ARISTOTLE'S POETICS

TRANSLATED & WITH A
COMMENTARY BY

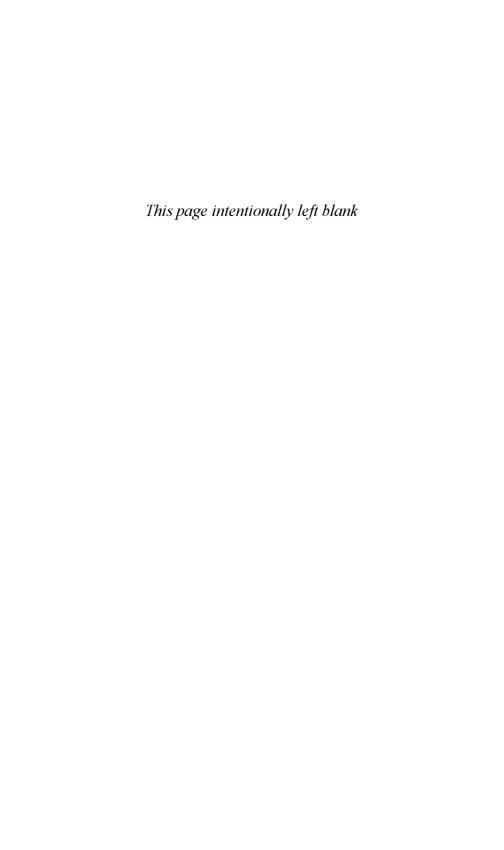## GEORGE WHALLEY

Aristotle's *Poetics*

Translated and with a commentary by George Whalley
Edited by John Baxter and Patrick Atherton

George Whalley's English translation of the *Poetics* breathes new life into the study of Aristotle's aesthetics by allowing the English-speaking student to experience the dynamic quality characteristic of Aristotle's arguments in the original Greek.

Aristotle's Poetics combines a complete translation of the *Poetics* with a running commentary, printed on facing pages, that keeps the reader in continuous contact with the linguistic and critical subtleties of the original while highlighting crucial issues for students of literature and literary theory. Whalley's unconventional interpretation emphasizes Aristotle's treatment of art as dynamic process rather than finished product. The volume includes two essays by Whalley in which he outlines his method and purpose. He identifies a deep congruence between Aristotle's understanding of *mimesis* and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's view of imagination.

This new translation makes a major contribution to the study of not only the *Poetics* and tragedy but all literature and aesthetics.

The late GEORGE WHALLEY was professor of English, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

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George Whalley on the *Poetics*: A Preface

George Whalley worked on Aristotle's *Poetics*, in one way or another, for a period of nearly two decades, but the main portion of his project was completed in the late sixties and early seventies. The central work of translation and commentary was substantially complete by 1970. In June of 1969 he delivered a talk at the meetings of the Learned Societies, "On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*," which was then published in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* (1970). This was followed by the essay on "The Aristotle-Coleridge Axis" (*University of Toronto Quarterly*, 1973).

Why the translation-and-commentary was not published quickly is not finally clear. Robin Strachan, then Director of McGill-Queen's University Press, was very much interested in publishing it, and Whalley himself, in his correspondence from the period, thinks of its appearance in print as imminent. In a general way, it is fairly easy to guess at some of the major reasons for delay. Whalley's standing as a distinguished scholar and a defender of humane studies in the universities, in Canada, and in the rest of the world made for large demands on his time. He continued to work on what was proving to be the monumental task of editing Coleridge's marginalia, and he maintained his interest in the legendary and historical matter of John Hornby by editing the diary of Edgar Christian, published as *Death in the Barren Ground* (1980). In addition, he was not in the best of health in the years leading up to his own death in 1983.

His numerous scholarly and academic interests, however, should not be thought of as merely deflecting him from the task of Aristotle. The freshness of his approach to the *Poetics* is intimately related to the breadth of vision that it embodies, and that in turn, of course, is tied

up with his multitudinous activities as a scholar and critic, biographer
and poet. This reciprocity of interests means that his achievements in
these various fields cannot be gauged accurately without sounding the
depths of his engagement with Aristotle, which is only one of the rea-
sons for publishing his work on the *Poetics* now. Conversely, the origi-
nality of his translation is hard to measure in a few well-chosen phras-
es because it reverberates in such various ways: in his critical discussion
of "Jane Austen: Poet," for example, or in his handling of *The Legend
of John Hornby*, or in the underlying assumptions of his own lyric
poems.[1]

But the present volume is not intended primarily to advance the
study of George Whalley, desirable as that may be. It is intended for
students of English literature, to invigorate, or reinvigorate, our sense
of a critical tradition, to sharpen our awareness of the works we read,
to unsettle many of our habitual assumptions and responses. Whalley
used his translation-and-commentary with his own students for many
years. In fact, the layers of mimeographs and photocopies that result-
ed are the basis of this edition. It is time for a wider audience to par-
ticipate in the benefits, stimulating and provoking, and to assess the
results.

The essays from the *University of Toronto Quarterly* are included in this
edition because they provide the best introduction to the guiding prin-
ciples and special strategies of the translation-and-commentary. There
is much, however, in Whalley's unpublished correspondence that illu-
minates his immediate purposes and helps to chart the development
of his approach, especially the way it was changed and modified over
a crucial period of about five or six years (from about 1968 to 1974).
That development was breath-taking in its daring and in its creative
approach to the problems of re-presenting Aristotle. With the support
of that correspondence, the remainder of this preface focuses on the
salient questions that assail the project now. In what sense is this a stu-
dent edition of the *Poetics*? How does the Coleridgean influence oper-
ate, and what implications does it have? In what ways is Whalley's trans-
lation tied to the work of the great classicist Gerald Else? Can it be that
a translation finished in its essentials some twenty years ago has not
been superseded by more recent work, is still relevant, still fruitful?

WHALLEY AND THE STUDENTS

The task George Whalley set for himself was in some measure impos-
sible. He wanted to make a translation of the *Poetics* that in several ways
declines to be a translation. He wanted students of English literature

who had never studied Greek to be made radically conscious of Greek
diction and syntax. He thought this was the best way, perhaps the only
way, of enabling students to experience the drama of Aristotle's think-
ing about poetry and tragedy.

In correspondence with Gerald Else, he explains his leading princi-
ples:

Without some more-than-rudimentary knowledge of Greek, students (and lec-
turers) find the larger commentaries, like yours, inaccessible in detail and are
therefore prone to uncontrolled generalization. I feel very strongly that stu-
dents of English need to be brought somehow into direct and detailed contact
with the Greek – however that can be done. I have therefore not been pri-
marily concerned to make a translation that – like yours, with its admirably
trenchant introduction and notes – can stand by itself in place of the Greek,
but a rather literal rendering into English with a running commentary that
continuously draws attention to the minutiae in the Greek, and particularly
the textual cruces. The result is deliberately nagging and irritating rather than
'readable', because I want to engage the student in the activity and substance
of the Greek at the radical level, and to remind him (at least by implication)
of the state of the text. Consequently I have tried to evolve a style that might
conceivably be a dramatic rendering of the assumed nature of the writing –
colloquial, overheard, improvised, and 'tufty' rather than formal, elegant, and
'stylish'.[2]

How, one might wonder, could a translation that doesn't stand on its
own be thought to be more accessible than one that does? Why should
Whalley imagine that a less 'readable' version is to be preferred to any
of the existing translations into English?

He had expounded the same strategy earlier, in a letter to Robin
Strachan:

As you notice from the record in *Books in Print* there is no lack of translations
of the *Poetics*, and a certain number of the more recent ones have been pre-
pared with students of English literature in mind. A few are very distinguished
– Grube's I admire very much and think cannot be surpassed simply as a trans-
lation. What I have wanted to do, however, is not simply to prepare a transla-
tion and a commentary (of which there is no lack) but a translation-and-com-
mentary that keeps the reader in continuous contact with the Greek even if
the reader knows no Greek. The commentary is not so much an elucidation
and exposition of the text as a means of keeping the Greek in sight; and the
style of translation is meant to work in the same way – so that the translation
does not dispense with the Greek but is a counterpart to it.[3]

Is this possible? Can a reader who knows no Greek be put in even spo-
radic, much less continuous, contact with the Greek?

And even if it were possible, is it desirable? Who would want to sub-
mit to a text that is deliberately nagging and irritating? The benefits
aren't exactly self-evident, but the risks certainly are. To begin with, a
student who comes through the experience with merely a smattering
of Greek, a few tags for exotic display, is likely to sound pedantic, pre-
cious, or affected rather than learned or meditative. Whalley himself,
by his habit of transliterating instead of translating – by saying *poietry*,
for example, instead of poetry – doesn't always escape this risk. More
serious is the risk that a translation-and-commentary will make the stu-
dent more, rather than less, dependent on someone else's view of Aris-
totle. Wouldn't it be preferable just to acknowledge that you are deal-
ing with a translation, with a mediated view, and then make the best of
that?

The situation, however, is more complex. The existing English trans-
lations repeatedly run into the problem of having at once too much
authority and too little. As Whalley explains, again in correspondence
with Else, "There has already grown up – among students and many
instructors – from the use of the Butcher translation a sort of sub-Aris-
totelean jargon, impregnable because canonical (it is claimed); and
this fails both to clarify Aristotle and to release the lines of thought
that the *Poetics* can invigorate."[4] Students of English commonly regard
the *Poetics* as one of the things you need to be able to claim to have
read but don't need to spend much time on. This little treatise may
apply to Greek drama but is it really all that relevant to English litera-
ture? The philosopher's diagrams or classifications (if that's what they
are) are of probably limited use, even if they are reasonably accurate.
Everyone, anyway, now knows about the central concepts: the quasi-
technical ones, *praxis*, 'pity and fear', *catharsis*, and *hamartia*; and the
ordinary ones, plot, character, thought, and so on; imitation and uni-
fied action; recognitions, reversals, and sufferings. These things are
widely understood, aren't they – part of the canon of critical termi-
nology?

In such a context, Whalley's purpose is not so much to make Aris-
totle more familiar to us as to make him strange, to defamiliarize us,
to startle us into new perceptions of the vigour of Aristotle's thought
about poetry, to make us see how heuristic, how exploratory, the *Poet-
ics* really is, how far it is from the merely classificatory. His strategy, as
he demonstrates throughout the commentary, is to draw attention to
the particularly active qualities of Greek syntax and inflections, and
especially to the drive and freshness of Aristotle's own prose. The strat-

egy of transliterating such terms as *mimesis, pathos,* or *poiesis* is not intended to promote a technical vocabulary or to give us a readily labelled meaning, but to remind us that we don't know, and will likely always have trouble grasping, the full implications of such words.

In preparing to publish "On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics,*" Whalley confided to the editor of the *University of Toronto Quarterly,* William Blissett, that he was "primarily concerned with the question: how can we best present Aristotle's *Poetics* as a living document to the students of English." He says to Blissett, as he had said to Strachan and Else, that he intends to prepare "a working version of the *Poetics* rather than a self-contained translation."[5] In the phrase "working version," I think, lies the clue as to how he hopes to keep the Greek-less student in continuous touch with the Greek. It means, in effect, that he tries to keep the student in touch with his own touch. He invites the student into the translator's laboratory while the work is still going on. In other words, he admits that this is very much one person's perspective, one man's interpretation, but so far as possible shows how it happens, indeed, shows it happening.

This does not mean that Whalley thought his commentary should rival the treatise for attention. Even though he conceives of commentary and text printed on facing pages, he does this to keep visible the translator's hesitations, dilemmas, and the processes of his decisions. The upshot is very much a personal presentation of the *Poetics.* If the work is acroamatic, a work for listening to, we should hope to catch echoes of Aristotle talking – to his students in the Lyceum, or the Academy, and perhaps on occasion even to himself – and that, for those of us with no Greek, is possible only through the translator's courage in acting out his own participation as auditor and as transmitter. A further concomitant to Whalley's personal approach to the *Poetics* is that what we get is very decidedly a Coleridgean Aristotle.

ARISTOTLE AND COLERIDGE

The collocation of Aristotle and Coleridge in Whalley's thinking was at first something of a lucky accident, and it took him several years to sort out how much was a matter of good luck and how little merely accidental. It is doubtful that he ever truly completed that sorting process.

Admittedly, he did consider that his credentials for coming to grips with Aristotle included the way his own efforts as a poet fed into a sustained practical interest in Coleridge. But, in the beginning, he does not spell out why he thinks that development particularly important. He writes to Else:

An early interest in poetics, guided more by my own experience of making poetry and playing music than by a formal study of what had been written on the subject, led me into work on Samuel Taylor Coleridge. For the past twenty years or more I have had a hand in the edition (by Miss Kathleen Coburn) of the Coleridge Notebooks and am now completing an edition of Coleridge's marginalia to be published in the *Collected Coleridge*.[6]

To begin with, he seems to regard his work on Coleridge as important primarily because it required him to keep his Greek in "reasonable working order." He doesn't set out, in other words, to produce a Coleridgean Aristotle, and there is no evidence to suggest that he started with a specific sort of interpretation in mind.

Even as late as 1970, in "On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*," though he is aware of how unorthodox his position has become, he is still a bit hesitant about pursuing its implications. "I should be prepared ... to challenge R.S. Crane's statement that there is a 'Coleridgean method' of criticism distinct from and diametrically opposed to Aristotle's; I begin to sense an Aristotle-Coleridge axis in criticism and poetics but am not yet prepared to speak about it" (28). This suggests that, though he must have felt the strong and continuous influence of Coleridge on himself, the possibility of a critical alignment with Aristotle grew upon him only slowly.

"The Aristotle-Coleridge Axis" was published three years later, with a noticeable increase in confidence marked by his calling attention to "the unrepentant use of the definite article – *The* Aristotle-Coleridge Axis." This essay is crucial to any attempt to understand the originality of Whalley's approach to Aristotle (to say nothing of Coleridge), but it is admittedly brief, even sketchy, considering its implicit claim to dismantle one of the largest and most long-standing assumptions of criticism, the opposition of classic and romantic. And even if his summary of the major tenets of the two critical positions is correct, the effort to align the two surely comes up against a serious impediment in its concluding paragraph: the problem of finding a shared terminology. "Imagination, which Aristotle had scarcely considered except as our ability to present to the mind 'pictures' of things not physically present, assumed in Coleridge's mind a role that Aristotle would probably have approved – as the supreme realizing function, a dynamic state of wholeness accessible to all men, and overflowing into things-made so that they have a life of their own, not being the image of the person who made them" (176). Given the magnitude of the critical stakes here, Aristotle's *probable* approval is probably not good enough. And can even that much be proved?

Many more objections come crowding in. Isn't Coleridge, Shelley's "subtle-souled psychologist," notoriously more interested in character and psychology than in plot? Doesn't he inaugurate a line of Shakespearean criticism that focuses on character especially, a line that reaches its apogee in the work of A.C. Bradley, and which is likely not yet played out? And if his approach does not apply Aristotle to Shakespeare, then to whom is it applied? To the Greek dramatists themselves? Whalley concedes in "Coleridge on the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus" that whatever Coleridge was doing in his remarks before the Royal Society, he was not looking at Aeschylus through the lens of the *Poetics*.[7] And he concedes further that in general Coleridge thought of himself as a Platonist rather than an Aristotelean.

In the face of such objections, however, there are strong reasons for holding to Whalley's intuition. There is something to his suggestion that Aristotle's *mimesis* and Coleridge's "imagination" are put to the same, or similar, uses – and that these uses lie near the heart of critical practice in each case. As many commentators have suggested, one important function of the *Poetics* is to present Aristotle's response to Plato's objections to poets and to the claims of poetry to be an art. The response does not, however, take the form of a direct rebuttal or reply to Plato; instead, much of the weight of the case rests on a much more complex use of the concept of *mimesis*. But Aristotle never really defines this term, he simply uses it in a variety of ways, some of them similar to Plato's uses, many of them not. And if it is anachronistic to apply the term "imagination" to him in a Coleridgean sense, it is still very evident that he thinks of *mimesis* as requiring some sort of creative initiative, some sort of active re-making and re-ordering of the poet's materials – requiring, in other words, something fundamentally akin to the sort of exhilarating and energizing activity Coleridge was trying to describe. Whalley therefore transliterates *mimesis*, rather than translating it, precisely to circumvent the static connotations of "imitation."

Coleridge's definition of "imagination" may, on the other hand, prove no less elusive, for all the air of doctrinal lucidity in the famous formulation at the end of *Biographia Literaria* XIII, with its distinctions between primary and secondary imagination and between imagination and fancy. Whalley quotes from one of Coleridge's Notebooks (from a passage discussing the *making* activity that is poetry):

The sensitive faculty is the power of being affected and modified by *Things*, so as to receive impressions from them. The Quality of these impressions is determined partly by the nature of the sensitive faculty itself and its organs, and partly by the nature of the Things. These impressions are in the first instant

immediate Sensations: as soon as the attention is directed to them, and they are taken up into the *Consciousness*, they become *Perceptions*. The repetition of past Perceptions in the Consciousness is Imagination. The Object of the Attention *during* Perception may be aptly termed a *Presentation*, during Imagination a Representation. All Sensations and their correspondent Objects have doubtless something in common; but it is impossible to abstract it, that is, to discover what that is in Sensation <in general> which causes it to produce perception, or what it is in any given sensation which causes it to produce a certain particular perception. Equally impossible is it with regard to the Objects of past or present perception – i.e. the presentations or representations of Things, to distinguish by determinate boundaries, what part proceeds from the sensitive faculty itself, and what from the outward Causes or the Things acting on the faculty ... The cause of this impossibility is that we become conscious both of the one and of the other in one & the same way; namely, as modifications of our own Being. What precedes the modification as its cause, we can never know; because our consciousness originates in the modification.[8]

This, in short, is one of the problems of *mimesis*: does it stem from a reference to the external world ("outward Causes") or from the creative ordering of the perceiver ("the sensitive faculty") or both – and if that, in what order or proportion?

Without purporting to resolve the problem, Whalley is now more sure than ever of an Aristotle-Coleridge alignment. *Poietic*, he says, is a

making activity of mind that flows seamlessly from perception if it is instantly being worded in rhythmic and sonic forms, complex, subtle, and stable enough. One of Coleridge's axioms for imagination is thoroughly Aristotelian – *nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*. Another set of axioms for the relation between the whole and parts in poetry is no less Aristotelian: the whole is logically prior to the parts, the whole inheres in every part, a poem is unity in multeity.[9]

These remarks, published in 1974, show a growing firmness and a widening exploration of the Aristotle-Coleridge axis. That exploration is not concerned to establish fixed conclusions but to open up a fruitful field of enquiry. It does suggest, however, that the allusions to Coleridge in the commentary on the *Poetics* are not merely incidental, nor are they the casual associations of a man who just happened to be working on both figures; they are part of a more comprehensive vision. And the influx of the Coleridgean perspective is what distinguishes most sharply the work of George Whalley from that of Gerald Else.

WHALLEY AND ELSE

By a curious twist, an account of Whalley's indebtedness to the work of Gerald Else is also the most efficient way to indicate his independence and originality.

When he first wrote to Else, in August of 1968, he seems to have thought of his own undertaking as fundamentally an extension of *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument:* "so much of this depends upon – and indeed simply is – your work, that I could not think of doing it other than with your consent and cooperation, and preferably with your collaboration." His early drafts carry the rather cumbersome title, *Aristotle's Poetics Englished from the Greek text and commentary of Gerald F. Else.* "My work being merely an offshoot of what you have already done, I want to prepare an English version that you could approve."[10]

Else, however, had freshly prepared his own translation, with notes, and he wrote back suggesting that Whalley look it over carefully "before we engage in any further discussion."[11] Undeterred, Whalley revised his plan somewhat, and pressed ahead. By the following summer, he could say to Robin Strachan: "I intend to go and see Gerald Else as soon as he has had a chance to read my draft translation, but I now see his place in this as much less central. At first I thought I would be virtually re-presenting his work; but what has now come about is genuinely my own."[12]

Some light is cast on what is genuinely his own when he writes to Else in the fall of 1969, explaining that he had been ruminating on the project "for eight or ten years":

But it was working carefully through your *Argument* three years ago that convinced me of the value of making such an attempt; convinced me too of the vitality of the issues raised by a close study of the text; and it was your working version in the *Argument* (refined now by your translation) that gave me a hint of the stylistic 'tune' I was looking for. Fortunately Kassel's text had already been published and D.W. Lucas's commentary came soon after. Understandably I owe a heavy debt to your work and to Lucas's; and the tensions between the two have forced me to make up my own mind for myself on a number of points.[13]

It's true that Whalley exploits the tension between Lucas and Else in a wide variety of ways (though his sympathy and judgment remain heavily weighted on the side of Else). But something not mentioned in the letter, and of greater interest, is also happening. He begins to exploit the tensions, or at least the differences which in his handling tend to become tensions, between Else's *Argument* and Else's translation, and

to discover in this way more and more of his own impetus and momentum – his own voice.

Whalley appears to have travelled to Ann Arbor in January of 1970 to meet with Else. One of the later drafts of his translation-and-commentary has a pencilled note on the title page in Whalley's handwriting that reads, "Gerald Else's Corrigenda." These suggestions for revision, however, are nowhere written out. The traces that remain on the typescript are a series of pencil markings: underlined words or phrases, vertical lines in the margins, an occasional arrow or question mark. There are some fifty-three such markings. Presumably, the two men discussed the matter in detail. Succeeding drafts show significant alterations at precisely these points in thirty cases.

What Else thought of the overall project is not revealed, at least not in the written record among Whalley's papers. It seems fair to suppose that his willingness to take the time and trouble to make fairly detailed recommendations indicates some level of interest and encouragement. He was also in possession of a typescript of "On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*," which may indicate some degree of approval for the general principles, format, and strategy. On the other hand, there are at least one or two significant queries that are, perhaps even more significantly, resisted. At 1447^a20, for example, Else has underlined the word "imaginatively." Whalley concedes in the commentary that the word is "anachronistic, but I cannot think of a better" – and he does not change it.

Moreover, the draft that Else had scrutinized seems to have consisted of only the first half, or approximately twelve or thirteen chapters. It breaks off shortly before a section crucial for illustrating both Whalley's indebtedness and his independence. Having discussed simple and complex plots, reversals and recognitions, Aristotle injects a quick summary and a potent addition (1452^b10). Else's translation reads as follows:

These then are two elements of plot: peripety and recognition; third is the *pathos*. Of these, peripety and recognition have been discussed; a *pathos* is a destructive or painful act, such as deaths on stage, paroxysms of pain, woundings, and all that sort of thing.[14]

Among several interpretive questions embedded in this passage is the question of how best to deal with the phrase *en tōi phanerōi*, "in the visible [sphere]," according to Whalley's gloss. Most twentieth-century translators, up to and including Grube and Else, render this as "on stage."[15] More recent translators, it seems, fudge the issue – or perhaps

it's just that finding Aristotle himself to have fudged it, they quite
properly leave it fudged. Janko has deaths "in full view"; Halliwell, "vis-
ible" deaths.[16] But in whose view? In what way visible?

