Italian Literature from Dante to Shakespeare, London 1995, p. 155; L. Perinne, Literature, pp. 1014 ff.

of literature thus dealt with mythical and religious concepts, what pleasure did the people of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt gain from them? The answer to this question depends upon a critical investigation of the main characteristics of these Near Eastern narratives, as well as the points of correspondence and difference between Near eastern tales and those of the Greeks.

In dealing with the characteristics of ancient Mesopotamian narratives, certain points should be taken into consideration. On the one hand, most scholars would agree that there was no cultural connection between ancient Mesopotamia and Greece before the first millennium B. C. Accordingly, the appearance of certain Sumerian religious concepts - like that of a god who impregnates his daughter or granddaughter, a deity who kidnaps his victims, or a god who fights fictional animals - in Greek myths<sup>(1)</sup> should not be regarded as a direct influence from ancient Mesopotamia, since similar mythical motifs were conceived in many other Near Eastern civilizations. On the other hand, Sumerian and Akkadian-Babylonian myths and epics are critically regarded as modified literary forms of Old Testament stories which were conceived to serve certain ancient Mesopotamian beliefs<sup>(2)</sup>. The Sumerian myth of the earliest existence of a man with a woman - i.e. the water-god Enki and the goddess Ninhursag-in a pure and clean land - i.e. Dilmun - provides a number of interesting parallels to the motifs of the biblical paradise story as told in the second and third chapters of Genesis<sup>(3)</sup>. The events of the Sumerian tale might be taken as a significant allusion to the emigration of the early Sumerians from Dilmun to the fertile area of ancient Mesopotamia. Accounts of the Great Flood can be also compared. The Sumerian myth, as well as its Babylonian version, offers a close correspondence to the story of the Great Flood at the time of Prophet Noah<sup>(4)</sup>. And there are numerous other examples.

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(1) J. B. Pritchard (Editor), Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, Princeton, 1974, pp. 37 ff.

(2) This viewpoint is clearly shown in the critical comments presented by J. B. Pritchard, op. cit., pp. 37 f.; 42 f.; 104 f. etc.

(3) Ibid., pp. 37 ff.

(4) Ibid., p. 42 f.

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The same thing could be said about the Sumerian and Babylonian epic tales whose style and content were intentionally developed to commemorate political events or encourage religious devotion of ancient Mesopotamian monarchies, rather than to arouse the human emotions of a reader or an audience as was the object of Greek tragedy.

This literary function critically represents the most essential difference between ancient Mesopotamian narratives and Greek tragic tales which, when well performed, filled their readers - or audience - with various human emotions like fear, pity or exhilaration.

On the surface, the epic conflict between Gilgamesh and Agga, the king of Kish<sup>(1)</sup>, may appear quite dramatic. It contains a certain combination of the monarch as protagonist along with the struggle of his people against their enemies. However, its real purpose was probably more to document the early struggles of the Sumerian city states. In other words, this epic contains only certain elements of tragedy. It was not purposefully written to arouse human emotions as were Classic Greek tragedies. Its purpose could really be more as a kind of political history. Other epic tales could be interpreted as illustrations of how ancient Mesopotamian faced local natural catastrophes, the dangers of the nomads, etc.

On this topic, also, it is worthy to draw attention to the aspects of conflict and revenge characterizing the mythical plots of the Sumerio-Babylonian fictions concerning death and the nether world. Literary borrowing and transformation - specially from Semitic myths - are clearly shown in the description of the crimes which the divine and human protagonists of these fictions committed.

Though the ancient Egyptian literature of the third and second millennia B. C. largely served similar religious and epic purposes, there were successful attempts to produce special narratives whose characteristics can be artistically and critically compared with the classical tragic elements of the first millenium B. C. In these Egyptian narratives, which included both fictional and true stories, characters and events were realistic and dramatic, arousing the emotions like those of

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(1) *Ibid.*, pp. 44 f.

the Greek tragic tales. In considering this literary approach one might suggest that aspects of the ancient Egyptian art of fiction or even quotations from the simply told stories, must have reached the ears of the Greek writers before the classical tragic tales were written. The adaptation of certain ancient Egyptian religious and funerary beliefs with the popular stories told concerning them, might have helped educated Greeks to understand other aspects of Pharaonic cultural life such as the art of storytelling.

