UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
TRINITY COLLEGE

Faculty of Arts and Humanities

School of English

Sophister Examinations
English Studies &
Two Subject Moderatorship

Trinity Term 2007

Tragic Patterns in Ancient Drama

Wednesday 23rd May  
Arts Building, Room 3074  
09.30-12.30

Dr Andrew Power

Answer three questions.
Be careful not substantially to repeat material.
1. Who is the true protagonist of Aeschyles’ Supplices, Pelagus or the Chorus? Give reasons for your answer.

2. In which ways does the fact that Persai deals with recent history rather than myth affect our appreciation of it as tragedy?

3. To what degree does the history of division in Thebes affect Aeschylus’ representation of the city in Septem Contra Thebas?

4. 'The vengeance of Orestes was made the subject of plays by all three tragedians. All the plays are in their ways masterpieces, and each highly characteristic of its writer. Euripides realizes and psychologizes the horror of the story; Sophocles, apparently from a deliberate adoption of the "Homerian" tone, suppresses the religious problem and concentrates on the elements of direct passion' (Murray). How is Aeschylus dramatization of Orestes’ vengeance essentially a ‘religious problem’?

5. ‘Agamemnon's pride (hubris) prevents his awareness of his misdeeds and justifies his murder’ (Hafen). Discuss.

6. Choephoroe is, in essence, about the motivations behind the murders of Iphigeneia, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, and Aegisthus. Discuss.
7. ‘[S]ince this cause hath devolved on me, I will appoint judges of homicide bound by oath and establish a tribunal, a tribunal to endure for all time.’ (Athena, 482-4) To what extent is the concluding play of the *Oresteia* less about the gods than it is about men?

8. Discuss Aeschylus’ presentation of the complex interweave of myth that involves Prometheus.

9. Discuss the portrayal of heroism in Sophocles’ *Ajax*.

10. ‘Heap up great wealth in your house, if you wish, and live as a tyrant, but, if the enjoyment of these things be lacking, I would not buy the rest for the shadow of smoke as against happiness.’ (1168-1171) Is *Antigone* more concerned with Creon’s tyranny or Creon’s tragedy?

11. ‘Whoever gets up and comes to grips with Love like a boxer is a fool.’ (*Trachiniae*, 441) Discuss the treatment of Love in *Trachiniae*.

12. ‘A man growing old becomes a child again’ (Sophocles, Fragments, 434). Discuss youth and old age in *Oedipus Tyrannos*.

13. ‘To give birth is a fearsome thing; there is no hating the child one has borne even when injured by it’ (*Electra*, 770). Discuss familial bonds in *Electra*. 
14. Discuss the tension between the myth of Heracles and the ‘real’ Heracles of Euripides’ play.

15. Discuss magic in Euripides’ Medea.

16. ‘The man who melts / With social sympathy, though not allied, / Is more worth than a thousand kinsmen’ (846). Discuss the presentation of bonds of friendship (philia) and household (oikos) in Orestes.

17. ‘Nor mother is mine, neither father: his temple has nurtured me, and I serve his shrine’ (Ion, 110-11). Discuss the importance of parentage in Ion.

18. Discuss the dramatic self-consciousness / meta-theatricality of Euripides’ Bacchae.

19. How does Seneca’s Medea compare with Euripides’ treatment of the same story?

20. To what extent is Heracles’ madness caused by pride in Seneca’s Hercules Furens?
21. Explain how Seneca’s *Thyestes* depends upon a tradition of revenge tragedy established by its Greek predecessors and / or provides a pattern for future generations of revenge tragedians.

22. ‘It implies no doctrine of property and worldly goods to observe that objects are important: they can define and substantiate people’s roles, their standing, their way of life. And some objects gather, especially through the art of a playwright, special associations so that they betoken much more than themselves’ (Taplin). Discuss in relation to Sophocles.

23. Discuss one of the following themes / motifs in any play that you have studied for this course: *philia*; the *oikos*; supplication; *nostos* [homecoming]; patriarchy; tyranny.