Whalley's translation takes a different tack, with some remarkable
implications.

> These then – *peripeteia* and recognition – are two elements of the [complex]
> plot; a third element is *pathos*. [Two] of these – *peripeteia* and recognition –
> have [already] been discussed. A *pathos* is a murderous or cruel transaction,
> such as killings – [taken as] real – and atrocious pain and woundings and all
> that sort of thing. (91)

The last sentence here, in particular, contains several daring strokes as
a translation, including its rendering of *en tōi phanerōi* as "[taken as]
real." Whalley explains the force, as he sees it, behind these three
words.

> The root *phainein* (cause to appear, bring to light, reveal, disclose) naturally
> claims the notion of presentation to the sense of sight. Else in the *Argument*
> states convincingly that "The real function of the pathos is not to shock the
> audience by its physical occurrence. It is a *premiss* on which the plot is built,"
> and translates the phrase "in the visible realm"; but in his 1967 translation he
> returns to the traditional phrase "on stage" – which Lucas considers "the obvi-
> ous meaning." Lucas's argument that "on stage" is correct because there are
> several instances of a *pathos* rendered on stage is less than compelling since he
> admits that "such horrors are rarely shown on the Greek stage." Aristotle is
> here giving a brief definition; it is unlikely, then, that he could include in his
> definition an element of rare occurrence unless he drew attention to it as
> essential though rare. Else, I think, was on the right track in the *Argument*.
> *Phaneros* is used in the phrase for '*real* property' and '*hard* cash', i.e. property
> or money that can be shown to be substantial. I have used the phrase "[taken
> as] real" – 'real' as distinct from 'actual' – to imply that the killing etc. is held
> in a direct physical and perceptual sense, or as Whitehead would say "in the
> perceptual mode." The issue does not turn upon whether the pathos is actu-
> ally witnessed or not: however the *pathos* is presented, whether on stage or
> reported, it must be substantial enough to act as functional centre for "the
> moral and mental events which transpire as peripety and recognition" (Else).
> Whatever is held "in the perceptual mode" is – if only momentarily – 'real',
> whether or not it is actual. The phrase *en tōi phanerōi* points not to the method
> of presentation but to the quality of apprehension secured in the presenta-
> tion: in Coleridgean terms it points to the "illusion of reality" that it is the
> function of imagination to secure (90–2).

I have quoted this passage at such length because it illustrates so fully not only Whalley judging between the views of Else and Lucas, and then between Else's first and second thoughts, but also because it displays Whalley's Coleridgean independence to best advantage. Where he is most deeply indebted to Else he is also most firmly his own man.

Whether he is also right is another matter. Classicists may wish to rule out "imagination" as sheer anachronism. But if we deprive ourselves of this term, we may make it virtually impossible to come to grips with just how profound an interest Aristotle has in the way vivid representations act upon the soul of the individual, whether poet, character, or member of the audience. The implications, of course, are not restricted to this small passage in the *Poetics*. If the process Whalley decribes is anything close to being accurate, it will affect our understanding of several other points. For one thing, Aristotle's claim that the tragic effect may be experienced without the benefit of stage performance would then turn out to be something more positive than the anti-theatrical prejudice it is sometimes taken to be. He would appear to count on a certain vividness of apprehension in the mind of the auditor or reader. For the poet in the act of composing it gives, as Whalley remarks, "additional depth to the injunction ... that in putting plots together and fitting them to language 'you must above all keep things before your eyes'" (92).

And at least two other important points are also implicated. Aristotle remarks in a paradoxical way on events that are somehow outside the drama but not outside the plot. These are often events which are said to occur before the time of the play's opening but that have sufficient force to generate or motivate the action: one thinks of the report of the sacrifice of Iphigenia in the *Agamemnon* or the murder of Hamlet's father in *Hamlet*. Neither event takes place "on stage" though both have a vivid and intense effect on certain characters (and presumably then on members of an audience). In such cases, the "quality of apprehension" is surely the important thing.

The other point has to do with the question of what makes for the best kind of recognition. Aristotle comes at this question more than once, and it's not clear that his answers remain consistent. Most curious is the claim, in chapter 14, that the best sort of recognition may be illustrated by the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, in which the recognitions of brother and sister precede and thus avert the actuality of disastrous killing. This seems to mean that the vivid apprehension of the threat of death – the imagined reality – may be of sufficient intensity to elicit tragic effects without death actually occurring. Again, making sense of such claims would seem to involve some recourse to the sort of vocabulary Whalley invokes.

Like the phrase *en tōi phanerōi*, the word *pathos* in the short passage above has given translators trouble. The main English equivalents, 'suffering' or 'painful acts', pull the meaning either towards an emotion or towards an action. To avoid a reductive meaning, Whalley chooses transliteration rather than translation ("a *pathos* is a murderous or cruel transaction"), and comments on what he sees as the advantages:

Pathos (from *paschein*, 'suffer') primarily means something 'suffered', something that happens to a person – the complement to something done. Yet Aristotle says that a *pathos* is a *praxis*, an 'act'. I find it difficult to agree with Lucas that *pathos* in this short section is not a special term comparable to *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*. The paradoxical term *pathos*-as-*praxis* seems to imply that the crucial event is to be seen both as suffered and as inflicted. Aristotle's choice of the word *praxis* – which he regularly uses elsewhere for the single overarching tragic action as distinct from the separate *pragmata* (events) of which the *praxis* is composed – suggests further that the *pathos* as an event is both pregnant and determinate, the beginning of a process. *Peripeteia* and 'recognition' heighten and concentrate emotional force: *pathos* is the key event/act that provides substantial foundation and focus for the *peripeteia* and recognition ... I have therefore rendered *praxis* here as a 'transaction' to indicate the pathos-action paradox and to preserve the processive potential of the word *praxis* (90).

Again, much of the thinking here grows directly out of the work of Gerald Else, who says: "The *pathos* is the foundation stone of the tragic structure ... In fact it appears that the happening *or threatened happening* ... of a *pathos* is the *sine qua non* of all tragedy."[17] On this occasion, Whalley does not have to choose between early and later Else, which here remain constant; but he pushes the implications much harder. Both the word 'transaction' and the term *pathos*-as-*praxis* insist on seeing the tragic action less in terms of isolated individuals, or heroes, and more in terms of relationship. Whalley says elsewhere that 'hero' is not Aristotle's word but a later coinage, and it is clear in this instance that he is thinking not simply of such *pathos*-centred tragedies as *Ajax* or *Samson Agonistes*, but of the way that all tragedies – from *Oedipus* to *Othello* – turn crucially on relationships.

Pathos-as-*praxis* is a bold formulation that incites a radical rethinking of just what is meant by the standard account of a tragic action. Whalley's originality once again shows up most clearly in the context of his connections to Else. But the more clearly the originality is established, the more we may begin to wonder whether it veers off into eccentricity. Has he achieved his independence at the expense of his Aris-

totelianism? Has he been left behind by the last two decades of *Poetics* study?

The last twenty years have seen an amazing amount of work on the *Poetics*, and it will be possible to do no more than touch on a few salient points here. Something of the range of work is indicated by the twenty contributors to *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty. In addition, two of those contributors, Richard Janko and Stephen Halliwell, published translations of their own in 1987. I make no attempt to summarize this work (much of it is very distinguished), but a brief consideration of it with reference to three crucial terms – *mimesis, catharsis,* and *praxis* – together with a few reflections on the whole question of genre criticism will serve to highlight Whalley's perspective and the ongoing need to have it available.

A great deal hinges on *mimesis.* Janko declines for the most part to use the traditional option, "imitation," but depends instead on "representation" as the nearest English equivalent.[18] Halliwell, like Whalley, opts for transliteration – and for similar reasons, focussing especially on the dynamism or activity inherent in the term as Aristotle uses it. "A useful habit," Whalley says, "is to read *mimesis* as 'a process – *mimesis'*"; for Halliwell, "Aristotle's guiding notion of mimesis is implicitly that of *enactment*" (my italics).[19] But this parallel thinking may come to an abrupt halt at the point of considering exactly what sort of activity is involved. Halliwell, who offers a masterly survey of the word's history, is nothing if not suspicious of a Coleridgean angle, and he castigates L.J. Potts' *Aristotle and the Art of Fiction* for its "thoroughly confused assimilation of mimesis ... to 'creative imagination'."[20]

The objection here, however, may turn on "creative" rather than on "imagination". As Gerald Else suggests, in work published posthumously in 1986, *mimesis,* in Aristotle's way of using it "becomes the closest neighbor to creation: not out of nothing – no Greek ever believed in creation *ex nihilo* – but out of carefully observed 'universal' human tendencies to thought and action."[21] And Paul Woodruff pursues a similar sort of argument:

Mimesis in Aristotle is something like make-believe. Walton has shown how useful a model there is in child's play for understanding the various arts Aristotle considers mimetic ... Still, mimesis is not the same as make-believe, though it does aim to make us believe certain things. Our response to mimesis may involve make-believe, in so far as we are in cahoots with the artist – like adults joining a child's game of make-believe. But what the Aristotelian artist

does to draw us in, so that we accept at some level the truth of his work, and are moved by it – that is the heart of mimesis.[22]

Woodruff's claims about the goals (he says teleology) of this sort of make-believe, the possibilities for coordinating truth and fiction, are interesting, but they are almost bound to raise further questions. Having the "heart" of the matter, do we also have the soul? What "level" of truth are we talking about here?

Halliwell is particularly concerned about unwarranted intrusions of neo-platonic "levels." He thinks that the eclecticism of the English critical tradition has repeatedly obscured, even as it preserved, the *Poetics*:

in the first major document of neo-classical poetics, Sidney's *Defence of Poetry*, which re-works much material from continental writings, we find fragments of Aristotelian thought often juxtaposed with ideas deriving from very different sources, yet seemingly harmonized into a consistent classicizing view of poetry. Having, for example, set out an essentially neo-platonic interpretation of the poet's work as the embodiment of ideas and invention which go beyond the limits of nature, Sidney then offers his definition of poetry: "an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in the word *mimesis* ... with this end, to teach and delight." We see, in other words, that Aristotelian mimesis (for which Sidney has various reasonable glosses, including 'fiction' and 'representing') is combined both with a much more far-reaching neo-platonic notion of poetic imagination, and with the Horatian formula for poetic purposes on which I have already commented.[23]

The Romantics, Halliwell goes on to argue, picked up this neo-platonic notion of poetic imagination and continued to foist it on Aristotle, chiefly appealing to the famous claim in *Poetics* 9 about poetry being "more philosophical" than history. Coleridge, by Halliwell's account, is one of the chief perpetrators:

This passage [from chapter 9] had lent itself as early as the Renaissance to reinterpretation in the light of neo-platonic belief in the idealizing and transcendent powers of art ... and Coleridge represents a Romantic revival of that view. In the *Biographia Literaria* he tells us in ch. 17 that he subscribes to "the principle of Aristotle that poetry as poetry is essentially ideal," which he qualifies in a footnote as "an involution of the universal in the individual." Although the elaboration of the point in the text approximates to part of Aristotle's point in mentioning universals, Coleridge's use of 'ideal' alerts us to a desire to inflate *Poetics* 9 into a much more portentous text than it really is. This is confirmed by Coleridge's later (inaccurate) paraphrase, in ch. 22, of Aristotle's comparison of poetry to philosophy: instead of "more philosophical

and more serious than history," Coleridge makes Aristotle regard poetry, altogether more gravely, as "the most intense, weighty and philosophical product of human art."[24]

There is much that is just in Halliwell's treatment of Coleridge here. The ambitions of romanticism are clearly visible in the quoted parts, and are no doubt inflated. But Coleridge, even in the *Biographia*, is more elusive than this treatment acknowledges. Consider the remarks about Shakespeare's "Venus and Adonis" in chapter XV:

It is throughout as if a superior spirit more intuitive, more intimately conscious, even than the characters themselves, not only of every outward look and act, but of the flux and reflux of the mind in all its subtlest thoughts and feelings, were placing the whole before our view; himself meanwhile unparticipating in the passions, and actuated only by that pleasurable excitement, which had resulted from the energetic fervor of his own spirit in so vividly exhibiting, what it had so accurately and profoundly contemplated.

This, put simply, is a superb description of the activity of *mimesis* (even though Coleridge does not use the term) *and* of the pleasures it occasions, and it calls for a corresponding readiness in the reader – a "perpetual activity of attention" – to participate in the process or, to use Halliwell's preferred term, the enactment: "you seem to be *told* nothing, but to see and hear every thing."[25] Whatever he may say about poetry being essentially ideal, Coleridge in his practical criticism clearly prizes its concreteness and immediacy.

Halliwell is right, however, in some of his misgivings about Coleridge's eclecticism. Coleridge's direct dealings with the *Poetics* are never more than piece-meal, and a work such as the *Biographia* sends mixed signals. For a Coleridgean account of the *Poetics* we must look not to Coleridge, but to Whalley. That this account remains Aristotelian and avoids the abstractions of neo-platonism is clear, I think, from the axiom that Whalley seizes on in Coleridge: that poetry "flows seamlessly from perception." There is no "divided line."[26] The problem, in brief, is to pin down the central theme of Coleridge's eclecticism.

Is it, all the same, worth the effort to try to pin it down? The reasons for answering 'yes' to this question may be hinted at by pointing to the number of times the concept of the imagination appears in the Rorty collection. Especially interesting are those places where the word, or a related word, underwrites the nub or high point of an argument. A good illustration of this is Jonathan Lear on "Katharsis."

By Lear's account, *catharsis* is primarily a form of relief, and it is

something experienced by the audience. Whether his 'emotivist' inter-
pretation is superior to the 'cognitivist' stand of his opponents – those
who see *catharsis* as clarifying and educating the emotions of pity and
fear – or whether his view that it happens in the audience rather than
principally in the action of the play (as Whalley and Else believe), is
not what interests me at the moment. Whatever the merits of his case,
they depend crucially on an appeal to 'imagination':

For in the theatre we can imaginatively bring what we take to be a remote pos-
sibility closer to home ... The tragic poet awakens us to the fact that there are
certain emotional possibilities which we ignore in ordinary life. On the one
hand, these possibilities are remote, so it is not completely unreasonable to
ignore them in ordinary life; on the other hand, they lend content to the idea
that in ordinary life we are living "inside the plain": and they fuel our desire
imaginatively to experience life outside the plain ... Tragic poetry provides an
arena in which one can imaginatively experience the tragic emotions: the per-
formance of a play "captures our souls." ... We imaginatively live life to the full,
but we risk nothing. The relief is thus not that of "releasing pent-up emotions"
per se, it is the relief of "releasing" these emotions in a safe environment.[27]

The appeal to the imaginative here is open to a number of questions.
How could we live life to the full if we risk nothing? Risk is a part of
life. Even if we never lose sight of the fact that we are enjoying a work
of art, why should we suppose that makes the environment "safe"? And
what would Plato say, for whom "safe poetry" was as close to being an
oxymoron as "safe sex" has recently become for us? How could some-
thing which imaginatively captures our souls ever be completely risk-
free? The interpretation of *catharsis* as a kind of relief may turn out to
be correct for all I know, but it's clear that if the argument is to be pur-
sued along these lines, more work needs to be done to illuminate the
connection between *mimesis* and imagination, to measure the ways in
which the imaginative performs, in Whalley's terms, a "realising func-
tion."[28]

Similar puzzles arise concerning the relation between *mimesis* and
praxis. If an action is said to be unified, then presumably the enact-
ment, or re-enactment, of it must also be unified, even though *mimesis*
and *praxis* have to remain in some ways two different things, distinct.
But Rudiger Bittner, for one, thinks there is "no satisfactory account of
'one action' on Aristotelian lines." "Nothing," he says, "simply is one
action. Any piece of activity may be treated as such."

A successful tragedy often gives the impression: it was inevitable. Aristotle
mentions repeatedly that in tragedy things happen according to what is prob-

able or necessary. But the necessity involved here is not imposed by an alien power crushing human endeavor. Nor is it fate, predetermining the course of events. It is a necessity immanent to the action. All that is happening is tied together by its constituting this sort of action. Not consequences, strictly speaking, are inevitable, since consequences are something distinct from what they are consequences of. Not punishment is imposed on the hero, for the same reason. It is all the one action that takes its course, and the suffering at the end is part of it. Admittedly, doubts arise at this point whether under such strict conditions of immanence there exist any tragedies worth the name.[29]

Some of this is admirable: the claim that the necessity involved is "immanent to the action," for example. But it seems to imply that the suffering, the *pathos*, comes only at the end, and by spotlighting a tragic "hero" Bittner obscures the central role of tragic relationships. In any case, if the suffering is part of it, why not also the punishment and the consequences? The argument seems to suppose that what is distinct is also separable, which need not be true.

Moreover, what if a *pathos* is not simply a consequence of a *praxis* (arriving at the end), but is in some way a constituent of it from the first, as Whalley's formulation *pathos-as-praxis* suggests? And what if the major consequences, and perhaps also the most important punishments, centre on the recognitions of that fact? There is no doubt that Aristotle emphasizes the importance for tragedy of what happens according to probability or necessity; but these may involve more than a mechanical chain of cause and effect, which could in theory arbitrarily begin or end anywhere. Perhaps we should be looking for a more intimate kind of necessity. And there are degrees of recognition. Not all tragic figures see the full meaning of their *pathos*, not all are aware of the full transactive, or interactive, nature of their deeds, of their ineluctable involvement with fellow human beings, especially blood relations. But without some degree of imaginative realization of the *pathos* and the *praxis*, and of both together, there is no tragedy. As Stephen White says, in drawing connections between Aristotle's favorite tragedies, both *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Iphigenia at Tauris* "dramatize a movement from *hamartia* to recognition that reveals the depths of the protagonists' concern for the people harmed or threatened by their actions."[30]

Pathos-as-praxis suggests how little the *Poetics* subscribes to a merely mechanical notion of plot and how far its analyses are from the merely classificatory. A final note on the question of genre similarly challenges the notion of a doctrinaire Aristotle. There is a fairly widespread assumption that Aristotle aims mainly to define, and then rank,

various genres. This assumption frequently underpins a further assumption that the *Poetics* has very limited relevance to literature produced since Aristotle's time, many new species having been invented, including new sub-species within the genre of tragedy itself. Wayne Booth, for example, makes both assumptions:

almost nothing [Aristotle has to say after he has] explained why plot is the soul of tragedy (1450ᵇ) can be applied directly to any but a very few of the species [modern] criticism addresses. Even when you discuss works that seem to belong to the species of tragedy, you will find ... that few of them fall even loosely within the same species as [Aristotle's] admired *Oedipus Rex*. You will make hash of ... *Othello* or *The Mayor of Casterbridge* or *Death of a Salesman* if you apply, unmodified, [his] criteria for the best tragedy.[31]

Booth is no doubt correct to suggest that the practical critic will have to modify Aristotle's criteria, at least at some point; but it would be wise to start by modifying an overly rigid view of what those criteria are. You will likely make hash if you insist on a concept of Othello as "hero"; you might stand a better chance of acquiring a more discriminating taste if you work from the dynamic *pathos* of the relationship between Othello and Desdemona.

Whalley, for his part, may overstate the case in the opposite direction when he claims that "the radical error ... that is most commonly made about the *Poetics* is to suppose that Aristotle is discussing – as *we* might – tragedy, epic, comedy, and the rest as genres or as somehow things-in-themselves. This may be a valid-enough way to think of these things, but it happens not to be Aristotle's way" (21). Still, Whalley is, I think, on the right track in supposing that Aristotle is less interested in differentiating tragedy from epic than in exploring the intriguing fact, as he sees it, that it was Homer who taught the dramatists how to be dramatic *and* how to be tragic. Aristotle's interest is not simply in what tragedy is, but how it developed, what it developed from, how it works. His approach by way of inductive inference rather than deduction makes the *Poetics* more radically germane to the discussion of all imaginative literature.

It is one of the chief virtues of George Whalley's translation-and-commentary that it opens the way for a wider participation in that discussion. Students of English have much to gain from entering Whalley's workshop. But the benefits are not all one-way. The problems Aristotle wrestled with – *mimesis, catharsis, praxis,* and the rest – have not been sewed up, or solved once and for all. As Ben Jonson says in "Discoveries":

I know nothing can conduce more to letters, than to examine the writings of the ancients, and not to rest in their sole authority, or take all upon trust from them; provided the plagues of judging, and pronouncing against them, be away; such as are envy, bitterness, precipitation, impudence, and scurrile scoffing. For to all the observations of the ancients, we have our own experience: which, if we will use, and apply, we have better means to pronounce. It is true they opened the gates, and made the way, that went before us; but as guides, not commanders.[32]

THE METHOD OF PRESENTATION

Whalley's Aristotle may be a guide rather than a commander or a dictator, but since the project was left unfinished, it is necessary to say a bit more about the special circumstances or contexts of the material that follows, to provide a brief guide to the guide. The translation-and-commentary is bracketed by the essays reprinted here from the *University of Toronto Quarterly*.

"On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*" contains a great deal that clearly serves as an introduction, even though Whalley himself did not see it in that light: "Since it was a paper specially prepared for ACUTE [the Association of Canadian University Teachers of English] and not a draft of my introduction, I have agreed to [*UTQ* editor William Blissett's] printing it in the hope that it will arouse some interest in the translation when it comes out."[33] But much in the first part of the essay – the textual history, and so on – is introductory in a fairly straight-forward way.

The middle parts, by contrast, may feel somewhat awkward since they duplicate examples that reappear in the translation-and-commentary. But there are advantages to retaining them in this form and place, quite apart from the impossibility of writing Whalley's introduction for him at this stage. The comparisons with the work of other translators are useful for bringing us nearer the heart of the process, for showing more fully how the work of translation actually gets done, especially in the early stages. They also emphasize the radical focus on language, the interesting tensions between English and Greek, the big issues that hinge on apparently small linguistic choices, the ways that the understanding of a central concept such as *mimesis*, for example, is pressured or influenced by decisions about associated terms such as "medium" or "matter," "object" or "subject," "mode" or "method."[34]

In the final third of the essay Whalley makes the interesting claim that he is not primarily concerned with "points of interpretation but with the attitude of mind that might discover a vivid interpretation if one were wanted" (21). This is followed by a series of bold and confi-

dently offered interpretations. It is conceivable that Whalley might have toned these down were he to have drafted his own introduction. The translation-and-commentary does not stand or fall with a given interpretation of *catharsis, hamartia,* and so on, and it seeks to avoid hasty or premature conclusions. Nevertheless, it is useful to have his own vivid interpretations recorded, for they indicate the direction or drift of the treatise as Whalley sees it, and they are very relevant to considering whether, or to what extent, he has achieved his main goal of disclosing the "peculiar spring and set"[35] of Aristotle's mind, the activity of his imagination.