There is clear evidence that the Greeks had extensive knowledge of ancient Egyptian myths even before the fifth century B. C.<sup>(1)</sup>

An important example of this knowledge can be seen in the Greek fifth-century B.C. version of the conflict between the two gods, Osiris and Seth. Details of the Greek version are quite different, and were certainly romanticized and adapted to Greek cultural sensitivities.

Both ancient Egyptian and Greek narratives were purposefully written to defend religious doctrines, or to encourage conformity to social customs. Storytelling art, in both civilizations, was extensive and successful, not only in its aims and quality, but also in its display of fine speech. Miriam Lichtheim is one of the few scholars who has analyzed ancient Egyptian writings concerning their literary elements. In her critical comment on the ancient Egyptian eloquence, which was personally ascribed to an educated peasant, Miriam Lichtheim<sup>(2)</sup> stated the following : Egypt's high regard for the art of using words, a valuation of rhetoric comparable to that which was to prevail in Greece and Rome, found conscious expression in the composition known as the Eloquent Peasant. Here the art of fine speaking was made to serve the defense of justice. To the Egyptians eloquence came from straight

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(1) E. J. Bickerman, Chronology of the Ancient World, London, 1980, p. 77; P. Grimal, The Concise Dictionary of Classical Mythology- the English translation, Oxford, 1991, p. 226; C. Kerenyi, The Gods of the Greeks, New York, 1992, p. 112; J. G. Predey, Greek Art and Archaeology, London, 1993, pp. 46 f., 100 f., 120; A. Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, Oxford, 1966, pp. 352 ff.

(2) Ancient Egyptian Literature, I, II, Berkely, 1975, pp. 11 f.

- Elements of Classical Tragedy as shown in some Middle and Late Egyptian Stories thinking. It was left to the Greeks to discover that rhetoric could also prompt an unworthy cause. In its display of fine speech, this work, more than any other, made extensive and successful use of metaphors and other poetic imagery. In prose tales, she added, the art of fiction can be seen to grow in refinement, from the simply told tale to the complex story. Both have an effective directness.

As it has been stated by modern critics, drama is written primarily to be performed, while tragedy is to be read. In ancient Greece, however, both forms blend into each other, not only in their portrayal of serious and sad incidents but also in giving a sense of certain supernatural forces at work. This artistic admixture is clearly shown in the earliest critical studies which were presented by ancient Greek writers. Aristotle defined tragedy as an imitation of an action of high importance, complete and of some amplitude. It is presented in dramatic, as opposed to narrative form and utilizes poetic language<sup>(1)</sup>.

As regards origin and development, tragedy, like drama, would seem to take its very life from the actions and thoughts of mortal and super-natural persons. This assumption has in support the significant meaning of the term "tragedy", i.e. "goat song", which probably refers to an ancient totemic ritual which is performed in the sacrifice of a goat<sup>(2)</sup>.

Greek tragic and dramatic works have not been directly related to the illumination of the aspects of ancient Greek human life. However, the representation, of certain classes or beliefs, either in abstract form, or symbolically, probably help readers to understand some aspects of Greek political events and religious customs.

Critically, the concept of tragedy as these literary characteristics involve, has been consciously realized by ancient Egyptian fiction - writers. During the late period of the royal Fifth Dynasty, about 2400 B.C., the bloody conflict between the good god Osiris and his evil

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(1) K. Beckson and A. Ganz. *op. cit.*, p. 284. This language should, at least, be pleasurable and appropriate for the situation in which it is used.

(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 283 ff.



younger brother Seth was presented as a narrative within other funerary utterances of the so-called Pyramid Texts<sup>(1)</sup>. Here, and for the first time in the ancient world, there was a successful literary attempt to express the concept of the struggle between good and evil in tragic or dramatic work.

The reader of the tale of Osiris and Seth experiences a variety of strong emotions. The primary feeling of admiration towards the outstanding qualities of Osiris changes into a sense of fear and sympathy because of his murder by his evil brother Seth. Nevertheless, Osiris, resurrection and the defeat of Seth by Horus, the avenger of his father Osiris, fill the reader with pleasure. Finally, the just judgment, through which Osiris became the divine ruler of the nether world, reflects a real sense of the triumph of virtue.

