

ABSTRACT

The focus of this dissertation is in the area of Tragedy. It begins with the proposition that Tragedy explores the borders of individuality by engaging with limits like otherness, isolation, exile and death. The Tragic Hero is the cosmic exponent of freedom and hence, the agent provocateur of this great exploration. Where this dissertation diverges from critical consensus on Tragedy is in taking up the suffering of the Hero, irrespective of time and culture, as the core of Tragedy, and then in re-thinking the reason for the suffering of the Tragic Hero. With this objective, it demonstrates how Rene Girard and Richard Kearney's somewhat related concepts of the scapegoat can be suitably exploited to offer an alternative explanation for the Tragic Hero's suffering. This opens up the possibility of a cautious reappraisal of the concept of Tragedy. Following an exploratory-descriptive approach, we might endeavour to accommodate Classical, Modern, post-Modern and post-Industrial Tragedy and Tragic Heroes into a new theoretical accretion – one that treats Tragedy as ahistorical and omnicultural. Another important point of departure in this dissertation is the attempt to arrive at such a (re-) statement through the concept of the metanarrative. An attempt has been made to figure countering agencies that proscribe the Tragic Hero's freedom into this concept. The defiance of Tragic Heroes is directed against the grand narratives that hold suzerainty over human lives. In the post-Industrial world, the metanarrative is no longer a rigid superstructure; it is now a subsuming anthology that domesticates dissent before accommodating it. The dissent of Tragic Heroes, however, cannot be domesticated. Abetted by their heightened curiosities, Tragic Heroes question the totalising schemas used in grand narratives. In questioning grand narratives, Tragic Heroes violate their sanctity; therefore, they are exiled. Tragic Heroes become outsiders, unfit for "normal" human society. What is "tragic" about Tragedy is that a heightened curiosity, a sensitive disposition, a sharper intelligence is destroyed in a process that does no material harm to our totalising schemas. This is part of the mechanism as the fall of the Hero is cathartic; it rivets our promethean geysers before they can eject turbulently. That is why Tragic Heroes do not suffer ordinary deaths; their demise is nearly always of a superlative degree with powerful metaphoric value.