As for the translation-and-commentary itself, the method of presentation may appear somewhat cluttered or off-putting, perhaps even officious. An anonymous reader of the first *UTQ* essay objects that

> Whalley's editorial methods, his use of brackets and of foot-notes to indicate what (in his opinion) are Aristotle's *addenda* and Aristotle's 'foot-notes' or lecture-asides, are arbitrary in the extreme. It is one thing for an expert editor to warn a reader of a passage which there are good grounds for doubting as an interpolation or a corrupt passage; it is quite another to read the work for the reader in the guise of giving him a translation.[36]

Whalley resisted this charge, arguing (by return post) that his "method of presentation may produce results that more accomplished translations do not in fact achieve" and that "the proposed editorial method of separating different levels of text is not entirely arbitrary."[37] In pursuing this method he is once again following the initiative of Gerald Else, who similarly believed that the order of the argument could be crucial in directing or determining interpretation. For example, Else rejects nearly all of chapter 12 as "spurious," and in his translation relegates it (as does Whalley) to an appendix. In his *Argument* he speculates that the presence of chapter 12 in previous editions obscured the correlation of *hamartia* and recognition as interdependent parts. The mere fact of chapter 12's being interposed between the discussions of *anagnorisis* and *hamartia* constituted a stumbling block: "Even scholars who recognized its spuriousness were unconsciously influenced by its presence and position."[38]

Whalley follows this lead but carries it a step further. Chapter 16, on kinds of recognition, provides an instructive example. Else summarizes the problem as he sees it: "Although there is no reason to suspect the genuineness of this section, it is a later addition to the text of the *Poetics* which has been arbitrarily stuck in just here ... But it will not fit any better elsewhere."[39] Whalley, by contrast, thinks that it does fit better elsewhere: "Chapter 16, ill-placed where it stands by tradition in

the text (for it breaks into a sentence that begins in chapter 15 and is resumed in chapter 17), is self-contained and is a later addition. Logically, it could come after chapter 14, where the analysis of 'recognition' would follow the analysis of *pathos* (as Vahlen suggested)." Instead, Whalley decides, as Else had earlier postulated in the *Argument*, that it "goes best as a pendant to chapter 11." "In any case," he says, "it is simply an account of the techniques of 'recognition,' moving from the most mechanical to the most artistic; no connexion is drawn in chapter 16 between the technically best 'recognition' and – the concern of chapter 11 – the emotionally best" (88).

The method of presentation here is meant to provoke further thought about the nature and range of recognitions, the shifting criteria by which, in Aristotle's view, they may be evaluated, and the degree to which they are or are not embedded in the action. This arrangement also helps to illuminate the claims that recognitions are not simply technical but are crises in the action of the play and that they may be part of that "untying" of the action which often reaches back earlier in the plot than the more mechanical notions of climax and denouement usually suggest. It seems no large leap to suppose that a lecturer, in re-presenting his material, would be likely to group afterthoughts on a certain topic together with earlier, or first, thoughts.

Is such an editorial rearranging of the text tantamount to reading the work for the reader or taking over from the lecturer? In a sense, perhaps, it is, but at issue is the concept of what constitutes the act of reading in the first place. A lone reader confronting the integrity of the printed text in solitude? The Western paradigm of reading: a showdown on a deserted main street? This may apply to certain kinds of reading, but it's doubtful that it applies to the *Poetics*. First, the integrity of the text is far from simply given, no matter how conservative the editorial principles. And second, a text designed to be listened to as much as, or more than, to be read, implies a more sociable, a more collaborative enterprise from the start.

No one voice in this discussion gets the last word. It's clear that Aristotle has a sort of running dialogue going with figures such as Homer, Sophocles, and Euripides, who are repeatedly and explicitly cited; but there is the even more dynamic, yet hidden, polemic with Plato, who is never named. One suspects that Aristotle does not confront Plato directly because he does not have a wholly satisfactory or complete answer to Plato's charges, and that for precisely this reason Plato haunts him all the more. In this case, his set of lecture notes is multilayered as much on account of the difficulty of the questions as

because of the number of times the course was offered, or echoed, or copied.[40] At any rate, the relation with Plato in the *Poetics* is dialogic, whether urging the claims of a work of art to have an integrity of its own (as in some sense it must have if *any* poetics is to be possible), or whether arguing the case for regarding poetry as philosophical, capable, that is, of referring to and teaching about reality and universal moral principles.

Whalley retains the traditional chapter divisions because they are long-established and are now themselves a convenient way of referring to the various sections. But he also introduces a method of paragraph numbering, which is meant to challenge the authority of the chapter divisions and which highlights the often subtly shifting perspectives on various issues. Because his translation-and-commentary was used repeatedly with his own graduate seminars, it has also acquired an aura of its teaching context, one not unlike the aura that Whalley imagines for the inception of the *Poetics*. The most pointed reminder of this context is the handful of references to Coleridge, usually invoked as if he were a constant presence in the debate, a participant by natural right even if he speaks but seldom.

"The Aristotle-Coleridge Axis," the second essay from the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, completes and concludes this volume. It works as a conclusion, even though it was not originally intended to perform that function, because it articulates and summarizes the guiding principles of the whole project, emphasizing the co-presence of Aristotle and Coleridge in Whalley's critical thinking. Unlike the first *UTQ* essay and the translation-and-commentary, however, this essay is altogether without footnotes (printed that way, perhaps, because it was virtually a transcription of a public lecture).[41] Yet the absence of notes conceals important elements of its immediate context.

Among Whalley's papers in connection with this essay is a photocopy of an unusual article by Raymond Preston.[42] Whalley's marginal scribblings suggest that for at least some of the key points in "The Axis" there is a sort of hidden dialogue with Preston. Like Whalley, Preston sees parallels between Aristotle and Coleridge, but he concludes with some sharp criticisms of the latter.

I spoke of "what is specifically critical" in Coleridge; for Coleridge's "primary IMAGINATION ... as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" is a piece of transcendentalism critically worse than useless. A measure of the anti-objective, anti-mimetic ... tendency of modern criticism is the uncritical use of the word "creative" of the activity of the artist, a usage to which Coleridge's influence has given weight.[43]

Whalley underlines the last clause and writes an emphatic "NO" in the margin beneath it. It's a fair guess, then, that he has Preston in mind in "The Axis" when he writes: "Like Aristotle, Coleridge thinks of poetry as *making*; he uses the word 'creative' very seldom and then in a way that bespeaks a fastidious theological sensibility" (174).

But if on this issue Whalley and Preston are at odds, they come closer together in several others that Whalley has marked, including the following:

> Coleridge in his very best critical principle and practice, still maintains a solidly Aristotelian core. I am aware of the inaccuracy of reading into Aristotle's *phantasia*, in itself, more of a Coleridgean sense than the texts strictly warrant; but the third book of the *De Anima* repeatedly emphasizes that Aristotle's *phantasia* does not exist in itself. It is a function of the whole mind acting as a unity.[44]

Whalley does not comment explicitly on this passage, so it's not clear exactly what he thinks "the texts strictly warrant," and he refers to fewer Aristotelian texts than Preston does. But there is no doubt that for him the Coleridgean view of imagination as (in his words) "a state in which the whole soul of man is brought into activity with the correct relation of all its functions" is highly relevant to the *Poetics*.

Preston's essay is useful not only for clarifying the nature of Whalley's engagement with these issues but as a kind of independent testimony to the value of thinking about Coleridge and Aristotle together. He is less sympathetic to Coleridge than Whalley is, and he does not set out to focus on him, but there are more than a dozen references to him in the last few pages of the article. In addition, his approach differs from Whalley's by paying considerable attention to several other works by Aristotle, including *De Anima, Physics, Metaphysics, Ethics, Politics*, and *Posterior Analytics*.[45]

Yet, where Preston is content to see Coleridge as a follower of Aristotle, or at most as hitting occasionally on certain parallel points, Whalley thinks of him as offering something more fully complementary – as deepening and strengthening Aristotle's account – by maintaining a certain crucial difference. In Whalley's view, Aristotle's breakthrough concerning the centrality of action, of drama, depends on his peculiar set: "If he had not had as dull an ear for poetry as he seems to have had he could never have seen tragedy in this bizarre and penetrating way." Coleridge, with this acute ear for poetry, is able to entertain enriched "possibilities of tragic action by allowing for a greater intricacy of initiative, thereby allowing for a finer, more exquisite def-

inition of moral trajectory" (176). Whatever else it does for Whalley, the enlisting of Coleridge moves *The Poietic Art* further along the road to a defence of poetry.

                                                            J.B.

NOTES

1   *The Collected Poems of George Whalley,* ed. George Johnston (Kingston: Quarry Press, 1986); *The Legend of John Hornby* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1962); "Jane Austen: Poet," in *Jane Austen's Achievement,* ed. Juliet McMaster (Toronto: Macmillan, 1976), 106-33. This essay is reprinted in *Studies in Literature and the Humanities,* ed. Brian Crick and John Ferns (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), 145-74. The Crick and Ferns volume also contains a useful "Bibliography of the Works of George Whalley," 263-7.

2   George Whalley to Gerald Else, 29 November 1969, George Whalley Papers, Queen's University Archives, Kingston. All correspondence cited in this preface is from Queen's Archives.

3   Letter to Robin Strachan, 24 July 1969.

4   Letter to Gerald Else, 23 August 1968.

5   Letter to William Blissett, 18 September 1969.

6   Letter to Gerald Else, 23 August 1968.

7   "Coleridge on the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Canada* 54, series 3 (1960) Section 2: 13-24.

8   Quoted in "Coleridge's Poetic Sensibility," in *Coleridge's Variety,* ed. John Beer (London: Macmillan, 1974), 23-4.

9   "Coleridge's Poetic Sensibility," 23. The Latin tag means "there is nothing in the intellect that was not first in the senses."

10 Letter to Gerald Else, 23 August 1968.

11 Gerald Else to George Whalley, 6 September 1968.

12 Letter to Robin Strachan, 24 July 1969.

13 Letter to Gerald Else, 29 November 1969.

14 Aristotle, *Poetics,* trans. Gerald F. Else (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1967), 37.

15 Aristotle, *On Poetry and Style,* trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958). Others who also say "on stage" include Kenneth A. Telford, trans., *Aristotle's Poetics* (1961; reprint, New York: University Press of America, 1985); Leon Golden, trans., *Aristotle's Poetics: A Translation and Commentary for Students of Literature* (1963; reprint, Tallahassee: University Presses of Florida, 1981); M.E. Hubbard, trans., "Aristotle: Poetics" in *Ancient Literary Criticism,* ed. D.A. Russell and M. Winterbottom

(Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972); and Hippocrates G. Apostle, Elizabeth A. Dobbs, and Morris A. Parslow, trans., *Aristotle's Poetics* (Grinnell, Iowa: The Peripatetic Press, 1990).

16 Stephen Halliwell, trans., *The Poetics of Aristotle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Richard Janko, trans., *Aristotle: Poetics I, with the Tractatus Coslinianus, a Hypothetical Reconstruction of Poetics II, and the Fragments of the On Poets* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987). J. Hutton, trans., *Aristotle's Poetics* (New York; Norton, 1982) says "deaths that take place in the open [and not behind the scenes]." The square brackets are Hutton's.

17 Else, *Translation*, 94 n84. For a similar conclusion, see also B.R. Rees, "*Pathos* in the *Poetics* of Aristotle," *Greece and Rome* 19 (1972): 11.

18 Janko is especially interested in how close Aristotle comes to "redefining poetry as a representation of universals" (xiv-xv).

19 Stephen Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 128. In this commentary, published the year before he published his translation, Halliwell devotes a full chapter to a detailed discussion of *mimesis*. In the notes accompanying his translation, he remarks that "'imitation' is now the least adequate (though still regrettably common) translation of 'mimesis'" (71).

20 Halliwell, *Translation*, 28.

21 Gerald F. Else, *Plato and Aristotle on Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 75.

22 Paul Woodruff, "Aristotle on Mimesis," *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 90.

23 Halliwell, *Translation*, 18.

24 Halliwell, *Translation*, 23.

25 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, vol. 7 of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, gen. ed. Kathleen Coburn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 21-2.

26 Plato's metaphor of the divided line separating visible from intelligible entities (Book VI of *Republic*) was very influential in later neo-platonic accounts of poetry. See Wesley Trimpi, *Muses of One Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 201-22.

27 Jonathan Lear, "Katharsis," in Rorty, 333-4.

28 Other essays in Rorty that appeal to "imagination" at important moments in the discussion include Dorothea Frede, "Necessity, Chance, and 'What Happens for the Most Part' in Aristotle's *Poetics*," 210-11; Halliwell, "Pleasure, Understanding, and Emotion in Aristotle's Poetics," 242, 250, 253-4; and Alexander Nehamas, "Pity and Fear in the *Rhetoric*
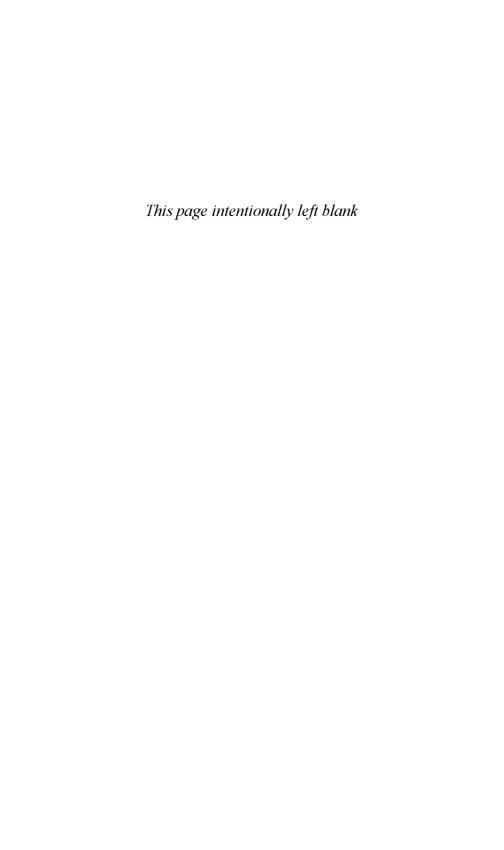
and the *Poetics*," 302-3. Deborah H. Roberts does not use the word
"imagination," but she deals with closely related notions in her discus-
sion of the "vivid narration" that puts things before the eyes, especially
by "metaphors that animate what they describe," in "Outside the Drama:
The Limits of Tragedy in Aristotle's *Poetics*," 143. None of these is vulner-
able to objections in the way that Lear is, but their use of the concept
invites further reflection on the question of just how central its role in
Aristotle is.

29 Rudiger Bittner, "One Action," in Rorty, 101.

30 Stephen A. White, "Aristotle's Favorite Tragedies," in Rorty, 237.

31 Wayne Booth, "The *Poetics* for a Practical Critic," in Rorty, 393.

32 Ben Jonson, *The Complete Poems*, ed. George Parfitt (Harmondsworth:
Penguin Books, 1975), 378-9.

33 Letter to Robin Strachan, 24 July 1969.

34 Whalley's decisions on these terms stand in contrast to those of both his
predecessor Gerald Else and the best of the recent translators, Stephen
Halliwell.

35 What Whalley means by "set" is explained in the essay "'Scholarship',
'Research' and 'The Pursuit of Truth'," in *Studies in Literature and the
Humanities*, 84: "'set' is closely related to what we know selectively, what
we are concerned to know, and what we choose not to know." This defin-
ition of "set" is akin to one of Coleridge's favorite maxims: "until I
understand a writer's ignorance, I presume myself ignorant of his under-
standing," quoted by Whalley in the introduction to *Marginalia I*, vol. 12
of *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, gen. ed. Kathleen Coburn
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), lxv.

36 William Blissett to George Whalley, 12 September 1969. Blissett, of
course, does not necessarily concur with the reader's remarks. He
thought them "astringent" but at several points "helpful." Whalley made
several revisions, some of them informed by the reader's comments.

37 Letter to William Blissett, 18 September 1969.

38 Gerald F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1967), 385.

39 Else, *Translation*, 100 n112.

40 Alexander Nehamas concludes that the problem of "whether or not Aris-
totle has met Plato's criticisms successfully has not yet, to my knowledge,
received a satisfactory answer. The issue of the nature, the status and the
ethical character of rhetoric and fiction remains disturbingly unresolved.
Plato's questions, like most of the other questions he asked, are still our
own" ("Pity and Fear in the *Rhetoric* and the *Poetics*," Rorty, 309).

41 The essay was first delivered to a meeting of the Classical Association (in
1971) and was then solicited for publication by the editor of the classical

journal *Phoenix*. But though the referees for that journal concurred in recommending it, they thought it deserved a wider audience than *Phoenix* could provide, at which point it was picked up by *UTQ*.

42 Raymond Preston, "Aristotle and the Modern Literary Critic," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 21 (1962): 57-71.

43 Preston, "Aristotle and the Modern Literary Critic," 67. Preston concedes that Coleridge deleted the famous phrase in his own copy of the first edition of the *Biographia*, but he argues that the glamour of the idea of the artist's divinity continued to cast its spell (70 n12).

44 Preston, "Aristotle and the Modern Literary Critic," 66.

45 If Preston anticipates Whalley in certain respects, there has not been any great stir of activity in his wake. The most recent and perhaps the most ambitious attempt to think about the connections between *mimesis* and imagination is Kendall Walton, *Mimesis as Make-Believe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). Walton takes his leads from Wittgenstein, among several others, as he explores the similarities between experiencing works of art and following, or learning, the rules of a game, including the child's game of make-believe. He almost overlooks Aristotle and Coleridge, referring to the former only a few times (and not at all in the index) and to the latter once, in passing. This scanty treatment is the more surprising in that these figures are significant not simply to his incidental points but to his major premises. His "rule of acceptance," for example, is fundamentally akin to Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief"; and what he calls "the rule of supplementation" ("supposed to preserve coherence") is very much related to Aristotle's thought about *mimesis*, not least to the sort of coherence required of beginning, middle, and end. Though it could be more aware of important allies, Walton's book is a lively and valuable contribution to the topic.

On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*

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On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*

The obvious question is – why again? Even a select list of English translations in this century makes quite a litany: Butcher, Bywater, Hamilton Fyfe, Lane Cooper, Allan Gilbert, Preston Epps, Seymour Pitcher, L.J. Potts, George Grube, Gerald Else. I admire three or four of these, and decry none of them. While the study of English literature has – in part at least – taken the place of Greek and Latin as a central humanist discipline and literary criticism has tried to assume the role almost of an autonomous discipline, Aristotle's *Poetics* has continued to be a document of great historical and critical importance. Because almost nobody in the field of English studies *reads* Greek any more – if indeed anybody ever could read fluently and without dismay the Greek of the *Poetics* – translations have accumulated, all highly accomplished.[1] But many of them are of a marmoreal smoothness; almost, the more eloquent and stylish the translation, the farther it is from inducing the direct tactile qualities of the Greek original. For many students of English literature, even some pretty mature ones, the *Poetics* is either a doctrinaire statement that can be readily mastered from a translation, or a very limited account of poetry, interesting enough as the oldest surviving treatise on poetry but distant, foreign, and not very much to the point. Certainly the continuous reprinting of Butcher's translation in collections of critical texts has not encouraged the currency in English studies of certain important developments in Aristotelian scholarship in the past forty years.[2]

As I have worked repeatedly through the *Poetics*, trying to unfold the original to students of English who have even less Greek than Shakespeare had, I have gained an increasingly vivid sense of the activity of Aristotle's mind in this broken and intermittent little document; and have wondered whether a translation could conceivably be prepared that would bring a reader to "the revelation ... of the driving energy of

Aristotle's thought."³ "An editor in these days," Ingram Bywater wrote sixty years ago, "can hardly hope to do much to advance the interpretation of a book which has been so carefully studied and re-studied by a long succession of editors and translators, many of them among the more illustrious names in the history of classical scholarship."⁴ To think of doing anything about the *interpretation* of the *Poetics* would make the heart even of a classical scholar quail.⁵ Of interpretation there is great store, not least in the work of those Chicago scholars whose enemies have called them neo-Aristotelians – Crane, Olson, McKeon, Maclean, Weinberg, to name but a few. These know their Greek as well as their English literature; and there is no sign that as critical theory has effloresced classical scholars have failed to apprise themselves of what might conceivably be profitable in the criticism of English letters to enrich and refine the commentaries they write for classical scholars. And still I feel there is something that needs to be done that has not yet been done for students of English literature; and it would probably take more than a plain translation. My purpose is simply to recover for Aristotle's *Poetics* what Werner Jaeger said was Plato's aim in writing his dialogues: "to show the philosopher in the dramatic instant of seeking and finding, and to make the doubt and conflict visible."⁶

Aristotle's works, as we know from the three lists that have come down from antiquity, fall into three groups, only one of which survives. His early reputation as a writer rested on a number of dialogues in the Platonic manner, many if not all written before he founded the Lyceum; all are now lost, and what little we know about them is from a few fragments and a few comments by other writers. He also compiled very extensive memoranda and compendious collections of material put together (sometimes with the help of others, he being perhaps the first to make systematic use of research assistants) for purposes of study and as a basis for future scientific works. Beyond fragments only one of these survives – the *Atheaiōn Politeia*, notes on the constitutions of 158 states, mostly Greek, prepared for publication and stylishly written, a manuscript which was recovered almost intact from the Egyptian desert as recently as 1889. Thirdly, he wrote philosophical and scientific works, still extant, about thirty in number, to which are attached two doubtful works and some seventeen spurious works. None of the works in this group was prepared for publication, and as a group they show varying degrees of finish; the *Nicomachean Ethics* is one of the most finished, the *Poetics* one of the least.

There are few indications even of the relative order of the works, though some of them have evidently been worked at over a period of time – the *Politics*, for example, and the *Poetics*. Most of them are too

elaborate and detailed to be regarded as mere lecture notes. Cicero speaks of Aristotle's works in two classes: "esoteric" works and "commentaries". The esoteric works were presumably the published dialogues whose style Cicero praised and which he sought to imitate in his own dialogues. The word "commentaries" (*hypomnēmata*) is not a very specific term: it could mean anything from rough notes to "such sophisticated works as Caesar's records of his campaigns,"[7] and so could cover both the encyclopaedic collections and the treatises that now survive. What we now have would be called "esoteric" in Cicero's terms; meaning, not that they were secret or available only to initiates, but simply that they were for use "inside", in the school. The early commentators – but not Aristotle – referred to these as *acroamatic* – 'works for listening to'. Though nothing is now known about the way these were actually used in the Lyceum, it is generally agreed by scholars that they were used in oral instruction and were not intended to be widely circulated outside the school. The *Poetics* is one of these – and a very small one. It takes up only fifteen pages (thirty columns) in Bekker's Berlin Academy edition (1830-1) compared with the ninety-eight pages of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and 114 pages of the *Metaphysics*. The *Poetics* runs to about 10,000 words – that is, about one-hundredth of Aristotle's extant writings.