In the still-continuing effort to analyze the main elements of tragedy, Aristotle's definition of the tragic hero as "a person of stature", has been the subject of much argument.<sup>(2)</sup> Perinne<sup>(3)</sup> regarded "stature" as a mark of nobility and greatness, i.e. a tragic hero is supposed to be prince or king. Nicoll suggested that this nobility and greatness could be seen in any character with excellent moral qualities<sup>(4)</sup>, e.g. high fame and flourishing prosperity. He added that nobility of character could be represented in the tragic hero's possession of extraordinary powers, qualities of both passion and aspiration, as well as wisdom.

In ancient Egyptian realistic and nonrealistic stories, the representation of kings and princes as protagonists, is very common. Although Osiris had been the eldest son of the earth-god Geb, he was romantically introduced as a just king, of a human race, ruling over the whole land of Egypt. His divine descent, as well as his justice, enabled him to be considered the tragic hero who enjoyed the high fame which thrilled the envy through the heart of his younger brother Seth. Famous Pharaohs, like Snefru and Khufu were presented as protagonists in

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(1) M. Lichtheim, *op.cit.*, I, pp. 24 ff.

(2) A. Nicoll, *op.cit.*, pp. 103 ff.

(3) *op.cit.*, p. 1016.

(4) A. Nicoll, *op.cit.*, p. 104.



- Elements of Classical Tragedy as shown in some Middle and Late Egyptian Stories certain tales<sup>(1)</sup>. The events of the conspiracy, in which king Amenemhet I, the founder of the Twelfth Dynasty lost his life, were much more effective as a tragic work.

In Greek tragedies ghosts have been accepted by readers with a kind of awed wonder<sup>(2)</sup>. The Egyptian writer showed Amenemhet I revealing himself, possibly as a ghost or through a dream, to his son and successor in order to relate to him how he was dramatically attacked by his guards<sup>(3)</sup>.

In addition to his natural power, tragic hero is suggested to have some extra human force, a force that at once serves as a fairly powerful means of creating a mode broader than that which mere individual capacity might achieve, and of providing some feelings of awe and emotion which are critically regarded as the prime essentials of tragedy<sup>(4)</sup>.

The plot in the ancient Egyptian story of the "Two Brothers" is mainly based on the concept of the supernatural force of the tragic hero.

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(1) this kind of narrative, which has served political aims, was very common in ancient Egyptian literature. In this narrative, the plot is mainly based on a divine prophecy or inspiration through which legitimate sovereignty could be granted to private persons or priests. During the reign of the first king of the Fifth Dynasty, a group of tales of this kind were woven together in a narrative frame to show the noble birth, i.e. the divine origin, of the first three kings of this Dynasty. As the monarch-hero of this tales, king Khufu has been presented as a good father being entertained by his sons who, in turn, relates to him marvelous events that happened in the past. King Snefru, the founder of the Fourth Dynasty, has been introduced as the royal hero of the third story of these tales which is known now as "The Boating Party". The events, which prince Hardedef related to his father dealt mainly with the details of the prophecy of the magician Ddedi through which the first three kings of the Fifth Dynasty were selected by the Sun-god Re to be the legitimate rulers of Egypt, M. Lichtheim., op.cit., 1, 215 ff.

(2) A. Nicoll, op. cit., pp. 104 ff.

(3) M. Lichtheim, op.cit., I, pp. 135 ff.

(4) This element of tragedy is critically known as the "Introduction of the Supernatural". A. Nicoll, op. cit., p. 106 f.

This story symbolically deals with the ancient Egyptian concept of the struggle between good and evil.<sup>(1)</sup> However, its writer succeeded in arousing a real tragic impression towards a virtuous young farmer who, as a hero of the story, was cruelly faced by the intrigue of the cunning wife of his elder brother, and the rashness and injustice of the latter.

A tragic sympathy towards this younger brother could be soon felt by any one who observes the supernatural strength which enabled him to practice very hard works both in the house of his elder brother and in the field. With this supernatural strength, he could understand his cows when they were asking him to take them to the place where the grass is good. A more sense of pity and fear could be felt by the reader when he knows how the elder brother was easily deceived by the false gossip of his wife, telling him that his younger brother tried to seduce her, and when she refused he had beaten her. The connection between this supernatural force of the hero and the rest of the story is tragically presented by the writer when he caused that two of the cows inform their herdsman that his elder brother is waiting for him with his spear in order to kill him, and that he would better run away.