A translator has to make up his mind about the primary document he is working with. Aristotle was, as we know, the inventor of what we now call a library, but we have no way of telling whether his successors regarded his working-manuscripts as sacrosanct in the way we now regard even the scribblings of some very minor writers: they were not, after all, drafts for finished written work. Plato's disciples prepared a sort of Academy edition of his works; Aristotle's successors seem not to have done so, and indeed we are lucky to have even the text of the *Poetics* as we have it. If the original *Poetics*, as a group of materials to be used in oral instruction, was the property of the school (as there is no reason to doubt) and remained in use after Aristotle's death, the manuscript could well – for successive uses – have been revised, cut down, altered and added to. It is impossible to deny on theoretical grounds that whatever Aristotle had originally set down *could* have been altered and revised entirely out of existence, leaving behind a manuscript ostensibly Aristotelian (and certainly Peripatetic) that contains nothing of Aristotle's beyond transmitted echoes. My own view, however, is that what has been passed down to us is genuinely Aristotle's; that a primary text – or part of it – is preserved; that the text as we have it includes revisions, additions and afterthoughts by Aristotle, and that at least some of these can be detected with varying degrees of confidence; that a number of spurious glosses have wandered into the text

(perhaps from later marginal and interlinear notes) and that these can also be identified with some certainty, without working to the high-minded principle that everything inconsistent, paradoxical, unexpected or difficult is not Aristotle's. I believe further that the substantial nucleus around which these accretal activities have occurred is distinct, coherent and shapely enough to give impressive evidence, at first hand, of Aristotle's intelligence and imagination at work.

This is an expression of faith, but not on that account a shot in the dark; for it arises from many detailed considerations, not least the minutiae of the text itself. But when we cry, "Back to the Greek text," the question arises "*What* – or which – Greek text?" If the style were less terse and abrupt, if the state of the text were less problematical than it is, and the line of transmission of the text more direct than we know it can have been, there would be fewer difficulties in translating, and fewer chances of being deflected into anachronistic misreadings.

Although the *Poetics* first came to the Western world in the Latin translation of Giorgio Valla in 1498 (from a good manuscript), the only readily available Greek text was the Aldine edition of 1508 (in *Rhetores Graeci*, for it was not included in the great Aldine edition of Aristotle of 1495-8), which, though poorly edited from an inferior manuscript, reigned for more than 300 years. In the Renaissance, when the authority of Aristotle's philosophy was already in decline, interest in the *Poetics* was widespread; through the commentaries of Robortello and Castelvetro it assumed a menacing and authoritarian aspect and gathered to itself some non-Aristotelian doctrine. By the end of the seventeenth century the wave of doctrinaire expository enthusiasm had subsided, leaving the Greek text in an unpurified form, even though some of Castelvetro's emendations are still worthy of consideration. The Greek text reaches us along a very shadowy route. With Aristotle's other manuscripts bequeathed to his friend and successor Theophrastus it came eventually to Rome in 84 BC after the sack of Athens and must have been included in the edition (long ago lost) made a few years later by Andronicus – the basis for our present Aristotelian corpus. But the *Poetics*, unlike the other works, received no commentary and so was not submitted to early detailed textual examination, and for a time seems to have disappeared. No passage from it is certainly quoted before the fourth century AD; the earliest manuscript with which we have any direct connection was of about the ninth century, and the link is very tenuous; the earliest authoritative Greek manuscript is dated on palaeographical evidence as having been written at the end of the tenth century. The history of the modern text of the *Poetics* begins in 1867, when Johann Vahlen established that MS Parisinus 1741 (MS A) – already known to Victorius, Tyrwhitt and

Bekker – was the best and oldest surviving manuscript. Three impor-
tant discoveries followed: the identification of MS B (in MS Riccar-
dianus 46) as independent of MS A but deriving directly from a com-
mon source from which MS A derived at second remove; the discovery
of the Arabic version of a Syriac version older than the common
source of MSS A and B: and the discovery of a thirteenth-century Latin
version of a manuscript closely related to MS A. Butcher's text of 1894
was the first attempt to combine MS A with other texts then available.
In the light of successive discoveries, other editions have followed –
Bywater (1909), Gudeman (1934), Rostagni (1937, 1945), Daniel de
Montmollin (1951) – all of which are superseded by Rudolph Kassel's
edition of 1965.[8]

This can be said with confidence: the best Greek text a translator
can now work from is a great deal better than any we have had before,
not only for the reliability of the central text but for the variety of care-
fully examined considerations it brings to bear upon the many cruces.
Nevertheless it is a long way away – in time and space – from whatever
it was that Aristotle wrote down and bequeathed to Theophrastus.
That does not necessarily mean, however, that what we have is a wildly
distorted or truncated relic of the original. The second "book" of the
Poetics – the whole section on iambic and comedy that balanced the
long account of tragedy and epic – is lost, and must have been lost
before the manuscript *lambda* from which MSS A and B derive on one
side, and on the other the Syriac version; for there is no trace any-
where of the section on comedy beyond the few, partly conjectural,
words in MS A which may have introduced it. If the heirs of Neleus had
a cellar anything like mine it would have taken less than a century for
a manuscript to suffer irremediable damage, and it is known that Aris-
totle's manuscripts did not survive their incarceration without physical
damage. Meanwhile it is clear that a translator cannot, without serious
danger of systematic distortion, ignore the textual evidence that has
been examined, refined and accumulated by a succession of Greek
scholars of great distinction; and in the end, for better, for worse, he
will have to make a number of textual decisions on his own account.

More than forty years ago, in 1923, Werner Jaeger established effec-
tively for the first time the principle that Aristotle's canon represents a
development, and that in order to understand and interpret the indi-
vidual writings it is essential to imagine as vividly as possible the man
and the mind that made these writings and in what order.

Aristotle ... was the inventor of the notion of intellectual development in time,
and regards even his own achievement as the result of an evolution dependent
solely on its own law ... It is one of those almost incomprehensible paradoxes

in which the history of human knowledge abounds, that the principle of
organic development has never yet been applied to its originator, if we exclude
a few efforts which ... have been ... without influence ... The main reason why
no attempt has yet been made to describe Aristotle's development is, briefly,
the scholastic notion of his philosophy as a static system of conceptions. His
interpreters were past masters of his dialectical apparatus, but they had no per-
sonal experience of the forces that prompted his method of inquiry, or of his
characteristic interplay of keen and abstract apodictic with a vivid and organ-
ic sense of form ... Everybody knew indeed, that he was a power to be reckoned
with, and one of the foundations of the modern world, but he remained a tra-
dition, for the reason, if for no other, that even after the days of humanism
and the reformation men still had far too much need of his *content*.⁹

I am concerned here, not with the development of Aristotle's work
altogether, but with the *Poetics* (to which Jaeger makes only two refer-
ences, one of them concealed¹⁰) and with the *Poetics* as Aristotle's; or,
to put it in Werner Jaeger's words, I wish to disclose "his characteristic
interplay of keen and abstract apodictic with a vivid and organic sense
of form." Recognising that the *Poetics* is by Aristotle, we may be expect-
ed to adopt an attentive attitude, and even to expend a little intellec-
tual effort; but the labour may go to gathering 'content', and our
interpretation could become – like much mediaeval and Renaissance
commentary – minute, immensely learned, and totally devoid of any
sense of the whole conception or of the energy that imparts whole-
ness. I feel Aristotle's presence in the *Poetics*, and find myself saying,
"We have a given text, made by Aristotle; it has a form which implies
not only why it exists, but what it is, and what energy is disposed in its
realisation, and what patterns of resistance have been interposed to
lead that energy into self-expository form." But the text is in Greek,
which few read; if there is to be a translation, I should want it – what-
ever else it did – to bring the reader to a vivid sense of the energy and
shape of Aristotle's thinking, and so to bring him into the presence of
Aristotle thinking. Aristotle making this thing, Aristotle inventing for
his purpose a method that allows him to do what he sees he must do.
This after all is a very Aristotelian way of coming at things; to accept
the *poiēma* as given and made; to consider its *physis* (nature); to infer
the *dynamis* (power) that realises itself in the given *poiēma*, and to work
out from this why it has assumed the form it has – which is to say, sim-
ply, what it *is*.
    For I hold the view that a piece of vigorous thinking is an activity of
imagination, with its own peculiar spring and set, an action of discov-
ery; and that its form, though overtly discursive, is yet imaginative. If
so, the outcome could be expected to be not a group of 'conclusions'

or doctrinal precepts, but rather the record of a feat of inventive think-
ing and the starting-point for fertile, elucidatory, finely controlled and
energetic reflection in response to it.

I should like a translation of the *Poetics* to disclose the *drama* of the
discourse – the gesturing forth of the argument (for, as Aristotle notes
in passing, *drama* means doing, acting) – so that the reader may be
able to experience or enter into that drama. If we were not dealing
with Aristotle, that might not be either necessary or even much to the
point.

But

> Aristotle was the first thinker to set up along with his philosophy a conception
> of his own position in history; he thereby created a new kind of philosophical
> consciousness, more responsible and inwardly complex ... Everywhere in his
> exposition he makes his own ideas appear as the direct consequences of his
> criticism of his predecessors, especially Plato and his school. It was, therefore,
> both philosophical and Aristotelian when men followed him in this, and
> sought to understand him by means of the presuppositions out of which he
> had constructed his own theories.[11]

The drama of his thinking in the *Poetics* flows out of the Platonic back-
ground, and is yet the unfolding, in an invented mode, of an energetic
process of discovering and seeing quite his own;[12] a self-clarification in
the presence of what he is examining – in this case certain kinds of
poetry.

As for Aristotle himself, his credentials as a person to speak author-
itatively about poetry are rather strange. It is known that he compiled
a list of all the dramatic performances given in Athens; he wrote dia-
logues *On Music* and *On Poets*; in addition to the surviving acroamatic
Rhetoric, he wrote a dialogue in three books *On Rhetoric*, a summary of
rhetorical theories in two books, and a summary of Theodectes' *Hand-
book of Rhetoric*; he annotated or corrected a copy of the *Iliad* for his
pupil Alexander (which Alexander treasured), and wrote out six
books of *Homeric Problems* (some traces of which seem to survive in
Chapter 25 of the *Poetics*). On the other hand, although Aristotle is
known to have gained a reputation for his dialogues and wrote some
verses, it is clear that he is not much interested in what we think of as
poetry; he does not respond to the touch and tune of poetry as Plato
did; neither in the *Poetics* nor elsewhere is there any notice of lyrical
poetry, nor of the choric writing that we consider the glory of Greek
tragedy; and his theory of metaphor, as far as it goes, is informed more
by logical considerations than by a sensitive understanding of the
transfigurations language can undergo in poetry. Yet his admiration

for Homer is unbounded and declares itself repeatedly in the *Poetics*
and elsewhere. And, if we have any tendency to suppose condescend-
ingly that his theory of tragedy is limited by the small number of exam-
ples he happens to have had at hand to study, we do well to recall that,
out of more than 300 plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides he
could have known, only thirty-two or thirty-three have come down to
us; that he could have known over a thousand plays, and that his well-
known compendious habits of inquiry tempt us to suppose that he may
well have done.

When we try to place the *Poetics* in the context of his other work or
to trace the development of the work itself, the evidence is far from
conclusive. In Aristotle's other works there are a few references to
what must be the *Poetics*: one in the *Politics* (the promise of a fuller
treatment of *catharsis* which has not survived), and five or six in the
Rhetoric. We know that parts of the *Rhetoric* go back to the last few years
of Aristotle's stay at the Academy, and this would not be an implausi-
ble date for the earliest elements of the *Poetics*. I am willing to hold
with Gerald Else that the earliest parts of the *Poetics* could have been
set down at the Academy in the last years of Plato's life, and that the
document may have been worked over in the Assos–Mitylene period of
his teaching and perhaps also while he was instructing Alexander, and
may have been worked over again in the Lyceum.[13]

From classical scholarship a translator can take a sound Greek text,
and can gain some acquaintance with Aristotle's works and his ways of
thinking so that appropriate connections can be made between the
Poetics and other works of Aristotle and of Plato. Something further is
needed, and for this there is little precedent – a prose style that will
remain in close and continuous contact with the details of the Greek,
an English vocabulary, syntax, and rhythm that will catch the immedi-
acy and movements of the Greek.[14]

English, with its eclectic vocabulary, a strong tradition of Latinism in
its philosophical terms, and of Latinistic structures in its formal writ-
ing, is not very much like the Greek Plato and Aristotle thought in.
The Attic dialect, the language of Athens at the height of her literary
magnificence, is the most cultivated and refined form of Greek: this
was Plato's dialect, and Aristotle had it by inheritance, even though –
an Ionian by birth – his usage lies in the border country between pure
Attic and the less strict, less eloquent *koinē* that was beginning rapidly
to develop in the wake of the Greek empire. Attic Greek differs from
English in being inflected, in the verb as well as in the noun, and is
much more highly inflected and supple than Latin (to which in some
other respects it is obviously similar). Greek is extremely rich in par-
ticiples, which with a fully inflected definite article offer a wide range
of substantival adjectives which function like verbal nouns, preserving

the active initiative of the verbs that are radical to them. This alone goes far to account for the vivid directness typical of Greek philosophical writing – the general absence of special terms and a happy restraint from abstraction. Furthermore, Greek is capable of providing a wide range of cognate words on a single root: this allows for great variety of self-expository compounds, and also adds to the range of participial nouns which by altering their terminations can refer the root to a person, a thing, a product, a process, an intention even. *Poiein, prattein aran,* and *mimeisthai* are crucial instances in the *Poetics.* From *poiein* (to do or make) we have *poiēma* (a thing made – roughly our 'poem'); *poiētes* (a maker – roughly our 'poet' but *poiētria* is not poetry but a poetess); *poiēsis* (the process or activity of making – only very roughly our 'poetry', and unhappily the eighteenth century fumbled the ball in allowing 'poesy' to become an elegant variant of 'poetry' when we badly needed a word for *poiēsis*). From the noun *poiēsis,* the adjective *poiētikos* is regularly formed (to do with making, capable of making); and, since we have allowed the word 'poetic' to become merely the adjective of 'poet' and 'poetry', I should like to be able to use both the 'poetic' (in our sense) and 'poietic' (in the Greek sense). Also, a number of compounds can be formed by attaching a noun to *-poiia* (making) and *-poios* (maker) to provide 'myth-making', 'song-making', 'a tragedy-maker', 'an epic-maker', and the like. Greek is seldom at a loss for alternative words in any verbal situation; yet it may be that the many subtle variants it can devise upon a single root accounts for the semantic clarity that Greek words preserve over a long period of time, so that, even when transliterated into Roman letters and converted into English forms, they preserve – at least to those who know even a little Greek – their pristine clarity.

It is in words of active or indicative termination that English seems to me particularly weak for the business of translating the *Poetics* – words that *by their form* clearly imply process or continuous action. English has no word to match the processive implications that abide in the very form of the words *mimēsis* and *poiēsis.* Too often we have to fall back on nouns formed from Latin past participles ("imitation", "conception", "notion", "construction") or upon collective nouns ("poetry", for example, which has to serve far too many uses); and the present participle "being" hovers uneasily between noun and participle (it took a Coleridge to wonder whether "thing" could be the present participle of "the").[15] Where Greek is strong, lucid, flexible and precise, and English too often, *faute de mieux,* driven to Latinism, a translator of the *Poetics* has to be crafty and unconventional, and write sentences that to an ear attuned to English philosophical writing of the last couple of centuries does not sound like philosophy at all.

Again, Attic Greek uses a variety of enclitics and particles which

impart subtle shades of emphasis and relation. These also play an important part in controlling and shaping rhythm. The best Greek prose is wonderfully sinewy and fluent – athletic in its grace and with the superb athlete's way of disposing energy in repose; by contrast, much English philosophical prose recalls the muscle-bound rigidity of the Hellenistic and Roman boxers. When the Greek is abrupt, without deliberate grace or sustained fluency – as is the case of the *Poetics*, even when the text is not corrupt – even then the rhythms still trace out the inflections of a speaking voice.

But what tune is it proper to have in the ear while translating the *Poetics*? Cicero thought well enough of Aristotle's dialogue-style to fashion his own dialogues on it; but that tells us little enough – Latin not being Greek – except that Aristotle's dialogues, as might have been expected, used more sustained discursive monologue that Plato does at his best. If, in the hands of a competent writer, prose style is the image of the mind that produces it, Aristotle's prose cannot be expected to lack force, structural strength, subtlety or complexity. To my ear there are plenty of tokens of all these qualities in the *Poetics*, even though in his later years any desire he may once have had for literary distinction had been dissolved into a preoccupation with teaching. In the *Poetics* he is probably writing with only half an ear for the sound of what he is saying; but there are some elaborate sentences there which, by the way they somehow in the end, and contrary to expectation, unravel themselves triumphantly to a close, make me wonder whether we may be dealing with an absent-minded virtuoso. Parts of the *Poetics* are admittedly broken and terse, and some parts look more like jottings than sustained writing; but the opening chapters – at least fourteen of them – are continuous enough to give an impression of style, even a hint of mannerism, certainly the distinct tune of an identifiable voice. And one thing that emerges from what Aristotle has to say about style is that nothing matters so much as clarity.[16]

All we know is that the *Poetics* was acroamatic – something to be listened to. Suppose it is lecture notes on which Aristotle would improvise and expatiate, as many lecturers do: the trouble is that we don't know how in fact Aristotle did speak from these notes, if they are notes; we have only what is set down. In translating, I have decided therefore to keep very close to the words, to add no grace, to smooth no roughness, thinking rather of Aristotle as a lecturer whose authority rests in the sustained gravity and openness of his speech; a man who chooses deliberate, even angular, plainness in preference to rhetoric, stylishness, or fine and memorable phrasing. The objection to a smooth rendering of the *Poetics* is that it will probably conceal the difficulties the text presents, and bury the fascinating and exacting cruces that often confront the reader in Greek.

The requirements I have in mind for a translation of the *Poetics* are these. The reader must never be allowed to lose touch with the Greek, even if he does not know any Greek. Latinistic words are to be avoided as far as possible. When a suitable English word does not match a central Greek word, the Greek word can be transliterated (for example, 'mimesis', 'opsis', 'lexis', 'poietic'), not in order to introduce a technical word of invariable meaning (which is the business not of language but of mathematical symbolism), but to remind the reader of the root meaning and implied functions of the word. The writing would have a *spoken* rhythm to allow for the vigour, informality, brokenness and sudden changes of direction in the Greek; it would be easy in movement, syntactically a little ramshackle, perhaps, to catch the sound of a voice that is good to overhear, bespeaking the grave unhurried self-possession of a man who is confident that he can think aloud coherently and inventively.

Even if I could manage all that, it would not in itself be enough for what I have in mind. The counterpart to the gaps in the discourse that Aristotle himself might have filled or elaborated would be some sort of commentary; and the counterpart to knowing the Greek is to jog the reader's elbow constantly (if need be) to tell him what the Greek is doing, or why at any point the English is markedly different from the Greek. I would show in square brackets in the text whatever the translator has supplied by way of elucidation or implied comment, and would draw the reader's attention away from the translation as often as and wherever necessary with editorial footnotes leading to a sparse and pointed commentary. This does not make for easy reading; but who ever thought the *Poetics* was going to be easy reading? The aim is to find Aristotle, not to miss him.

Another editorial or typographical device that seems to me important in a version of the *Poetics* is to separate out from the main text all identifiably intrusive elements. These are of two kinds. (1) Interpolations into the text by other hands, presumably at some time after the original text was consolidated. These are seldom emendations of the text itself, but are usually marginal or interlinear notes carried into the text by later copyists. The provenance of some spurious interpolations in the *Poetics* can be traced from manuscript evidence; if there are certainly some of these there may well be others. (2) Aristotle's own notes and afterthoughts, which in modern book-making would be printed as footnotes and appendices. To identify these is not easy. A good textual critic, guided by his respect for the integrity of the Greek text, is a curious mixture of daring and conservatism. Any claim to have identified an interpolation or dislocation of the text will be narrowly scrutinised by other scholars equally fastidious, daring, and conservative; few such identifications are accepted without qualification by many

scholars. But in some cases there is impressive agreement, and, as long as the motive is not to resolve intractable difficulties in interpretations by tearing up the paper the problem is written on, it is well to give distinctive treatment to Aristotle's additions. In this matter I am prepared, for pedagogic purposes, not to be excessively conservative.[17]

As an acroamatic document, the *Poetics* cannot be envisaged as a draft for a publishable treatise, with corrections, alterations, and additions written in to be accommodated to a final text. Some of Aristotle's additions look like the sort of additions that in a later draft are ballooned and arrowed into a context without final adjustment of the syntax and adjustment of the argument. Some are noticeable for their expansive and relaxed style; others are evidently later than the original because they suggest a new line of attack or use a revised vocabulary; a few seem to be blocks of material taken out of something written for other purposes but found convenient to extend the argument or to provide broader illustration. In my scheme all spurious intrusions are clearly separated out of the text, but kept in sight; Aristotle's additions are kept in the text but given distinctive typographical treatment; a few larger additions are printed as appendices; a few paragraphs are repositioned.[18]

The point of using these distinctions in presenting the text is not to "remove incoherencies and inconsistencies"; rather they give some hope of restoring the document to the status of an organic and living thing – *zōion ti* (a favourite phrase of Aristotle's). The purpose is to make clear "that provisional form which, being thoroughly characteristic of Aristotle's philosophy, constitutes the inevitable starting-point for every historical understanding of it." The *Poetics* is not chaotic: the *schema* is beautifully direct, orderly, and elegant in its logical and thematic development. Yet, for the intelligent and strenuous reader who has no Greek and therefore has no direct access to the textual problems, there seems little point in printing the translation 'plain'; then the reader would be left to resolve or ignore problems the solution of which would heighten his dramatic sense and energise his understanding. I would therefore insist upon some typographical clarification of the textual problems short of imposing dogmatic finality upon their solution. I would also introduce paragraph-numbering for large-scale reference in place of the rather perverse chapter-numbering that tradition has carried with the manuscript, while still preserving the Bekker lineation for small-scale reference.

A few examples will illustrate the sort of translation I have in mind and the kind of details that I think would be useful in a commentary to go with the translation. The two translations that I find closest to the tone I intend are George Grube's (for its firm muscularity) and Ger-

ald Else's literal version in his *Argument* (for its close contact with the Greek and its grave self-preoccupation). But Grube's rendering is so polished as to deflect minute inquiry; and I owe too much to Else's work to venture an open comparison. I have therefore chosen S.H. Butcher's version, as an example of received standard glyptic, and Lane Cooper's, for its relaxed and Latinistic verbosity. Let us begin in the natural way at the beginning.

Butcher, 1911:

I propose to treat of Poetry in itself and of its various kinds, noting the essential quality of each; to inquire into the structure of the plot as requisite to a good poem; into the number and nature of the parts of which a poem is composed; and similarly into whatever else falls within the same inquiry. Following, then, the order of nature, let us begin with the principles which come first.

Lane Cooper, 1913:

In this work, we propose to discuss the nature of the poetic art in general, and to treat of its different species in particular, with regard to the essential quality or function of each species which is equivalent to the proper and characteristic effect of each upon the trained sensibilities of the judicious. Accordingly, we shall examine that organic structure of the whole which is indispensable to the production of an ideally effective poem, together with such other matters as fall within the same inquiry respecting form and function. Turning first to the conception of poetry in general, we may follow the natural order, and begin with what is fundamental, the principle of artistic imitation.

I propose to translate as follows:

The poietic [art] [1] in itself and the various kinds of it, and what [particular] effect each kind has, and how plots are to be put together if the making [2] is to prosper [3]; and how many elements it has and what kind; and likewise everything else that belongs in this area of inquiry – let us discuss all this, beginning in the natural way with first things [4].

The commentary would discuss four points.

[1] The opening words are *peri poiētikēs* [*technēs*] – from which the book takes its title. Neither 'poetry' nor 'the art of poetry' is quite right. The root of *poiētike* – *poiein* (to make, do, fashion, perform) – is a strongly active verb that will dominate the whole discussion in the sense 'to make'. (Emphatically, it does not mean 'to cre-

ate'.) I have written 'poietic' art, rather than 'poetic' art, partly to emphasise the sense of 'making' (and the poet as 'maker'), partly as a reminder that Aristotle does not recognise a distinction between "art" and "craft".

[2] *Poiesis*, radically the *process* of making.

[3] *Kalōs hexein* – 'to go well with, to work out luckily'. Else translates 'to be an artistic success', but I prefer a more direct and idiomatic word.

[4] The way the discussion later develops in detail shows that this sentence is neither a systematic preliminary outline nor a statement of the programme Aristotle intends to follow. He seems to be sidling comfortably into his discourse. But by taking his starting-point in "first things" he shows that he is thinking of the poietic art as cause, or "reason why".

After the prefatory sentence-paragraph, the plot thickens immediately and the difficulties are formidable.

Now epic-making and the making of tragedy [5] – and comedy too – and the art of making dithyrambs, and most of the art of composing to the flute and lyre – all these turn out to be, by and large, *mimeseis* [6]. But these arts differ from one another in three respects: for they do their mimesis [7] (a) in different matters (in-what), (b) of different subjects (of-what), and (c) by different methods (how) [8].

[5] In the first sentence *poiein* or some derivative of it is used three times (even recognising that by Aristotle's day *epipoiia* often meant 'epic' rather than 'epic-making'). Aristotle is clearly not talking about epic, tragedy, comedy, etc., as genres or art forms; he is talking about the *making* of them.

[6] This word, the plural of *mimesis*, is transliterated to avoid using the word 'imitations'. *Mimēsis* is in its form a processive word – a point of great importance for much of what follows. A useful habit is to read *mimesis* as "a process – mimesis". "The mimetic process is the activity of *poiētikē*" (Else); its *dynamis* (potentiality) works towards a *telos* (end) which is, in both a substantial and active sense, a *poiēma* (poem). Aristotle does not define either 'the poietic art' or *mimesis*; he leaves both open for exploration and for progressive self-definition in the body of the discussion.

[7] In this paragraph, as in many other places, Aristotle uses *mimeisthai*, the verb cognate to *mimesis*. If the verb is translated 'to imitate', the meaning is deflected towards an assumed commonplace definition for 'imitation'. In order to keep clear that mime-

sis is an activity or process and not a thing or product, I use the phrase "they *do* their *mimesis*" for *mimountai;* 'they *make* their *mimesis*' would allow mimesis to be thought of as a product, an 'imitation'.

[8] This sentence does what is the despair of any English translator, and does it with Greek clarity and forthrightness and in a manner usual with Aristotle. Literally "they differ in as much as they do their *mimesis* in different things, of different things, and differently and not in the same way." The traditional abstract terms for these three differentiae are 'medium', 'object', and 'mode'. I prefer 'matter', 'subject', and 'method' for the following reasons.

Matter (in-what). Even if the word 'medium' were not now corrupted below fastidious use, it would not be quite correct here. In current vulgar usage, 'medium' refers to various means of public presentation – printed matter, public speech, stage, film, radio, television: in short, "medium [of communication]" – whatever the question-begging term 'communication' means. Aristotle's three "in-what" differentiae are rhythm, melody and speech. In our way of thinking, these three are not at the same level: rhythm is radical to both melody and speech. Although Aristotle seems to think of each emerging as dominant in dance, music and (dramatic) poetry, he does not encourage us to suppose that he thinks of any one of them functioning in isolation from at least one other. Aristotle's 'in-what' is the physical stuff in which the action is embodied and assumes form – e.g. for music, patterned sound, and for painting, patterned colour-and-line-in-space. We know too little about Aristotle's view about the work of art as 'mediating' between (say) poet and reader to use the word 'medium' confidently. What we do know is that Aristotle has a very strong sense of physical actuality. Since he seems to have been the first to attempt a classification of the arts according to the physical materials they use, the choice of a correct term for "in-what" is important.

Subject (of-what). 'Object' is unsatisfactory because (*a*) it tends to imply that the model imposes a predictable or desirable form upon the work of art, as is sometimes naively assumed to be the case for painting; (*b*) it may be mistaken for 'aim' and become so confused with Aristotle's teleological principle that the starting-point comes to look like the 'end'. 'Subject' presents no difficulty or deflection: we commonly speak of the 'subject' of a book, play, picture, or poem meaning in the most general way 'what it is about' and implicitly what it starts from.

Method (how). The usual word 'mode' (as in 'narrative mode', 'dramatic mode') is unsatisfactory because it indicates a static classification into which individual works may fall. 'Method' places the initiative in the maker and helps us to concentrate on the work as in process of making or acting – which is consonant with Aristotle's emphasis throughout the *Poetics*. Fortunately this sense of the word 'method' is familiar to us from twentieth-century critical analysis of prose fiction, drama and poetry.

Let us go on, straight through the next long paragraph which happens to include two allegedly spurious insertions, one certainly spurious word, and a passage that I treat as a discursive note or afterthought of Aristotle's.

[Differentiation by Matter]

You know how some people make likenesses of all kinds of things by turning them into colours and shapes – some imaginatively and some [merely] by formula [9] – and how other people do their *mimesis* with the voice [10]: well, in the same way, the arts we are thinking of all do their *mimesis* with rhythm, speech, and melody [11], but using speech and melody either separately or mixed together. For example, flute-playing, lyre-playing, and any other [instrumental] arts of this sort – like playing the panpipes – use only melody and rhythm [12]; while the other [verbal] art [13] – an art that happens so far to have no name* – uses only prose [speeches] or [unaccompanied] verses, and when verses, either mixed or of only one kind.

*[*A discursive note by Aristotle:*] [Speaking of lack of suitable terms,] we haven't in fact even got a common term to cover the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and the Socratic dialogues; and, again, if somebody does his work in trimeters, elegiacs, or some other such verse-form [we have no name for it] – except of course that people get into the habit of attaching the word 'poet' to the verse-form, and speak of 'elegiac poets' and 'epic poets' – not because they are entitled to be called poets for the quality of their *mimesis* but because as practitioners they are lumped together according to the verse-form they write in. And if a man puts together some medical or scientific work in verse, people usually call him a 'poet'; and yet Homer and Empedocles have nothing in common except their use of verse, and properly speaking the one should be called a poet, and the other not a poet but a science-writer – and the same would apply even if he used a combination of all the verse-forms (as Chaeremon did in his *Centaur* [14]). [15]

For these arts, then, let this be our division [according to matter].

Looking back, a few comments are in order.

[9] Aristotle's word is 'habit' or 'routine'. Coleridge once referred to Southey's verse as "cold-blooded carpentry", but that is probably stronger than Aristotle intended. The word 'imaginatively' is anachronistic, but I cannot think of a better here.

[10] 'Sound' will not do. *Phōnē* is specifically the human voice – "the most mimetic of the human faculties" (*Rhetoric* 1404ᵃ21).

[11] The word is *harmonia* – the due fitting-together of musical sounds. For Greek music this applies horizontally – melodically. Our use of the word 'harmony' implies a vertical or chordal relation.

[12] 'And the dancer's art uses rhythms alone, without melody, for it is through their rhythmic figures that dancers represent characters, feelings, and actions.' Else in his *Argument* agreed with Vahlen in taking this passage for an afterthought of Aristotle's: it certainly disrupts the run of the sentence. In his *Translation*, however, Else omits the passage as spurious – the way it is represented here.

[13] The word "epic" has been introduced here, probably from an explanatory gloss; but it is obviously wrong and is marked as spurious by Kassel. When the phrase on dancing [12] is not allowed to interrupt the sentence, it is clear that Aristotle is making a contrast between 'bare' instrumental music (without song) and the 'bare' verbal art that has no instrumental accompaniment – "an art that happens so far to have no name."

[14] "... a mixed epic work (*miktēn rhapsōdian*) – but he [Chaeremon] is entitled to be called a poet." Whatever *miktēn rhapsōdian* means, Chaeremon's *Centaur* (which has disappeared except for five iambic lines) was a drama, perhaps a closet drama, possibly a tragedy but more probably a satyr-play. Yet a rhapsody is normally a portion of epic of a length that can be given at one performance. Chaeremon seems to have been a contemporary of Aristotle. Aristotle's point in any case is not that Chaeremon was not a poet but that he used a mixture of all the metres.

[15] Whether this section is to be regarded as a note or an afterthought or even a 'later' addition is probably not worth quarrelling over. To mark it off typographically draws attention to its looser rhythm and more leisurely conduct in contrast to the trenchancy of the argument so far. This difference is felt if the passage is left embedded in the text, but we may get the impression that Aristotle has lost the thread and is drifting away from his announced discussion of differentiation by *matter* (in-what). It is worth noticing that the "art that happens so far to have no name" is not what we should call 'lyrical poetry', but prose by itself and

verse without music. And what seems to have led Aristotle to complain about the lack of proper terms was his insistence that the word 'poet' should not be used sloppily.

One more passage will give an example of one of Aristotle's more complicated sentences sustained against fearful odds, and will also show what happens to the central passage about the relation between plot and character in my version. The shape of the *Poetics* is, in outline at least, straightforward and purposeful. Part I, quite short, deals with the differentiation of *mimesis* secured by the matter (in-which), the subject (of-what), and the method (in what way). In part II – also quite short – Aristotle discusses the origins of the poietic art. This is not so much drawn deductively from historical evidence (if indeed much was available), but is a theory of how "it stands to reason" the poetic art took its origins and grew towards fulfilment – a very Aristotelian way of working. The poietic art, he says, grew out of two human radicals: a flair for *mimesis* (which in this context is very much like 'imitation' in Plato's sense), and a feeling for rhythm and melody. His first and basic division for the poietic art is bravely and incontrovertibly moral: two species establish themselves according as the subjects and central figures (? and poets) are *spoudaioi* ('serious', morally superior, praiseworthy) or *phauloi* ('mean', trivial – or, as Else happily suggests, 'no-account'). Hence on the one side epic and tragedy, and on the other 'iambic' (rough lampooning) and comedy. Each species "finds itself," discovers its own nature and form, and progressively – even inevitably – moves towards realising its own peculiar nature. He then turns in Part III (which is all the rest of the manuscript as we have it) to discuss tragedy and epic *together*, with tragedy in the forefront until the closing chapters, when epic is distinguished from and compared with tragedy and found inferior to it. And all the time he is talking not about things-made so much as about things in the making, coming into being, finding themselves.

At the beginning of Part III Aristotle sets down the famous definition of tragedy after saying "let us pick out the emergent definition of its integral nature" – emergent, that is, according to his theoretical "history" of the way tragedy found itself. Then he discusses the six *merē* of tragedy, literally 'parts' and often translated 'constituent elements'; but, since Aristotle is thinking of tragedy as a special instance of the *poietic* art, the *merē* must be related to the making and coming-into-existence processes of tragedy. *Merē* are not component parts, and the *Poetics* is not a do-it-yourself tragedy kit. So I translate *merē* as 'aspects' – various points of vantage from which we can examine the making and functioning of a drama. Aristotle points to six 'aspects': *opsis* (an

impossible word – 'look'? 'visuals'?, but preferably not 'spectacle'[19]), *melopoiia* (song-making – both words and music), *lexis* (speech or dialogue, not 'diction'), characters, 'thought', plot.

I take up the text again at the point where he has finished with *opsis*, *melopoiia* and *lexis*; the syntax of the first sentence is left much as it is in the Greek.

Since [tragedy] is a *mimesis* of an action and [since] it is acted out by certain people acting and these must necessarily have a certain kind of character and cast of mind (for it is in the light of these that we say that their actions are of a certain kind, and according to [their actions] they all succeed or fail); and [since] the plot is the *mimesis* of the action (for I use 'plot' in this sense – the putting-together of the events) and the 'characters' are what allow us to ascribe certain qualities to the actors, and the 'thought' is the places where [the actors] by speaking prove some point or declare wisdom – because of all this, the [number of] 'aspects' to tragedy-[making] as a whole that account for tragedy as a distinct [species] must be exactly six: plot and characters and speech and thought and 'visuals' and song-making ...

But the most important of these is the putting-together (? structuring) of the events. For tragedy is a *mimesis* not of men [simply] but of an action, that is, of life.[20] That's how it is that they certainly do not act in order to present their characters: they assume their characters for the sake of the actions [they are to do]. And so the [course of] events – the plot – is the *end* of tragedy, and the end is what matters most of all. Furthermore, you can't have a tragedy without an action, but you can have it without [clearly defined] characters ... So it follows that the first principle of tragedy – the soul, in fact – is the plot, and second to that the characters; it is a *mimesis* of an *action (praxis)* and therefore particularly [a *mimesis*] of men-of-action in action.

I am aware of the uncouthness of the style in these passages, but I have retained it for a distinct purpose: to hold the English to what I feel sure the Greek is saying and doing, to the way that argument runs and the emphasis falls. I must now say what guides that purpose and encourages that confidence; but sketchily, because I am not primarily concerned here with points of interpretation but with the attitude of mind that might discover a vivid interpretation if one were wanted.

Far and away the most insistently recurring words and ideas in the *Poetics* (though not so much near the end as in earlier chapters) are 'making' and 'action/acting'. Nevertheless, the radical error (*prōton pseudos*) that is most commonly made about the *Poetics* is to suppose that Aristotle is discussing – as *we* might – tragedy, epic, comedy, and the rest as genres or as somehow things-in-themselves. This may be a valid-enough way to think of these things, but it happens not to be

Aristotle's way. The second error is to suppose that Aristotle has drawn together all the literary works he can lay his hands on, has classified them, and drawn certain general conclusions which he then proceeds (in the standard backward philosophical way) to explicate and 'prove'. There are a number of reasons for rejecting these two assumptions, inevitable though they may be to some mentalities and even though many translations, especially the earlier ones, imply or endorse them. The dominance of 'making', 'action' and process in the Greek text makes it plain that – whatever preliminary investigations Aristotle may have made (and we may reasonably guess that they were comprehensive and minute) – he is here not working by deduction but by inference. In short, he is working in the distinctive Aristotelian way. He is seized by the individual, the particular, as substantial. What interests him, as Jaeger puts it, is the fact, "not that something *is coming to be*, but that *something* is coming to be":[21] something that will be final and normative is making its way into existence; when it has come into existence it will have achieved *form*, it will have become what it had to be. The form then is the final statement – assertion, if you like – of an activity seeking its own end, its own fulfilment.[22]

Aristotle sometimes uses the organic example of the seed or the developed organism.[23] It has been argued – I think convincingly – that the distinctive nisus of Aristotle's thinking is most clearly to be seen in his biological investigations: contrary to Plato's ascription of reality to the ideas only, Aristotle's habit is to insist (as he does repeatedly in the *Metaphysics*) upon individuals – particulars – as substances, the only fully real things. His biological investigations provide commanding instances of a process that he recognises in everything he sees and everything he thinks about, embodied in the notions of potency and act. The power, potency (*dynamis*) can be latent or active; when it becomes active the *dynamis* is *energeia*, actuality, activity from within that drives towards, acts towards attaining its own end (*telos*): that is, *dynamis* is self-realising. (Coleridge, though he regarded himself as a Platonist and no Aristotelian, said that "Every thing that lives, has its moment of *self-exposition*."[24]) For Aristotle, everything presents itself to him in terms of motion and end; and "in every kind of motion his gaze is fastened on the end."[25] Whether it is a snail, an octopus or dogfish, the convolutions of a nautilus shell or the evolution of the government of a city-state, or the activity of man as a moral creature, Aristotle's fascinated and stern gaze is fixed on the inescapable mystery that this *is*, that *this* is the self-exposition of its *dynamis*, the end of its action. (Wordsworth was in this sense profoundly Aristotelian.) A 'thing' is for Aristotle never inert: it always implies its action and its power. Can it be that this central analogy for the dynamis that in many specialised

aspects runs through all things as through a single hierarchical order is not the organic figure drawn from plants, fishes, and animals, but the human *dynamis?* "For the actuality of *Nous* [intelligence, intuition] is life."[26]

When Aristotle looks at tragedy he wants to find out the form of tragedy; that is, in his terms, what tragedy of its own nature comes to be. The pre-Socratic philosophers had tried to account for everything in terms of the distribution of chaotic matter by mechanical causes; Plato and Aristotle, each in his own way, had moved away from that position. For Aristotle, action and power, motion and form are the dynamic modes which everything discloses. The higher we ascend in the order of the cosmos, he believes, the more purely the motion expresses the form that is its end; and the highest form must be pure activity. At the human level, it may be, he sees tragedy – and perhaps all art – as pure act in the human psyche. Tragedy as the end of a certain aspect of human *dynamis*; and, if the tragic action flows from the moral centre of man, tragedy will also tell us something profound about man. Aristotle's theory of the origins and growth of art starts by identifying two causes "deep-rooted in the very nature [of man],"[27] shows how the main literary-dramatic forms emerged and identified themselves, and concludes that tragedy "when it has gone through many changes, stopped when it had realised its own *physis* – its integral nature."[28] When he deals with tragedy – and we must remember that he is simultaneously thinking of epic and tragedy under the heading of those literary kinds that arise out of 'serious' people and subjects – he has to find a way of thinking positively from the given *end*; he has to be able to infer accurately the action (energy) that the end realises. The action is human, the energy is human, the tragedy is human; there can be no other assumption, no other analogy. The action is plotted and prepared by a maker, a poet; it is acted out, brought into physical existence, by actors in the theatre (it is the actors, not the poet, who do the *mimēsis* – but the poet can also be an actor and often was); and the action is traced out and realises itself before an audience (though the tragic effect *can* come about through reading). Aristotle is very much aware of the complex web of relationships between poet, actors, performance and audience, and of their interactions; he knows all about the egotism of actors too, the silliness of audiences, and the way poets can be deflected by sensational appeals to vulgar taste. It has often been said that, even among the small group of superb Greek tragedies that have come down to us, few would meet Aristotle's specification; but this, I take it, is one of the clear signs that he is *not* working deductively either from the huge corpus of plays known to him or from his own personal preference (which is known to have been ques-

tionable). He is looking for the *form* of tragedy, and needs to invent a method – a means – of finding that for himself and of disclosing it to others.

His method in the *Poetics* is brilliantly simple and appropriate. He says in effect, "Let us *suppose* that we want to *make* a tragedy; how should we set about it?" Intensely aware of the complex and refined dynamic of tragedy, he is not content to say what tragedy is (as though that were easy anyway), but insists on showing how it works. As he advances, he concentrates on making and doing and acting – and is it not poetry-*making*, not poetry itself, that is a more serious and 'philosophical' business than history-*making*? The word *dei* (it is necessary) recurs, particularly in the later chapters, like a reiterated dominant seventh: it is necessary to do this; you must –, you should –. The Renaissance scholars took these utterances for rules, and once into that mood worked out some pseudo-Aristotelian rules of their own; in the end even Corneille, it is said, shook in his shoes at the thought of breaking the 'rules', and a little later it was said that because Shakespeare broke the rules, yet wrote passable plays, he must have invented a kind of tragedy that Aristotle – poor fellow, with his limited horizon – had never dreamed of. Such conclusions seem to me less than inevitable. I cannot seriously think of Aristotle giving a master-class in tragedy-writing. But he has thought of what is probably the only way, even now, of seriously and responsibly engaging the critical attention of a student of literature: it is a dramatic device of teaching. He says in effect, "Just imagine that you are capable of making one of these things. Just imagine that you are capable of tracing out the right action that will realise itself in the right end, that you are capable of entering into and generating the action which, acted out by others, will ruthlessly bring about this end, an end so profound and momentous that at best we can only catch a glimpse of it. Then we shall see the *physis*, the *dynamis*, the *telos*, the *life*." His *dei, dei, dei* is the insistent reiteration, within this dramatic supposition, of what matters most: the action, the specific action that needs to be traced out, by what conceivable means, working within the limits of what resources to what end. For every action implies its realisation in an end. But there is no formula to guarantee success, only the poet's judgement and luck and vision. The fact that no poet ever worked successfully in the way Aristotle 'recommends' does not affect the validity of his imaginative scheme. His aim is not practical, but theoretical; yet paradoxically, as far as his aim is 'critical' it is intensely practical – it helps us with our doing.

Aristotle knows certain central things from his experience of tragedy: that tragedy happens only to people of a certain kind or quality; that, if part of the horror is seeing a man broken, it must be a

strong man (and that is implicit in the pleasure peculiar to tragedy); that if the issue is to do with law and man's nature, the man must be morally strong – without the strength, what we see is merely pathetic, pitiful, or revolting; that tragedy is to do with the darkest and strongest issues in our experience – life and death and law and responsibility and freedom and necessity. He knows that we can betray ourselves from within, that when we take the law into our own hands we pass from freedom to mechanism and cease to be human, having cut our- selves off from the law of our inner nature; and he knows that a man can know that he is doing this and yet do it, and watch himself doing it, capable even in his fascination of altering or reversing the action. A certain quality of moral awareness is required in the person this can happen to, and a certain degree of strength; and it can happen only over something that *really* matters, such as the defiance of blood-rela- tionship or some other primordial human bond.