The ancient Greek method of identifying the tragic hero with an ideal, a faith or a class, is defined by modern critics as the "Symbolism in the hero". Other use of what is now called "External symbolism" connects the illustration of a tragic action or the fate of a tragic hero with significant external effects, like voices of wild animals, a wide expanse of snow, ghosts, etc. As an example of "Symbolism in the hero", there is the tale of "Truth and Falsehood"<sup>(2)</sup> which shows the idea of the struggle between the wicked and the good. The tragic concept of this story could be, at first sight, realized by the reader when he recognizes the significant names which were given to the two brothers who act as the protagonists of the tale, (i.e. Truth for the good brother and Falsehood for the evil one).

External effect could be observed in the above indicated story of the Two Brothers, in which the writer presented the appearance of the Sun-god Re- i.e. the sunshine -as the symbolic force which saved the

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(1) M. Lichtheim, *op.cit.*, II, pp. 203 ff.

(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 211 ff.

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younger brother who preferred to live in the so - called "Valley of the Pine" rather than to return back to the house of his elder brother. In another aspect of this story, the younger brother defined the fermentation of a jug of beer in the hands of the elder brother as an external effect showing that something wrong has happened to his younger brother in that place.

In a number of classical tragedies, one might feel that there is something which constantly baffles human effort. This feeling is critically regarded as the "General sense of fate" which might involve tragic works in the form of misfortune, misery, doomed to death, or to destruction, etc.<sup>(1)</sup>

This concept of fate, as has been understood by classical tragic writers, is clearly shown in an ancient Egyptian story<sup>(2)</sup>, whose royal protagonist was fated, since his infancy, to be killed or devoured by one of three fierce animals i.e. the crocodile, the snake, or the dog. The only difference between the sense of fate in Greek tragedy and that of the Egyptian tale could be noticed in the ending of the latter which is assumed to be a happy one.

In Greek tragedies, the so-called tragic end deals with the hero's falling from prosperity into misery and wretchedness.

Assuming that the now missing ending of this Egyptian tale was a happy one, it is reasonable to suggest that no firm belief in an inescapable fate was theologically accepted by the ancient Egyptians. The belief in god's will is clearly shown in the speech of that prince to his father who kept him in the royal palace. He talked to his father saying "To what purpose is my sitting here ? I am committed to fate. Let me go, that I may act according to my heart, until the god does what is in his heart."<sup>(3)</sup>

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(1) A. Nicoll, op.cit., pp. 109 ff.

(2) Though usually called the doomed prince, the tale is more accurately called "The prince who was threatened by three fates"; for most scholars have come to the conclusion that the now missing ending of the tale was a happy one. M. Lichtheim, op.cit., II, pp. 200 ff.

(3) Ibid., p. 200.

As modern critics have stated, both the dealing with the hero's tragic downfall, and the causes which lead to it, are the most effective elements with which the writer of any tragedy arouses the reader's emotions. In his analysis of this point, Aristotle suggested what he has called "Some error of judgment", as the cause of this downfall. In ancient and modern critical studies, this error of judgment is frequently interpreted as the "Tragic flaw" - or the Classical "hamartia" - Which is caused by the hero's own fault<sup>(1)</sup>.

With all his great qualities, The tragic hero may be afflicted with some fault of character, such as inordinate ambition, quikness to anger, a tendency to jealousy, or overweening pride. Conversely, however, his vulnerability may result from an excess of virtue - a nobility of character that unfits him for life among ordinary mortals. But whatever it be - a fault of character, bad judgment, or excess virtue - his vulnerability leads to his downfall. Accident or fate may contribute to the downfall but only as cooperating agents : they are not alone responsible. The combination of the hero's greatness and his responsibility entitles critics to describe his downfall as tragic rather than as merely pathetic. As whatever results follow, this tragic downfall of the hero fills reader with compassion and awe<sup>(2)</sup>.

As Aristotle has suggested, there is the hero who might act wrongly through unconscious error, or a thoughtless folly. This hero's task represents the tragic human "frailty" which is derived from his own ignorance<sup>(3)</sup>.