A tragic action correctly traced will lead to the end of recognising at least something about the nature of man, the values that are para- mount, the vulnerable centres that we must at all costs preserve – which is the law, our law. Here, it may be, the old debate about what happens according to nature (*physei*) and what according to law (*nomoi*) comes into ironic coincidence in Aristotle's mind when he sees the form of tragedy, when the inner law simply *is* our nature – not 'natural law' or 'the law of Nature' but the law of *our* nature.

"Tragedy is a mimesis [process] not of men simply but of an action, that is, of life." To achieve the precise end, a precise action is needed. We could think of the tragic action as a sort of trajectory traced by a projectile, implying a certain amplitude, direction, velocity, momen- tum, target, and that in every moment of flight all these terms are implied; and the nature of the projectile matters very much, because it is a man who, being morally strong, makes choices, determines the flight, is not simply propelled, is not a mere victim. Aristotle, I suggest, is showing us the tragic action as though it were a pure abstract motion traced out with exquisite precision, the precision that is needed to impart the force of necessity to an action that can at no point be pre- dicted for certain because it can at any moment be altered or deflect- ed: it will at once feel both inevitable and free. The plot, the sequence of events that specifies the action, Aristotle says, has to be conceived as a *schēma*, an abstract motion, and you put in the names afterwards; but the *schēma* is not simply a locus of dramatic points or a flight plan, for the points are not so much intersections in time and space as events, each momentous, crucial, chosen, formative. Yet the tragedy is *inside* the protagonist and is of his own doing; and, if he did not know, he could have known, perhaps should have known – which is why know-

ing and not-knowing is crucial to the tragic action. Recognition (*anagnōrisis*) is not a device of plot-structure, but an essential crisis in the action; and *hamartia* a mistake rather than a sin, a distinction that was clearer to Peter Abelard and other subtle Fathers than it seems to be to us – *hamartia* is an *ignorant* act, and in tragedy (as in 'The Ancient Mariner') ignorance is no excuse, for in these matters the plea is made not to a court of external law, but is argued in the inner dialogue of moral choice according to the law of our nature. And these things have to be declared outwardly, presented openly in action, so that they strike us not only with the *frisson* of horror and pity but with the shock of recognition; we too must be drawn into that intricate web of knowing and not-knowing. And that is the peculiar pleasure of tragedy.

To claim that Aristotle is simply talking about a "tragedy of action" out of poverty, not knowing anything else, and that later dramatists discovered a "tragedy of character" that Aristotle had never considered possible, is a radical misunderstanding of Aristotle's position. To establish the existence of a "tragedy of character" of comparable force and incisiveness it would be necessary to show that the "tragedy of character" does in fact trace the specific action required of tragedy and that it does so with resources not accessible to the "tragedy of action." The resources for tracing out the tragic action are very few: plot, characters, speech, song, the various techniques of stagecraft and acting. Language is indispensable, speech being one of the principal resources of human action, if also the most ambiguous. But things need to *happen*, not simply in sequence but in a sequence that implies the whole ineluctable trajectory and the end. The people involved have to be the sort of people that such things can happen to; at least one of them has to be capable of irreversible moral choice and yet capable of making a disastrous mistake in at least one of his moral choices, and it still has to be a *moral* choice, not just an accident or "the will of the gods" or "Fate." The plot is the sequence of events that in one sense delineates the action (the action which alone can produce the end); and the persons involved in the action delineate the action by being the sort of persons that could initiate such events and have them happen to them. "You can't have tragedy without action, but you can have tragedy that is weak in characters" – that is, without persons who are shown taking strong moral choices. Aristotle cites examples, but this must be at an extreme limit of tragic possibility since the tragedy *aēthēs* – 'without characters' – throws away one of the most powerful and subtle resources for delineating tragic action; for the *praxis* (action) of the play is defined by the *praxis* of the persons in the play, and the *praxis* makes the characters what they are as well as what they are becoming and will become. When Aristotle says that "the first

principle of tragedy – the soul, if you like – is the plot, and second to that the characters," he means this quite specifically, not rhetorically; the soul is the 'form' of the person, and prior to the body – the plot is the 'form' of the tragedy, and prior to the action – the characters are the 'body' of the action (will body forth the action) and are shaped by, as well as generate, the action. The person acting does not disclose or externalise his character in action, as though the character existed before the action: the character (in Aristotle's view) is *shaped* by his actions, and in tragedy we see the protagonist, as character, being shaped by his choice and his actions.

This is why the notion of *hamartia* as a tragic or fatal 'flaw' is completely wrong-headed in Aristotelian terms, and why to insist upon such a notion erodes the austere purity of Aristotle's view of tragedy. If the protagonist had by nature a 'flaw' that steered him more or less inevitably into a fatal situation, he would be a mechanism and predictable to us, incapable of inducing terror or recognition; he would be repulsive or pathetic merely; he would no longer be a man-of-action in action shaping himself towards his *telos* in this action, but a man who – having fallen into mechanism – was no longer capable of discovering his 'form' in and through action.

And as for *catharsis* – the word occurs only once in the *Poetics*;[29] in the central definition of tragedy (Ch. 6) to be sure, but so completely unrelated to anything in the introductory chapters that some textual critics have regarded the phrase as a later insertion by Aristotle. The discussions of *catharsis* in the *Politics*, and of pity and terror in the *Rhetoric*, are of questionable relevance to the *Poetics*; and the promise in the *Politics* to "explain this further in my discussion of poetry" is not fulfilled anywhere in the surviving corpus. So the one phrase – ten words – has accumulated a massive exegetic literature.[30] *Catharsis*, as we know from experience, has its implications, in some sense, for the audience; but is it a technical word at all? And are we prepared to accept that one of the distinctive formative principles of tragedy (some seem to claim that it is the *final* cause of tragedy) is to be found not in the action but in the audience's reaction? Gerald Else, as far as I know, was the first to insist that the *catharsis* occurs primarily *inside* the action; and Kitto, I think (*pace* Lucas), settles the matter for good and all. It is the incidents within the action itself (not the emotions of the audience) that are purified, brought into a sharp focus specific to tragedy, by the *mimesis*, by the presentational action – by the *mimesis*, not by 'tragedy'. Events in the area of pity and terror are minutely defined in a cathartic process towards Unity of Action – that is, Purity of Action; and so the pleasure peculiar to tragedy, because of this refinement, is aroused by the quality of the action.[31] And comedy has its *catharsis* too,

presumably, in as much as *its* action needs to be 'purified' within its proper area and only so refined will arouse the pleasure peculiar to comedy. And yet, as Kitto says in a wistful aside, "There are times when one suspects that Aristotle's own lectures on the *Poetics* would be more valuable even than the original text."

Few of these observations are in any way new. But these are the sort of things, as a vigorous and single guiding view, that I should want a translation of the *Poetics* to keep steadily in the reader's mind, in the final choice of each central term, in the shaping of phrases that too often and too easily recall improper connections, in a pungent running commentary that keeps the reader off his comfortable heels, in the rhythms of a speech that might conceivably be coming unguardedly but deliberately out of the intelligence of the man who was affectionately known to his contemporaries in the Academy as 'The Brain'. To do so successfully, a person would need to be pretty skilful, learned, and lucky.

In this view, the action of tragedy (to think of only one of the 'kinds' Aristotle has under his eye) is not a 'representation' or 'imitation' at all, but the specific delineation, within extremely fine limits, of a moral action so subtle, powerful and important that it is almost impossible to delineate it; an action self-generated that has as its end a recognition of the nature and destiny of man. (No wonder few 'tragedies' meet the specification.) In this view, *mimēsis* is simply the continuous dynamic relation between a work of art and whatever stands over against it in the actual moral universe, or could conceivably stand over against it. So *mimēsis* is not definable by itself, least of all as a simplistic preliminary to a subtle inquiry. For this very reason, I imagine, Aristotle does not define it except in action, by a variety of uses gradually drawing around the word the limits of its activity – which is 'definition' in another but perfectly legitimate sense.

It would follow – and I should be prepared to argue – that the notion of 'mimetic' and 'non-mimetic' *art* is a verbal fiction based on a misunderstanding of Aristotle's use of the word *technē*. I should be prepared also to challenge R.S. Crane's statement that there is a "Coleridgean method" of criticism distinct from and diametrically opposed to Aristotle's; I begin to sense an Aristotle–Coleridge axis in criticism and poetics but am not yet prepared to speak about it. And I would affirm my own strong conviction that the method of the *Poetics* provides – for those who care to explore it – a paradigm for all those critical procedures that seriously seek to discover the nature of what they are examining, that seek to release with accurate definition the energy contained within what precise shaping limits. It seems to me more than possible that what Aristotle has to say about tragedy is

absolute, that his account is not limited by the number of examples that he happened to have at hand. It is the privilege of genius to make such discoveries on incomplete evidence and to make durable statements about them.

In trying to discover and disclose the driving energy of Aristotle's thought in the *Poetics*, I have addressed myself to making a translation with commentary – and have in the end come upon the clean air of Aristotle's penetrating imagination and his grave, unwinking intelligence, to find the *Poetics* a dramatic record of his profound and incisive thinking, contemplative reflection of the highest order with a brilliant method of exposition to match it. Here indeed is theory, *theoria*, vision. My exhilaration may perhaps be pardoned even if it is not universally shared. Immanuel Bekker, whose Berlin Academy edition has provided the standard system of reference to the whole Aristotelian canon, edited in all some sixty volumes of Greek texts and collated more than 400 manuscripts. Gildersleeve said of him that in company he knew how to be silent in seven languages. Less learned than Bekker and less taciturn, I did not feel that, in the matter of the *Poetics*, I could any longer – whatever the hazard – be silent, in the one language I know at all well.

NOTES

1 If we ignore Theodore Coulston (1623), who made a Latin version of Castelvetro, and Thomas Rymer (1674), who translated René Rapin, and two anonymous versions (1705, 1775 – the first from André Dacier), and Pye (1788), who graciously conceded the palm to Twining, the first English translation of the *Poetics* was by Thomas Twining (1789). It reigned until Butcher's translation of 1895. But Bywater followed Butcher in 1905, and thereafter there have been a number of English translations, none of which has succeeded in dislodging Butcher from the university anthologies.

2 S.H. Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art with a Critical Text and Translation of 'The Poetics'* (1st ed 1895; 4th ed 1907; rev. posthumously 1911 and reprinted several times; the translation reprinted frequently in collections of critical texts, including Saintsbury and Ross; reissued in paperback in 1951 from plates of the 4th ed). The 1951 reissue has a note at the end of the bibliography suggesting that "critics are likely to agree with the opinion of Professor W.K. Wimsatt, Jr ... that the revisions of the text, derived from the Arabic version and MS Riccardianus 49 [*sic*] 'are not as a matter of fact important enough to have worked any substantial damage to the theoretical part of Butcher's labour'." This state-

ment, if written after 1965, would seem to be ill informed or disingenuous.

3 Werner Jaeger, *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development,* trans. Richard Robinson (Oxford: 1948), 7.

4 Ingram Bywater, *Aristotle on the Art of Poetry* (Oxford: 1909), ix.

5 Lane Cooper and Alfred Gudeman, *A Bibliography of the Poetics of Aristotle,* Cornell Studies in English, vol. xi (1928). Listed 1583 items. Marvin T. Herrick provided a supplement in 1931, and in 1954-5 Gerald Else published "A Survey of Work on Aristotle's *Poetics,* 1940-1954."

6 Jaeger, *Aristotle,* 24.

7 D.W. Lucas, *Aristotle's Poetics: Introduction, Commentary and Appendixes* (Oxford: 1968), ix. My summary here is based in part on Lucas's Introduction.

8 *Aristotelis de arte poetica liber recognovit brevique adnotatione critica instruxit Rudolphus Kassel* (Oxford: 1965; reprint with corrections 1966); printed as Greek text to Lucas's "Introduction, Commentary, and Appendixes," *Aristotle's Poetics,* 3-52. Gerald Else based his massive *Aristotle's 'Poetics': The Argument* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1957) on Rostagni's 2d ed. (1945); but in his *Translation* (Ann Arbor: 1967) he used Kassel's text, remarking that it "makes all previous editions obsolete, being the only one that provides anything like full and accurate reports from all four text witnesses." Lucas perhaps had this comment in mind when he wrote that Bywater's "great edition ... remains after half a century far from obsolete."

9 Jaeger, *Aristotle,* 3-5. The original ed., *Aristoteles, Grundlegung einer Geschichte seiner Entwicklung,* was first published in Berlin in 1923. For the 1st English ed., see n3 above.

10 Jaeger, *Aristotle,* 6, 13. Only the first is indexed.

11 Ibid., 3.

12 Marjorie Grene, in assailing the view encouraged by Jaeger that Aristotle started as a Platonist, puts this point neatly: "Plato was a Platonist to the last, and Aristotle an Aristotelian from the first, or very near it" – *A Portrait of Aristotle* (London: 1963), 256.

13 F. Solmsen, in an impressive article "The Origin and Methods of Aristotle's *Poetics,*" *Classical Quarterly,* 29 (1935): 192-201, recognises an "original train of thought and ... later additions," but does not venture a more exact consideration of the span of possible dates. The only recognisable piece of internal evidence for some part of the *Poetics* having been written in Athens (i.e., before 348 BC or after 335 BC) is 1448ᵃ 31 – a passage that Solmsen considers to be 'late'.

14 The first hint that this might be possible came to me from the working version Gerald Else uses in his *Argument,* though he says that it is "not meant to be read by itself, as a 'translation' of the *Poetics.*" It is "rigidly literal", preserves the length and structure of Aristotle's sentences, yet

allows some flexibility in extending words and phrases by "translating out" for clarity, and avoids rigidity in applying key terms. See *Argument*, xvi.

15 One promising resource has to come to us indirectly from Greek in the nouns (now often neologisms) ending in '-ism', but we have never made careful use of them. If these words were thought of as coming directly from Greek processive verbs ending in *-zein*, they would imply process. Unfortunately they have been deflected through German into the collective abstraction of static nouns standing for 'ideas', and even the '-ism' words that do not come to us from German now have this character. In critical discussion, for example, it is useful to insist that "realism" refers to a method, not a quality; but some people are hard to persuade. And I like to think of "criticism" as a process of getting-to-discern.

16 The alleged inferiority of Aristotle's 'style' to Plato's has historically encouraged the view of Aristotle's work as static and monolithic, and has tempted some to try to make his writings into "readable handbooks" (see Jaeger, *Aristotle*, 6). See also ibid., 30, n2: "The only mark of good style laid down by previous rhetoricians that A. recognizes is lucidity ... A. thinks of knowledge as a force that must alter everything, language included."

17 Valuable detailed proposals have been made in recent years by Solmsen, Rostagni, de Montmollin and Else. The prevailing attitude at present towards "systematic attempts ... to remove incoherencies and inconsistencies by distinguishing different layers of composition" is well represented by Lucas: "The scope for disagreement here is certainly not less than in more usual forms of textual criticism" (*Aristotle's Poetics*, xxv). Jaeger too was suspicious of "rationalizing interference" by philologists (*Aristotle*, 6). For a test case – the status of ch. 12 – see Lucas, *Aristotle's Poetics*, 135-6; and Else, *Argument*, 360-3, and *Translation*, 94. That there are disparate elements in the *Poetics* there can be no denying. The crucial question, in the absence of reliable internal evidence for dating, is: on what basis is the disparateness to be judged? See also n21 below.

18 The larger problems come after ch. 14, concerning the status of part of ch. 15, of chs. 16–18, 21, 24, and part of 22. But there are questions about ch. 12 too, and its relation to 16–18 (ch. 18 being evidently a group of notes).

19 Primarily, one imagines, the 'look' of the actors, whatever strikes the eye – their masks and costumes – often splendid no doubt. Aristotle says that Sophocles introduced scene-painting, and the *deus ex machina* must have been quite a sight; yet 'spectacle' throws the emphasis where the Greek theatre can least support it. In any case, Aristotle says that the poet had little control over this 'aspect' and does not discuss it further in detail.

20 Here a passage, long suspect and subjected to much emendational inge-

nuity, is athetised by Kassel: "a happiness; and the end [? of tragedy] is a certain action, not a quality. The persons [in the drama] are of certain kinds because of their characters, but they are happy or unhappy because of their actions."

21 Jaeger, *Aristotle*, 384.

22 Cf. *Metaphysics*, 1041^b 6–9: "Since we must know the existence of the thing and it must be given, clearly the question is *why* the matter is some individual thing ... Therefore what we seek is the cause, i.e. the form, by reason of which the matter is some definite thing; and this is the substance of the thing."

23 Plato too; see *Phaedrus*, 264C: "Every *logos* [discussion] should be like a living organism [*zōion*] and have a body of its own; it should not be without head or feet, it should have a middle and extremities which should be appropriate to each other and to the whole work."

24 *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (New York and London: 1957–72) III, 4397, f. 53; *variatim* in *Literary Remains* (1836–9) I, 225, and *Biographia Literaria*, ed. J. Shawcross (Oxford: 1907) II, 259. Cf. G.M. Hopkins on observing the form of sea-waves: "it is hard for [the eyes] to unpack the huddling and gnarls of the water and law out of the shapes and the sequence of the running" – *The Journals*, ed. Humphry House and Graham Storey (Oxford: 1959), 223. See also *Metaphysics*, 1050^a 21–4.

25 Jaeger, *Aristotle*, 384, where he also states that "The meaning of 'entelechy' is not biological; it is logical and ontological." Marjorie Grene follows D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson in proposing that Aristotle's biology "may have provided the cornerstone for his metaphysics and logic" and that seems to complement rather than contradict Jaeger's position. See *A Portrait of Aristotle*, 32; and for a general critique of the 'genetic' method advocated by Jaeger, see ch. 1.

26 *Metaphysics*, 1072^b 27–8. Jaeger uses this phrase as motto on his title-page.

27 *Poetics*, 1448^b 4–5.

28 Ibid., 1449^a 15.

29 Ibid., 1449^b 28. *Catharsis* occurs again in 1455^b 15 but in a neutral-referential sense.

30 For a conspectus, see Else, *Argument*, 225-6 n14. See also Lucas, *Aristotle's Poetics*, 97–8 and Appendix II.

31 H.D. Kitto, 'Catharsis', in *The Classical Tradition*, ed. L. Wallach (Ithaca, NY: 1966), 133–47.

The Poietic Art

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A Note on the Text
of the Translation

The surviving Greek text of Aristotle's *Poetics* is incomplete: the whole
section on comedy is lost and there are some lacunae in what is left.
The text has also suffered from the accretion of later glosses and inter-
polations by hands other than Aristotle's: these have found their way
into the text in various ways and are visually indistinguishable from
Aristotle's words. Some of the interpolations are helpful, but many of
them are wrongheaded and misleading. In my translation I have omit-
ted all the interpolations which cumulative scholarly authority judges
spurious, and have recorded in notes indicated by superscript letters
only those that are of substantial interest, particularly the ones that
need corrective comment because some earlier translations have
included them as Aristotle's.

It is clear that Aristotle worked over his own text after it was first set
down. (I incline to the view that the first draft of the *Poetics* belongs to
the middle, rather than to the later, period of Aristotle's work; and it
seems to me unlikely that the text as we have it could be a set of stu-
dent's lecture notes.) Some of Aristotle's additions and afterthoughts
are substantial and all of them are interesting; but they are often in a
more diffuse style than the main text and sometimes deflect the clear
line of the argument. I have therefore regularly printed these as foot-
notes to the text, using the traditional indicators * and †. Few of Aris-
totle's notes and glosses can be dated even relatively. A few are clear-
ly "late"; but all we can say about most of them is that they were writ-
ten into the text after it was first drafted; some of them look like jot-
tings made during a first revision. A few of these revisions are short
enough and continuous enough with the argument to remain in the
text: these I have placed in < >. I have also used < > to indicate pas-
sages restored to Aristotle's text by firm conjecture, but these are all
identified separately in the notes.

   The translator's notes (indicated by superscript arabic numerals) are intended to help the reader to stay in close touch with Aristotle's text and with his argument at crucial points. I have not felt it necessary to identify all proper names or to provide archaeological information when it does not seem central to the argument or crucial to the evidence. Some of Aristotle's references, in any case, are to writings that have not been preserved and therefore cannot be verified: Else's *Argument* discusses all the references, both actual and hypothetical, in detail.

   Words not found in the Greek but introduced by the translator in the cause of sense or fluency are placed in [ ]; I have sometimes allowed myself the luxury of expanding or identifying terms that might otherwise be ambiguous or unfocused. The profusion of square brackets from about §41 (Ch 14) onwards, though irritating to the reader, is some indication of the elliptical and difficult state of the original.

   The numbering in the margins of the translation provides (a) at the beginning of each paragraph, a sequential paragraph number marked §; (b) in the left margin, the pagination according to Bekker's Berlin Academy quarto edition of the whole works of Aristotle (1831) by which reference to Aristotle's works is now regularly made; and (c) in the right margin, a reference to the traditional chapter-numbers which appear in all editions of the Greek and in most translations. Whoever inserted the chapter divisions in the first place did not have a very clear eye for the way Aristotle's argument develops or for the places where the main breaks in the discussion occur. I have introduced the paragraph numbering for convenient reference, but the paragraph divisions are my own, there being no breaks in the Greek text except the openings of the traditional 'chapters'. I have also provided topical titles and sub-titles for the clearly definable subdivisions of the work. A topical summary has also been drawn up which serves as a table of contents and also shows the structure of the discourse (and the digressions from it). The incompleteness and corrupt condition of the Greek original does not conceal or impair the clarity and methodical energy of Aristotle's thought.

   In deciding upon the form and authority of the Greek to be translated I have worked from the edition of Rudolph Kassel (Oxford: 1966) rather than from the earlier Oxford text of Bywater (Oxford: 1911), and at crucial points have selected from his *apparatus criticus* certain emendations proposed by earlier scholars. Gerald Else has introduced in his *Argument* a number of refinements of Kassel's text in respect to punctuation and in the identification of erratic elements: I have accepted almost all these.

My debts to Gerald Else's detailed, intelligent, and rigorous com-
mentary are substantial and manifold. I had thought there might be
some advantage in a translator approaching the *Poetics* along the line
of vision of recent developments in literary criticism and poetic theo-
ry. It would be virtually impossible to seize that advantage if I were not
able to rely upon the clear-headed and scrupulous work of a classical
scholar whose erudition and insight are unsurpassed in the long and
crowded inquiry into the words and meaning of Aristotle's *Poetics*.

<div style="text-align: right">G.W.</div>

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Editors' note:
All translated words, except those in parenthesis, are placed in single
quotation marks, as are terms used in odd, problematic, or ironic ways.
Other people's translations and any word used in the sense of "the
term x" are shown in double quotation marks.

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Topical Summary

The Poietic Art

Commentary

1 The opening words are *peri poiētikēs [technēs]* – from which the book takes its title. Neither 'poetry' nor 'the art of poetry' is quite right. The root of *poiētikē* – *poiein* (to make, do, fashion, perform) – is a strongly active verb that will dominate the whole discussion in the sense 'to make'. (Emphatically, it does not mean 'to create'.) I have written *poietic* art rather than *poetic* art, partly to emphasise the sense of 'making' (and the poet as 'maker'), partly as a reminder that Aristotle does not recognise a distinction between 'art' and 'craft'.

2 *Poiēsis*, radically the *process* of making.

3 *Kalōs hexein* – 'to go well with, to work out luckily'. Else translates "to be an artistic success" but I prefer a more direct and idiomatic rendering.

4 The way the discussion later develops in detail shows that this sentence is neither a systematic preliminary outline nor a statement of the programme Aristotle intends to follow. He seems to be sidling comfortably into his discourse. But by taking his starting point in 'first things' he shows that he is thinking of the poietic art as cause, or 'reason why'.

5 In the first sentence *poiein* or some derivative of it is used three times (even recognising that by Aristotle's day *epipoiia* could mean 'epic' rather than 'epic-making'). Aristotle is clearly not talking about epic, tragedy, comedy etc. as genres or art-forms: he is talking about the *making* of them.

6 This word, the plural of *mimēsis*, is transliterated to avoid using the word 'imitations'. *Mimesis* is in its form a processive word – a point of great importance for much of what follows. A useful habit is to read *mimesis* as "a process – *mimesis*." "The mimetic process is the activity of *poiētikē*" (Else); its *dynamis* (potentiality) works towards a *telos* (end) which is, in both a substantial and an active sense, a *poiēma*

The Poietic Art

1447ᵃ8   § 1   The poietic [art]¹ in itself and the various kinds of it, and   *1*
what [particular] effect each kind has, and how plots should
10   be put together if the making² is to prosper;³ and how many
elements it has and of what kind; and likewise everything else
that belongs in this area of inquiry – let us discuss all this,
beginning in the natural way with first things.⁴

PART I   DIFFERENTIATION OF THE POIETIC ART

First Things

§ 2   Now epic-making and the making of tragedy, and come-
dy too, and the art of making dithyrambs,⁵ and most of the art
15   of composing to the flute and lyre – all these happen to be, by
and large, *mimeseis.*⁶ But these arts differ from one another in

(poem, thing made). Aristotle does not define either 'the poietic art' or *mimesis*; he leaves both open for exploration and for progressive self-definition in the body of the discussion.

7 In this paragraph, as in many other places, Aristotle uses *mimeisthai* – the verb cognate to *mimēsis*. If the verb is translated 'to imitate', the meaning is deflected towards an assumed commonplace definition for 'imitation'. In order to keep clear that *mimesis* is an activity or process and not a thing or product, I use the phrase "they *do* their *mimesis*"; "they *make* their *mimesis*" would also be possible except that it would allow *mimesis* to be thought of as a product, 'an imitation'.

8 This sentence does what is the despair of the translator, and does it with Greek clarity and forthrightness and in a manner usual with Aristotle. Literally "they differ in as much as they do their *mimesis* in different things, of different things, and differently and not in the same way." The traditional abstract terms for these three differentiae are 'medium', 'object', and 'mode'. I prefer 'matter', 'subject', and 'method'. (The three differentiae represent the material, efficient, and formal causes.)

Matter (in-what). Even if the word 'medium' were not now corrupted below fastidious use, it would not be quite correct here. In current vulgar usage, 'medium' refers to various means of public presentation – printed matter, public speech, stage, film, radio, television: in short, "medium [of communication]" – whatever the question-begging term 'communication' means. Aristotle's three "in-what" differentiae are rhythm, melody and speech. In our way of thinking, these three are not at the same level: rhythm is radical to both melody and speech. Although Aristotle seems to think of each dominantly emerging in dance, music and (dramatic) poetry, he does not encourage us to suppose that he thinks of any one of them functioning in isolation from at least one other. Aristotle's 'in-what' is the physical stuff in which the action is embodied and assumes form – e.g. for music, patterned sound, and for painting, patterned colour-and-line-in-space. We know too little about Aristotle's view about the work of art as 'mediating' between (say) poet and reader to use the word 'medium' confidently. What we do know is that Aristotle has a very strong sense of physical actuality. Since he seems to have been the first to attempt a classification of the arts according to the physical materials they use, the choice of a correct term for "in-what" is important.

Subject (of-what). 'Object' is unsatisfactory because (*a*) it tends to imply that the model imposes a predictable or desirable form upon the work of art, as is sometimes naively assumed to be the case for painting; (*b*) it may be mistaken for 'aim' and become so confused

three respects: for they do their *mimesis*[7] (*a*) in different matter (in-what), (*b*) on different subjects (of-what), and (*c*) by different methods (how).[8]

with Aristotle's teleological principle that the starting-point comes to
look like the 'end'. 'Subject' presents no difficulty or deflection: we
commonly speak of the 'subject' of a book, play, picture, or poem
meaning in the most general way 'what it is about' and implicitly
what it starts from.

    Method (how). The usual word 'mode' (as in 'narrative mode',
'dramatic mode') is not altogether satisfactory; even though it means
'manner' or 'way', it easily indicates a static classification into which
individual works may fall. 'Method' places the initiative in the maker
and helps us to concentrate on the work as in process of making or
acting – which is consonant with Aristotle's emphasis throughout the
Poetics. The word 'method' is familiar enough in twentieth-century
critical analysis of prose fiction, drama, and poetry.

9   *Schēma* can also mean the posture of an actor or dancer, and the
    structural 'diagram' of a play – 'plot' in the refined sense Aristotle
    uses consistently later in the *Poetics.*

10 Aristotle's word is 'habit' or 'routine'. Coleridge once referred to
    Southey's verse as "cold-blooded carpentry," but that is probably
    stronger than Aristotle intended. The word 'imaginatively' is
    anachronistic, but I cannot think of a better.

11 'Sound' will not do here. *Phōnē* is specifically the human voice – "the
    most mimetic of the human faculties" (*Rhet* 1404ª21).

12 *Harmonia* – the due fitting-together of musical sounds. For Greek
    music this applies horizontally (melodically), not vertically (in
    'chords') as implied by classical Western use. There is a good article
    on Greek music in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary.*

13 Else, in his *Argument*, agreed with Vahlen in taking this passage for
    an afterthought of Aristotle's; it certainly disrupts the run of the sen-
    tence. In his *Translation* he omits it from the text as spurious –
    which is the way it is represented here.

14 Somebody has introduced the word "epic" into the text here, proba-
    bly from an explanatory gloss; but it is obviously wrong and is
    marked as spurious by Kassel. When the phrase on dancing (*a*) is not
    allowed to interrupt the sentence, the contrast in the sentence clear-
    ly establishes itself: it is between 'bare' instrumental music (without
    song) and the 'bare' verbal art that uses language without instrumen-
    tal accompaniment – "an art that happens so far to have no name."
    The "nameless art" is not what we should call 'lyrical poetry', but
    prose by itself and verse without music.

15 Whatever *miktēn rhapsōdian* means, Chaeremon's *Centaur* (which has
    disappeared except for five iambic lines) was a drama, perhaps a
    closet drama, possibly a tragedy but more probably a satyr-play. Yet a
    rhapsody is normally a portion of epic of a length that can be given
    at one performance. Chaeremon seems to have been a contempo-

Differentiation by Matter

§ 3   You know how some people make likenesses of all kinds
of things by turning them into colours and shapes[9] – some
imaginatively and some [merely] by formula[10] – and how
other people do their *mimesis* with the voice;[11] well, in the
same way, the arts we are thinking of all do their *mimesis* with
rhythm, speech, and melody[12], but using speech and melody
either separately or mixed together. For example, flute-play-
25   ing, lyre-playing, and any other [instrumental] arts of this sort
– like playing the panpipes – use only melody and rhythm;[a]
while the other [verbal art][b] – an art that happens so far to
have no name* – uses only prose [speeches] and [unaccom-
1447[b]8   panied] verses, and when verses, either mixed or of only one
kind.

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§ 3A   *[*A discursive note by Aristotle:*] [Speaking of lack of suit-
10   able terms,] we haven't in fact even got a common term to
cover the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and the Socratic
dialogues; and again, if somebody should do his work in trime-
ters, elegiacs, or some other such verse-form [we have no
name for it] – except of course that people get into the habit
of attaching the word 'poet' to the verse-form, and speak of
15   'elegiac poets' and 'epic poets' – not because they are entitled
to be called poets for the quality of their *mimesis* but because
as practitioners they are lumped together according to the
verse-form they write in. And if a man puts together some
medical or scientific work in verse, people usually call him a
poet; and yet Homer and Empedocles have nothing in com-
mon except their use of verse, and properly speaking the one
should be called a poet, and the other not a poet but a science-
20   writer – and the same would apply even if he used a combi-
nation of all the verse-forms (as Chaeremon did in his *Cen-
taur*[c]).

a and the dancer's art uses rhythms alone, without melody, for it is
through their rhythmic figures that dancers represent characters,
feelings, and actions.[13]

b epic[14]

c *Centaur* a mixed epic work[15] – but he [Chaeremon] is entitled to
be called a poet.

rary of Aristotle. Aristotle's point about Chaeremon is not that he
was not a poet but that he used a mixture of all the metres.

16 It is not clear why Aristotle here shifts from the *rhythmos, logos, harmo-
nia* of §3 to *rhythmos, melos, metron*. The change may be gratuitous,
but it may suggest an attempt at a less general specification for the
last two terms. *Metron* is used again in §10.

17 *Nomos*, originally a tune, applied especially to a type of melody
invented by Terpander as a setting for texts from epic poets. Later
(as here) the word is used of a choral composition constructed
astrophically (cf. Lucas on 47^a13).

18 Literally "the representors represent, the 'imitators' 'imitate'." Since
Aristotle is now clearly speaking of the art-in-words with or without
musical accompaniment – in our current sense, the poetic art –
"poets" is an acceptable translation. It will become clear later that in
drama it is the actors, not the poet, who do the *mimesis*; but for Aris-
totle the separation would not be a marked one since down to
Sophocles' time the poet was principal actor and producer and
inventor of the choric dances – a many-sided *mimete*. (See Lucas on
dancers, 47^a28, and actors, 62^a10.)

19 Implicitly "men of action in action." "Men acting" is closest to the
Greek words but that might seem to point to the actors on the stage.
"Men of action" are those who are morally dynamic; in action they
do not merely disclose their character but shape and crystallize it.
Aristotle never uses the verb *prattein* alone for acting on the stage
(see Lucas, 63n); it is worth noticing that he will soon concentrate
on the cognate noun *praxis* as moral and *formative* action.

20 The fundamental principle of Aristotle's theory of character develop-
ment is that *we become what we do*, that our actions crystallize into
character – which is reason enough to reject as spurious (as Gude-
man does) the phrase at *a*. The distinction serious/mean, which
emerges as the basic twofold division in Aristotle's scheme, is com-
prehensively moral, embracing political, social, and aesthetic dimen-
sions as well as personal behaviour. *Spoudaios* (superior, morally seri-
ous and strong) is an exalted but very substantial term; (cf. the use
of *chrēstos* and *epieikes* (capable, reasonable) in §§53, 53A below). It
stands for the aristocratic flair for action and the heroic virtues of
excellence, moral gravity, courage, decision, endurance. *Phaulos*
(mean, trivial, no-account) is not devoid of a hint of squalor.

21 *Éthē* (characters) here refers, not to the characters-in-the-play, but to
kinds of disposition – the whole set of a person as determined and
fixed in and by action. The verb in the last phrase of Greek is "fol-
low"; Aristotle clearly wants us to understand that the two categories
of character – serious and mean – are all-inclusive: hence the gloss
"as effect from cause" (suggested by Lucas).

§ 4   For these arts, then, let this be our division [according to matter]. There are however some arts that use all the 'mat-
25 ters' we have been discussing – rhythm, song, and verse:[16] for example, the composing of dithyrambs and nomes,[17] and the arts of tragedy and comedy. But these differ again, in as much as the first group [i.e. dithyrambs and nomes] uses all the 'matters' at the same time [i.e. words sung by a chorus that dances], the other [i.e. tragedy and comedy] uses them intermittently [i.e. dialogue versus words and rhythm (though occasionally an actor sings – 52^b18), chorus, music, and dancing].

§ 5   These then are the differentiations of the [poietic] arts
29 [in respect of the matter] in which poets do their *mimesis*.

Differentiation by Subject

1448ᵃ § 6   Since poets take their *mimesis* from[18] men in action,[19] and   2
since these [models] will necessarily be either [morally] serious or mean[20] (because [men's] dispositions almost always follow only these [two kinds] [as effect from cause][21ᵃ]) they represent men that are either better or worse than the [aristo-

a for all men differ in goodness and badness of character

22 Lucas points out that *hekath' hēmas* (with us or amongst us) is equiva-
    lent to *tōn nun* (people now) at the end of §7 which in turn may be
    an echo of Homer's *hoioi nun brotoi eisin* (like mortals are now).
    These two phrases, and the words *toioutous* and *homoious* (like [us])
    in *b* and *c* are innocent of any notion of the "average common man";
    Aristotle would probably have considered such a person *phaulos* –
    'mean'. It is tempting in our democratic days to expect a category
    for the ordinary or common person, but that happens not to be Aris-
    totle's position. The two interpolations *b* and *c* not only confuse the
    clarity of Aristotle's twofold scheme of serious/mean; they are also
    out of Aristotelean character. Neither Kassel nor Lucas recognises
    these as spurious, but there is nothing elsewhere in the *Poetics* to
    reinforce a tripartite scheme with 'the common man' as a middle
    term. (See n21 above.)
23 Nicochares may be the comic poet of that name who was contempo-
    rary with Aristophanes. If the title *Deiliad* is correct (for the work is
    lost) the work – presumably an epic – would be to do with cowardice.
24 Else regards this illustration from Homer, Hegemon, and Nicochares
    – even when the spurious interpolation *b* about Cleophon is
    removed – as "suspicious but not proved spurious." As we shall see,
    Aristotle thought that Homer was the author of the *Margites* and so
    saw him as the primogenitor of comedy as well as tragedy – of *phau-
    los*-drama as well as of *spoudaios*-drama.
25 Timotheus represents the serious strain, Philoxenus the grotesque.
26 The sentence that follows (1448^{a}20–24) is one of the most difficult
    in the *Poetics*.
27 Else suggests for the last phrase a substantially different reading that
    would translate: "and then at times bringing on some dramatic char-
    acter"; but there is no manuscript support for this and the emenda-
    tion is not noted by Kassel. Else's objection to the canonical text is
    that, with the clear echo of Plato *Rep* 392D–394D, *mimesis* would
    here mean 'impersonation' – a notion not totally absent from Aristo-
    tle's mind but in general an exclusive meaning that he systematically
    rejects in the *Poetics*. Homer's projective *mimesis* in an epic figure
    does not necessarily imply impersonation, but rather the same dra-
    matic projection that the poet achieves in drama; the poet then
    becomes not an impersonator but an actor. Plato distinguished
    between narrative and dramatic methods (though he never used the
    word *dramatikos* – that word was coined by Aristotle), and noticed a
    "mixed method in which the poet from time to time impersonated
    one of the figures in the narrative."

5   cratic] norm amongst us[22a] just as the painters do – for Polyg-
    notus used to paint the better kind of people, and Pauson the
    worse sort.[b] And it is clear that each of the [poietic] arts we
    have been considering will also differentiate itself by taking [as
    models] subjects that differ in this [moral] sense. Actually this
10 differentiation occurs in[c] flute-playing and lyre-music, and in
    prose dialogues and unaccompanied verses: Homer, for
    example, deals with the better sort of men[d] while Hegemon of
    Thasos (the first maker of parodies) and Nicochares (the
    author of the *Deiliad*[23]) dealt with the worse sort.[24] The same
15 holds for dithyrambs and nomes: for you can represent the
    Cyclops as Timotheus did or Philoxenus.[25] And tragedy stands
    in the same relation of difference to comedy; for the one [i.e.
    comedy] tends to take as subjects men worse [than the gener-
    al run], and the other [i.e. tragedy] takes men better than we
    are.

Differentiation by Method

    § 7   Yet a third differentiation of these arts occurs in the *way*   3
20 each [kind of subject – serious or mean] is handled.[26] For it
    is possible to deal with the same matter and using the same
    subject [but using different methods]: (*a*) by narrating at
    times and then at times becoming somebody different,[27] the
    way Homer works [i.e. composes], or by one and the same per-
    son [speaking] with no change in point of view or of

---

a or also men of much the same [average] sort
b and Dionysius [represented] people like us
c dancing and
d Cleophon men like us

28 Literally "without shifting aim." I have chosen a term current in criti-
   cism of prose fiction as a hint that Aristotle might have refined this
   classification if he could have studied the development of European
   prose fiction.

29 The 'representors'? – but the word is a present participle. Aristotle
   holds that the poet properly is impersonal and 'lost' in the *mimesis*.
   In drama it is the actors acting, not the poet (unless he is one of the
   actors), who do the *mimesis*.

30 Bywater and Else find a three-fold division in this sentence, corre-
   sponding to Plato's three categories which were also traditional with
   grammarians and rhetoricians: narrative, dramatic, and mixed.
   Most editors now prefer a two-fold division into (*a*) narrative, [i] the
   poet narrating (like Homer) sometimes in his own person, some-
   times through another figure, [ii] the poet narrating continuously;
   (*b*) dramatic, the *mimoumenoi* acting and apparently initiating the
   action throughout. Else notes that in the 'mixed' method the poet
   and his 'actors' are rivals for the [epic] stage. The point of interest,
   however, is that in the 'mixed mode' the poet alternates between
   narrative and dramatic *method*; the impetus is narrative but there are
   genuinely dramatic interludes in which the poet acts in his own per-
   son, or lets his characters speak (as they do in true drama) as though
   in their own right. And this happens to endorse the two-fold divi-
   sion. Plato, assigning to *mimesis* a rather simple and forthright mean-
   ing (without which he could hardly have banished poetry from his
   Republic), sees the mixed form as a 'mode' and the poet's part in it
   as impersonation. The difference between Plato and Aristotle here
   turns not on the question about a two-fold or three-fold division, but
   upon the difference in their meanings of *mimesis*, Aristotle's being
   the more allusive and complex. (See also §9 n3.) For this reason it
   is necessary to insist that Aristotle is talking about a *method*, the way
   the poet works, and not about a *mode*, a manner that the work can be
   seen to have fallen into.

31 Literally "the *mimesis* is in these three differences." The process of
   differentiation is somehow a process of progressive self-specification
   or self-finding.

32 This is the only reference to Aristophanes in the *Poetics*, and there is
   only one other reference to him in the whole works of Aristotle (*Rhet*
   1405^{b}30). Aristotle did not admire the "obscene abuse" (*EN*
   1128^{a}22) of Old Comedy.

33 *Prattontas kai drōntas*, from *prattein* and *dran*, here and in the next
   sentence are nearly synonymous – 'doing' or 'acting'. *Prattein* is the
   usual word (and for the important connexion with *praxis* see §6 n19)
   but for Aristotle *dran*, with its cognate *drama*, is a key word. Here

method;[28] or (*b*) by all the people who are doing the mimesis[29] taking part in the action and working in it.[30]*

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25   § 7A   * [*a digressive note by Aristotle*:] As we said at the begin-
ning, the *mimesis* differentiates itself in these three ways:[31] in
matter, subject, and method. So in one sense [i.e. according
to subject] Sophocles would be the same sort of poet as
Homer because both deal with serious men; but in another
[i.e. according to method] Sophocles would be the same sort
of poet as Aristophanes[32] because both deal with men acting
and doing.[33] And that's why some people claim that dramas
are called 'dramas' – because they deal with men acting (or
30   doing). <And that in fact is the ground for the Dorians' claim
to [priority in] both tragedy and comedy for the Megarians
here [i.e. in old Greece] claim that comedy originated in the

dran provides a modulating link with the argument that follows, in which the radical meaning of *drama* is established. For Aristotle's unusual use of the word *drama* and the probability that he coined the words *dramatikos* and *dramatopoiein*, see Else, *Argument*, 107–8.

34 Early 6th century BC ?

35 This argument is questionable and is therefore treated by Else as spurious. The same argument is presented by some later writers, but no authority other than this gloss appears to be claimed in support of it.

36 The parenthesis in pointed brackets may have been written separately from the rest of the note: see Else, *Argument*, 117–23.

37 The correct derivation of *kōmōidia* is *kōmos* (revel, carousel), as Aristotle is evidently aware. There was, however, a "widespread tendency in later antiquity to derive *kōmōidia* from *kōme* (village)" (Else, *Argument*, 120–1).

38 The argument for the distinctively Dorian use of *dran* is weak; but Aristotle is not hostile to the Dorian Claim, and anyway the word *drama* had special importance for him (see n33 above). For Else's claim that this passage of "comfortable prolixity" was added by Aristotle, perhaps with some internal addition, see *Argument*, 103-23.

39 Although this sentence is firmly linked to the next sentence by the enclitics *men ... de*, I have taken it as the last sentence of Part I, as the traditional chapter-division does.

PART II

1 Literally "Two causes seem to have produced (brought into being) the poietic art as a whole." I have altered the structure of the sentence in order to prepare for the syntactically involute sentence that follows.

2 Aristotle's account of the original of *poiētikē* is not so much a 'history' drawn deductively from the available evidence as a 'theory' which will provide a starting-point for what is to follow. The verb that opens this section – *eoikasi* – makes this clear: "it seems likely, it stands to reason."

3 Aristotle's argument here is general and common-sensical, and he is using the common-sense meaning of *mimesis* as 'imitation' that Plato used and that can never be entirely separated from the word. In the introductory sections and later, Aristotle keeps *mimeisthai* and its cognates flexible and does not ossify *mimesis* by a verbal or technical definition. The change here to the common-sense meaning is therefore noticeable, but there is no reason to limit the definition of his sophisticated usage to the limited sense of this passage. For an excel-

35   time of their democracy,[34] and so do the Megarians in Sicily;[a]
      and some of those in the Peloponnese claim tragedy, and
      cite in evidence [the derivation of] certain words [i.e. 'come-
      dy', and 'drama'].>[36] For they say that they call their outlying
      villages *kōmai*, whereas the Athenians call them *dēmoi*, and
      argue that 'comedians' were so called not because of their
      'reveling' (*kōmazein*) but because, driven out of the city in con-
1448[b] tempt, they roamed from one village (*kōmē*) to another;[37] and
      that they [normally] use the word drān for 'acting' (or
      'doing') whereas the Athenians use *prattein*.[38]

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      § 8   So much then for the differentiae of *mimesis*, what they
      are and how many there are.[39]

PART II   A THEORY OF THE ORIGINS OF THE
                    POIETIC ART

Natural Origins

      § 9   As for the origin of the poietic art altogether, it would   **4**
5   seem that two causes account for it,[1] both of them deep-root-
      ed in the very nature of man.[2] To imitate is, even from child-
      hood, part of man's nature (and man is different from the
      other animals in that he is extremely imitative and makes his
10   first steps in learning through imitation);[3] and so is the plea-
      sure we all take in copies of things – as we can tell from expe-
      rience, for there are things that we find painful to look at in
      real life – misshapen animals, for example, or corpses – and
20   yet we take pleasure in looking at the most accurate images
      of them.* Since [the flair for] imitation is natural to us and

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      § 9A   *[*a gloss by Aristotle.*] The reason for this is that learning
      is a very great pleasure, not just to philosophers, but in exact-
15   ly the same way to any ordinary person even though he has
      only a slender stake in learning. That is why people enjoy see-
      ing the images: when they look at them they find they are
      learning by working out what each thing is, when they say "so

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      a for the poet Epicharmus was from there, much earlier than
        Chionides and Magnes[35]

lent account of the history of the meanings of *mimesis*, see Lucas, Appendix I.