Although Osiris must have realized that his brother Seth has been illdisposed towards him, he did nothing to defend himself against his wickedness. In the story of the Two Brothers, the younger brother was deeply affected by his brother's rashness and ingratitude. In his grief and fury, he took a reed knife, cut off his phallus and threw it into the water. He grew weak and become feeble. His elder brother has been deeply affected because of the pains which be caused to his younger

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(1) A. Nicoll, *op.cit.*, pp. 122 ff.

(2) L. Perinne, *op.cit.*, p. 1016. K.Beckson and A. Ganz, *op.cit.*, 284 f.

(3) A. Nicoll, *op.cit.*, p. 147.

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brother. Although he wished to help him, he could not crossover to the place where his younger brother was, because of the crocodiles. Emotions of alarm and wonder must have struck the courtier Sinuhe<sup>(1)</sup> when he heard of the killing of the king Amenemhet I by his eunuchs. He should have realized the threats of death which he would face in his precipitate flight into Palestine.

On the other hand, there is the hero who is faced by a task greater than his powers. In this case, the human frailty is tragically attributed to what is called the "wrongful action". To this element of the classical tragedy belong special narratives which describe how individuals of Egyptian poor classes could be faced by the injustice of local chiefs.

In the story of the Eloquent Peasant, the way with which the hero had been robbed of his donkeys and merchandise, arouses emotions of sympathy not only towards the hero himself, but also towards his poor wife and children who were left without being supplied with enough food.

In Greek tragedies, the importance of the so-called "Tragic Irony" is represented in its being a gift or a promise of the "Gods of a speech", either to the tragic hero himself, or to any other person whose character influences the development of the tragic action<sup>(2)</sup>.

The presence of a peasant, who is expected to have been directly concerned with works of the field, as an educated person, might be regarded as the tragic element of the above indicated tale of the Eloquent Peasant. With this tragic irony, the peasant-hero has presented his supplications before the magistrate, and expressed his indignation towards the injustice of his sovereign.

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(1) As a courtier, Sinuhe - or Sanehet as the name is pronounced in Egyptian - had been brought up at the court. While he was accompanying the king's eldest son in the army which was sent to the land of the Libyans, the news of the murder of the king Amenemhet I reached him. His precipitate flight into Palestine could be attributed to his personal relation with the plotters. After he had faced various different threats and misfortunes, he found favor with the prince of Palestine, where he had a wife and children. Finally Sinuhe begged the succor of king Amenemhet I to forgive him, so that he might return back to Egypt to be buried there. M. Lichtheim, op.cit., I, pp, 22 ff.

(2) A. Nicoll, op.cit., p. 111.

The feminine element does not have a direct influence on the development of the tragic event. Indirectly, it might involve the tragic action by its influence on the mind of the tragic hero or as being a reason of his affliction. In such cases, the heroine of any tragedy must have in her temper some adamant qualities and severity of purpose not ordinarily associated with the typically feminine.<sup>(1)</sup>

The murder of Osiris arouses various different emotions. To the reader, it arouses love passion towards a hero with a noble character. To Isis, it represents the fate of pain and misery which she had to face.

Immediately after her husband's murder, Isis had to face the assault of Seth. When her child Horus was born, she had to hide him in the marshes which became the home of her son's childhood. In the fierce conflict between Seth and her grown up son Horus she bravely supported the latter, and intelligently maintained his pleading so that he might restore his father's divine right as a king of the whole land of Egypt.

However, a romantic character, like that of Isis, has been non-existent in other Egyptian stories where that feminine element shows a direct bad influence on the lives of protagonists. This might justify why a female adultery has been introduced as essential cause for the doleful falls of the unfortunate and afflicted heroes. In the story of the Two Brothers, the noble behavior of the younger brother has been faced by the wickedness of his brother's wife. In the story of Truth and Falsehood, the son of the elder brother, i.e. Truth, must have been ashamed of his mother's bad treatment to his father.<sup>(2)</sup> In the story of the Two Lovers<sup>(3)</sup>, the adultery, which the priest's wife has committed,

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(1) *Ibid.*, p. 157.

(2) She did not inform him that the door-keeper, who was guarding their house, was his father. M. Lichtheim, *op.cit.*, II, p. 212.

(3) This story describes the adultery of a priest's wife who loved a young man and used to hold erotic meetings with him in the garden of her palace. When the priest discovered the sin of his wife, he practiced magical forces against that young man who was finally devoured by fierce crocodiles which were magically put in the artificial lake of the palace where he used to wash after every erotic meeting with that sinful wife. A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, translated into English by A. M. Blackman, London, 1927, pp. 66 f.



- Elements of Classical Tragedy as shown in some Middle and Late Egyptian Stories caused pains to her husband who practiced supernatural forces to let crocodiles devour her lover.

Ancient and modern critics have concentrated largely on the so-called "Tragic Relief" and its relationship to what could be here defined as the useful experience-or the practical acquaintance-which the tragic action significantly considers.

In his analysis of this point, Aristotle affirms that, by arousing pity and fear, tragedy effects what he calls "*Catharsis*"<sup>(1)</sup>. Although it is still difficult to define the exact meaning of *Catharsis*, critics regard it as the composite effect through which a reader becomes accustomed to the terrible and is thereby aided in his thorny way of life. In other interpretations, however, *Catharsis* appears to be concerned with what a reader might morally benefit by recognizing a hero's greatness or nobility. Through this *Catharsis*, also, a reader might be aware of the mutability of fortune and of God's just punishment of a vicious life.

The story of the conflict between Osiris and Seth could be regarded as the earliest successful literary attempt of introducing a tragic event effecting such significant considerations of the above indicated Tragic Relief.

Modern Scholars think that this tragic conflict represents, in truth, the struggle of the two main leaders of the Egyptian Prehistoric states which finally led to the first political unification.<sup>(2)</sup> The memory of Osiris, as a righteous ruler of the northern states, has not been forgotten in later times, when the concept of the Egyptian divine kingship was theoretically founded. What has survived of these long-forgotten events seems to have been much more effective and suitable for a moral story of the struggle between good and evil, through which the notion of this divine kingship could be significantly implied.

The introduction of the miserable scenes of the treacherous murder of Osiris and the painful life of his wife and child in the marshes of the Delta into the story, could be only regarded as the tragic force-or the

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(1) A. Nicoll, *op. cit.*, pp. 122 ff.

(2) W. Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, London, 1963, pp. 42 ff.



dramatic element which arouses the reader's emotions of awe and pity. Though the tragic relief might be represented in the defeat of Seth and the triumph of Horus, the tragic spirit of the story is deeply felt in its end which dramatically describes how Osiris resumed his earthly life to become the lord of the nether world.

The representation of a justice, that is based on divine laws, has been the tragic action of the story through which Horus has dramatically restored his right as a legitimate heir of his father Osiris. His grandfather Geb, who has appointed Seth as the king Upper Egypt, changed his mind and declared Horus as the sole king of the whole land of Egypt, for he was the son of his firstborn son<sup>(1)</sup>. This right of the "firstborn son" has been practically presented as the basic foundation of the Egyptians concept of kingship.<sup>(2)</sup>

Egyptians had firmly believed in the moral punishment which wicked persons have to face. This punishment, which is morally regarded as God's inflicted penalty, is introduced into the ends of certain Egyptian stories as a tragic element. It symbolically confirms the triumph of virtue.

In the story of the Two Brothers, the elder-brother's wife has been committed to death. The end of the story of Truth and Falsehood describes how gods inflicted punishment upon the wicked brother, i.e. Falsehood<sup>(3)</sup>. In the story of the Two Lovers, the sinful youth has been destined to be killed by the crocodiles of the lake where he used to wash after his erotic meetings with the priest's wife who was also committed to be burnt.

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(1) M. Lichtheim, *op. cit.*, I, p. 52.

(2) A. Moret, *Du Caractere Religieux de la Royaute Pharaonique*, Paris, 1902, p. 6; H. W. Fairman, *The Kingship Rituals of Egypt*, Oxford, 1958, p. 75.

(3) The Tragic action of this story is represented in the so-called "Error of judgment" which wrongly leads to the tragic hero's downfall, L. Perinne, *op. cit.*, p. 1014. Truth was badly judged by the gods. When he was found innocent, his wicked brother Falsehood was similarly faced by this bad judgment, i.e. he was smitten with five open wounds, blinded in both his eyes, and made door-keeper of the house of Truth, M. Lichtheim, *op. cit.*, II, p. 213.