4   Lucas suggests that the 'images' (*eikones*) are painted or unpainted sculptures, freizes, figured pottery, and the like, with mythological themes; the delight arises from working out correct identifications of the figures and motifs. Else argues that the *eikones* here are detailed biological drawings of a kind that might be used for demonstration in a lecture; the delight then arises from making a correct classification. My translation follows Lucas's conjecture.

5   This sentence trails off lamely. Yet this is as near as Aristotle gets to recognizing what we should call aesthetic pleasure. It is noticeable that although Aristotle several times draws illustrations and even   · explanations from painting he is not much concerned directly with the visual arts, perhaps because painting was not yet a highly developed art, perhaps because he was convinced of the primacy of the verbal arts.

6   Aristotle introduces his second point – the sense of melody and rhythm – in a subordinate part of a complex sentence, almost casually. This suggests that he may have had in mind the much fuller treatment of melody and rhythm in Plato *Laws* 653C ff (see Else, *Argument*, 133 n32).

7   This now accounts for the three 'matters' of Part I – melody, rhythm, and speech (logos); but 'speech' is represented here, as in §4, by *metron* (verse).

8   The Greek word is *poiēsis* which, in view of §1 n1, I refrain from translating as 'poetry'.

9   A sentence of Aristotle's text, traditionally placed here, raises serious problems of interpretation. Else has shown that the argument is clarified and the sentence rendered meaningful by moving it to the beginning of §11 (where I print it in pointed brackets).

10 Literally "according to what was fitting, as a matter of propriety."

11 *Margites*, a burlesque epic in hexameters irregularly mixed with iambics, is no longer ascribed to Homer. Aristotle thought it was Homer's (see also *EN* 1141ᵃ14) and a comment by Eustratius shows that others shared the view. The ascription, reinforced by Aristotle's great admiration for Homer, is important to Aristotle's theory: it allows him to see Homer as the father of both tragedy and comedy.

12 The evolutionary connexion between Homer's epics and tragedy was widely recognised but Aristotle was probably the first to draw the corresponding connexion between the *Margites* and comedy.

that's what it is."[4] [We know this is so] because if we happen
not to have [actually] seen the thing before, it is not the fact
of its being a replica that will produce the pleasure, but its
workmanship or colour or something of that sort.[5]

_____

[the sense of] melody and rhythm too,[6] (and clearly the vari-
ous verses are [simply] pieces of rhythms),[7] people who were
especially endowed in these [two] senses, from the [very]
beginning evolved the poietic process[8] out of their improvisa-
tions, making their way little by little.

The Growth of Dramatic Poetry

§ 10   And the poietic process split apart [into two directions],
25   depending on the sort of characters proper to it. For the
graver sort of people took to representing noble actions and
the actions of superior people, while the lighter sort repre-
sented the actions of no-account people and in the early
stages, in the way that others were making hymns and enco-
mia, made [poems of] abuse.[9] In these [primitive pieces] the
iambic metre turned up to suit the need[10] (and that in fact is
why the term 'iambic' is used nowadays: it was in this verse
that people used to 'iambize' – lampoon – each other); and so
it came about that some of the old-time poets became makers
of heroic verses and some of them makers of iambic verses.
28   § 11   <Now [it is true that] we have not a single poem of this
kind by anybody before Homer, yet it seems likely that there
were many [who made them]; but starting with Homer there
are such poems, for example his own *Margites* and others of
35   that kind.[11]> In the same way that Homer was eminently a
poet in heroic themes (for he alone not only wrote well but
also made *dramatic* representations), so also he was the first to
sketch out the resources of comedy by writing *dramatically*
[and] in a way that was not abusive but funny; for his *Margites*
1449[a]   bears the same relation to comedy that his *Iliad* bears to
tragedy.[12] Once comedy and tragedy had been brought to
light, the people who were pressing towards each of the two
types of composition [i.e. serious and mean] became, accord-
ing to the inherent nature of each, makers of comedy instead
5   of iambics one lot of them, and the others makers of tragedy
instead of epics, because these [two] forms (*schēmata*) were
grander and more admirable than the others [i.e. 'iambic' and
epic].

13 *Ta thēatra* – both the audience and the limiting format of perfor-
mance, particularly the conditions of the dramatic festivals.

14 Referring perhaps forward to §§65–69 (cf. 49^{a}15 in Lucas).

15 The *exarchōn* was both leader of the chorus and part of it, at times
improvising to a traditional refrain somewhat in the manner of a
shantyman. He is the first step towards the detached and indepen-
dent actor – not that the *exarchōn* evolved into an actor simply, but
into the poet-as-actor.

16 The manuscripts read *phaulika* – a non-word. All recent editors
emend to *phallika.* I am tempted to wonder whether *phaulika* could
mean 'knockabout performance', seeing a direct link with the cen-
tral word *phaulos.* The corruption of the text, the fact that the word
occurs in what may be later jottings of Aristotle's (see n17 below)
and that *phallika* does not appear elsewhere in the *Poetics,* deprive
the passage of substance as possible basis for a theory.

17 Else, in his *Argument,* followed Montmollin in taking this parenthesis
as a later note by Aristotle, but restored it to the text in his *Transla-
tion* – as I have done, despite the syntactical awkwardness of the
phrase.

18 *Physis* – a key term – 'nature' of '[process of] growth'. For a recon-
struction of the changes, and for a group of Aristotelian texts in sup-
pose and amplification of the scheme of the progressive self-finding
of art-forms, see Else, 160–1 and Lucas, 81–2. In view of the question
Aristotle puts aside at the beginning of §12, this statement means
simply that tragedy had discovered its 'integral nature', not that it
was no longer capable of further refinement and internal develop-
ment.

19 The text of this passage is elliptical, possibly corrupt; the passage
may be spurious, and if genuine is no better than jottings. I follow
Else in withdrawing it from the text. Lucas remarks that this passage
and what follows to the end of §12 "contains some of the most indi-
gestible matter in the *Poetics.*" Although it is now probably impossi-
ble to trace in any detail the history of the changes Aristotle is dis-
cussing, they must have occurred earlier than Aeschylus and certain-
ly earlier than Sophocles. As long as it was thought that the satyr-
plays had a chorus of goat-men (*tragoi*) and that *tragōidia* meant
'song of goats', there seemed some possibility that there was an evo-
lutionary connexion between the satyr-play and tragedy; but "it is
now generally believed that the satyrs of the theatre were horse-
rather than goat-men" (See Lucas, 84–5). What is said in this passage
is not readily consistent with the parenthesis earlier in §12; in any
case, Aristotle is not primarily concerned with the *origin* of tragedy
(whether or not from *tragoi*) but with the way it *developed* from

The Growth of Tragedy

§ 12   Now to examine the question whether or not even
tragedy fulfills our basic principles well enough – something to
be judged both in itself and with relation to the state of the
10   theatre[13] – that is matter for another discussion.[14] In any case,
tragedy did come out of improvisational beginnings (and com-
edy [too]: the first [i.e. tragedy] growing out of those who
used to 'lead off' the dithyramb,[15] the second [i.e. comedy]
out of those who led the phallic songs[16] that still persist in
many of our cities even now);[17] and it grew little by little by
developing each of its aspects as they came to light; and when
15   it had gone through many changes tragedy stopped when it
had realised (attained) its integral nature.[18] [In this way:] on
the one hand Aeschylus first increased the company of actors
from one to two, reduced the choric element, and assigned
the leading function to dialogue;[a] and on the other hand the
verses changed from [trochaic] tetrameter to iambic [trime-
ter]. For to begin with, they used [trochaic] tetrameter
because the form was [a sort of] satyr-play – that is, pretty
much just dancing; but when [spoken] dialogue had come in,
the nature [of the form itself] came upon the verse that
25   belonged to it; for of [all] the verses the best to speak to is the
iambic: notice how in speaking to each other we use plenty of
iambic verses, but we seldom speak hexameters and when we
do we move out of the colloquial pattern of speech.
§ 13   As for the numerous incidents, however, and the other
30   separate things that are said to have been brought to bear [in
early tragedy], let us take it that we have discussed them; for it
would certainly be an enormous job to go through [all that] in
detail.

a and Sophocles [introduced] three [actors] and scene-painting.
   Also, [he brought in] greatness. [Tragedy, arising] out of silly (?
   short) stories and ludicrous diction because it evolved out of satyr-
   play, found its serious character rather late on.[19]

singing and dancing to find its fulfilment in spoken dialogue and in the verses most appropriate to dramatic speech.

20 Referring to a previous line of argument rather than a particular statement. The association of comedy with *phauloi* was noticed in both §6 and §10.

21 *Aischros* (ugly) has moral as well as aesthetic implications, as does *kalos* (beautiful) and *kakos* (bad). "Ugliness is as incompatible with *aretē* (virtue) as is baseness" (Lucas).

22 The word for 'mistake' here is *hamartēma*, which naturally enough recalls the *hamartia* ('big mistake') of tragedy. But Aristotle seems not to use the word *hamartia* – as we are tempted to do – in any technical sense. Plato (*Philebus* 48A–50B), in distinguishing the various kinds of 'mixed pleasures', notices how "spectators of a tragedy sometimes feel pleasure and weep at once" and that "when we laugh at what is ridiculous in our friends, we are mixing pleasure this time with malice"; and he makes it clear that what we find ridiculous in others is their deficiency in self-knowledge. The main discussion of the tragic mistake comes in §§39–44. Whereas the tragic mistake leads to pain, wounding, blinding, death, the comic mistake threatens pain or injury, but does not bring it about. In this respect comedy is distinct from tragedy certainly; but there is a further important difference. Mature comedy is distinct from its 'iambic' forebears in that it does not involve us in envy, malice, and anger. *To geloion* (the laughable, funny) is the *telos* of comedy as pity-and-fear is the *telos* of tragedy.

23 It has been known since 1903 that comedy was introduced at the Dionysia in 486 BC.

24 But see §12 above, for the number of actors in tragedy. Most Attic comedies can be performed with three actors; very rarely four or five are needed.

25 This is evidently a marginal gloss. For Epicharmus cf. §7A above. Of Phormis (or more probably Phormos) nothing else in known. Aristotle does not imply that comedy had its very first beginnings in Sicily, but that in Sicily (by Epicharmus and Phormos) comedy first discovered its integral nature by achieving a dramatic presentation with universal or general reference, thereby detaching comedy from the violent realism and personal malice of primitive 'iambic'. The scheme *archē* (tentative beginnings) – *auxēsis* (growth and increase) – *telos* (fulfilment) is the same for comedy as for tragedy, Aristotle argues, even though the historical information for the *archē* is lost to us.

26 *Katholou* (universally, generally) is explained in §31 below. Else translates this as "along general lines" and "of a general nature"; Grube

The Growth of Comedy

§ 14   Comedy is, as we said,[20] a *mimesis* of inferior persons –   5
not however that it has to do with the whole [range of] wicked-
ness but with what is funny – an aspect of ugliness.[21] A *funny*
thing, to be precise, is a clumsy mistake that is not painful or
destructive:[22] [or] to take an obvious example, the comic
mask is ugly and grotesque but not repulsive or painful.
§ 15   Now, there is some record of the changes that tragedy
went through and of the people who brought them about, but
1449[b]   because comedy was not taken seriously at first, it is only after
it had already to some extent taken shape that there is record
of people called 'comic poets'. (In fact the *archōn* did not
'give a chorus' to comic poets until quite late on;[23] before that
the chorus were volunteers.) Indeed [comedy] already had
certain distinctive features by the time 'comic' poets came
along and were recorded. Who supplied masks or prologues
5   or companies of actors[24] is not known. But the constructing
of plots[a] came from Sicily originally, and in Athens it was
Crates who first abandoned the 'iambic' and began to make
stories – that is, plots – in a typical way.[26]

a Epicharmus and Phormis[25]

writes "of general interest." But since Aristotle later says that the construction of plots is the supreme job of the poet, and that plots must be conceived as *schemata* rather than as stories, the word 'typical' seems most appropriate to the *katholou* of comedy, corresponding to the 'universal' reference that tragedy seeks.

PART III

1   Except for the first part of the opening sentence, the 'historical' account is now finished. Aristotle proceeds to discuss poetry kind by kind: serious poetry in the rest of the *Poetics* as we now have it, 'light' poetry in the second (lost) book. Tragedy, being the 'highest' and most comprehensive serious kind, includes the lower kind, epic, within it. The likenesses between tragedy and epic are contained in the discussion of tragedy (Ch. 6–22), the differences in the discussion of epic (Ch. 23–24), and a combined view of tragedy and epic closes the truncated *Poetics* (Ch. 26). In Aristotle's scheme tragedy and comedy do not remain at a correlative level: under the overarching dichotomy *spoudaios/phaulos* both tragedy and epic lie on the *spoudaios* side, 'iambic' and comedy on the *phaulos* side, inferior to *spoudaios*.

2   The text is disturbed here. Both Lucas and Grube read *ēkolouthēsen* (went along with) as historic present (but Else does not), and read *akolouthein* not as 'follow' (its usual meaning) but as 'resemble', in contrast to *diapharein* (differ). But Aristotle may still be thinking of his theory of origins and not of tragedy and epic as genres. Homer, the supreme epic poet, played a crucial role (in Aristotle's view) in differentiating tragedy and comedy (see §11); but although he wrote *dramatically* he did not write *drama*. Tragedy, by becoming specifically dramatic, outgrew the epic that had adumbrated the true tragic 'nature', and comedy outgrew 'iambic'. Epic 'followed along with' tragedy up to the point where tragedy became distinctively drama.

3   The meaning of *mēkos* here is a serious question. Elsewhere (§§50, 61, 66), *mēkos* can simply mean 'length'. In this context three possibilities occur: (1) physical length, number of lines etc.; (2) time taken to read or perform; (3) time encompassed by the action. (1) and (2) are clearly related, but this cannot be what Aristotle had in mind if he meant what he says at the end of the paragraph. A tragedy could not be expected to be of the same physical length as an epic; the oldest tragedies we know of are short, and there may have been some shorter; they can never have been "unlimited in time" (*aoristos tōi chronōi*) in the sense of being 'as long as you like'. Only (3) will do; and since the physical length of an epic is not a

PART III   SPOUDAIOS (SERIOUS)

Epic compared with Tragedy[1]

§ 16   Well now, as for epic: it went along with tragedy as far
10   as being a *mimesis* of serious persons in verse;[2] but in having
its verse unmixed [with song] and in being a narrative –
that's where they differ. Furthermore, in the matter of length
[of action][3] – tragedy does its best to run in a single daylight

direct function of its total time-span, the right *mēkos* of tragedy is
whatever secures the tense concentration of action peculiar to
tragedy. See also §30. This is the only conceivable reference to
'unity of time' in the *Poetics*; 'unity of place' was Castelvetro's contri-
bution.

4   For a detailed discussion of this vexed passage, see Else, *Argument*,
207–17, and Lucas, 93–4. The phrase in Greek is "a single circuit of
the sun" – that is, either twelve or twenty-four hours. Else settles for
"a single daylight period" on the grounds that "only war, love, wine,
or thievery, or a combination of them, kept classical Greeks awake
after sundown, and three of these pursuits were not heroic enough
for tragedy." Tragedy seeks to focus itself within a definite span of
human concentration, and mature tragedies in fact show remarkably
little variation in physical length.

5   This last sentence – three sentences in the Greek – may be a later
addition of Aristotle's: it anticipates, without introduction, the analy-
sis of 'parts' or 'aspects' that is to follow in §18. The 'parts' that epic
lacks are *melos* (song) and *opsis* (visuals): see §59A. The sense of the
last phrase is repeated in §66.

6   The word *mimētikē* here has much the same status as *poiētikē*, the
word *technē* being implied but not present. *Technē* however is not
what we call 'art' or 'fine art'. It is closer to 'craft' – or 'art' as in 'art
of making or reasoning'. The Greek phrase for what we call 'logic' is
hē logikē [*technē*]. There is no evidence that Aristotle thought of a
'mimetic' *art* and – by implication therefore – of a 'non-mimetic' *art*.
Examples of non-mimetic [arts] would be history, logic, and science.

7   Epic is discussed again in §§58–67. Comedy was presumably treated
at length and in detail in the lost second book.

8   That is, the definition emerging from the 'historical' account of its
self-finding and self-definition – as Else interprets the passage. I can-
not agree with Lucas that this reading is "not readily intelligible,"
nor can I see that it is not clearly contained in the Greek.

9   *Praxis* (action) is a key-word that Aristotle uses consistently not
only in the *Poetics* but also in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics*:
not just any action, but an action arising from choice, directed
towards and implying a *telos*, and to which other subsidiary move-
ments may be attached without deflecting it. It is therefore by its
nature complete, purposeful, self-contained, end-implying (*teleios*).
Also, *proairesis* (choice) is one of the paramount capacities of the
spoudaios. The tragic action (*praxis*) is a psychic trajectory, declaring
itself as arising from choice and bringing itself to a *telos*. The open-
ing phrase then defines the word *praxis* by recalling Aristotle's stan-
dard assumptions for the word; it is not a narrowing down of the
general notion of 'action'.

period or to show little variation [in length],⁴ while epic has
no fixed limit in time and in this [respect] differs [from
15   tragedy]; although to begin with they used to do this as much
in tragedies as in epics.*

§ 16A *Some parts [or 'aspects'] are common to both
[forms], some are peculiar to tragedy; so anybody who can tell
good tragedies from bad knows about epics too, because all
the 'parts' of epic are present in tragedy, but not all the'parts'
20   of tragedy are present in epic.⁵

A. Tragedy (and Epic)

A General Definition of Tragedy

§ 17   Well then, we shall speak later about the mime-   **6**
tic [art]⁶ that works in hexameters [i.e. epic], and about
comedy;⁷ but let us [now] discuss tragedy, picking up the
emergent [self-]definition of its integral nature from what has
already been said.⁸ A tragedy, then, is a *mimesis* of an action⁹ –
25   that is, it is [morally] serious and purposeful, having magni-

10 Literally "having *megethos* (size, bulk)"; but *megethos* is now equivalent
   to *mēkos* in §16 – the length that secures the required concentration
   within a frame of time (cf. §27).
11 *Hēdusmenos* means "giving a pleasant flavour, spiced"; Else translates
   "language which has been made sensuously attractive." Aristotle says
   what the 'spicings' are at the end of the paragraph. The word
   'heightened' (cf. 'reinforced' of wines) implies a special use of lan-
   guage not alien to the nature of language; but this suggestion of con-
   centration within the resources of language may be un-Aristotelian
   since Aristotle, like Plato, could think of style as something *added to*
   the matter of language.
12 See §3 where Aristotle makes clear that he thinks of the play falling
   into two alternating 'parts' – dialogue and song. Lucas, however,
   supplies *hēdusmata* (spices) rather than 'sections' – that is, rhythm
   and rhythm & melody; but that comes to much the same thing, an
   alternation between verse-dialogue and choral song.
13 The reason for this editorial gloss is explained in the notes to
   §§41–43.
14 It seems more than likely that the phrase in pointed brackets has
   been projected forward as an afterthought from §§41–44. The last
   phrase reads literally "the purification of such *pathēmata* (emotions,
   sufferings)." In §37 Aristotle implicitly defines *pathēmata* (commonly
   the plural of *pathos*) by saying that "The *pathos* is an act which is
   destructive to life or painful." I follow Else in expanding *pathēmata* in
   accordance with the later definition, in view of the extreme emphasis
   that has in the past been placed on the interpretation of this (possi-
   bly interpolated) passage. See also Lucas, 97–8 and Appendix III.
15 A spurious gloss athetized by Kassel, apparently based on §4.
16 Aristotle does not withdraw the *mimesis* into either the poet or his
   text: the *actors* do the *mimesis*; the poet does his *mimesis through* the
   actors, often himself being one of them. We shall see in §66 that the
   play can achieve its *telos* in a reading (but that may imply an 'imagi-
   native' or 'empathic' performance?).
17 Aristotle is still considering tragedy as a special instance of *poiētikē* –
   the art of making [tragedy]. *Meros* (here translated 'aspect') means a
   'part' as distinct from the whole. I prefer to avoid the static implica-
   tions of 'part' and 'element', and use 'aspect' for the line-of-
   approach or the special consideration of the poet from time to time.
   The temptation in this passage is to think of the 'parts' of *a* tragedy
   or of tragedies generally, as though they were constituent 'pieces'
   that together make up the whole. (Sometimes, however, I translate
   meros as 'part'.)
18 In defiance of the more usual translator's word 'spectacle', I follow

tude[10]; uttered in heightened language[11] and [using] each of
its resources [i.e. dialogue and song] separately in the various
sections [of the play][12], [the action presented] by people act-
ing rather than by narration; <bringing about through [a
process of] pity and fear [in the events enacted][13] the purifi-
cation of those destructive or painful acts.>[14] (By "heightened
language" I mean utterance that has rhythm and melody;[a] and
30   by "each of its resources separately" I mean that some sections
[of the play] are carried through in verses alone and others
again in [choric] song.)

The Six Aspects of Tragedy-making

§ 18   Since the actors do the *mimesis* by acting it [out],[16] a first
aspect[17] of tragedy[-making] would have to be arrangements

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[a] and song[15]

Bywater in construing *opsis* as what it actually means – the 'look', what the eye sees. *Opsis* applies primarily to the masks and costumes (often splendid), the stage itself being inflexible and usually unornamented (but cf. §12); and this (as Aristotle later points out) is a matter for the mask-maker and costume-designer rather than for the poet. (Neither *melopoiia* nor *opsis* is discussed at all in the later full-dress treatment of the six 'aspects'.) But a few spectacular stage-effects in Attic theatre were memorable enough to be recorded (see Lucas, 99) and the *deus ex machina* must always have been quite a sight; so I render *opsis* with the uncouth word 'visuals' when the context allows.

19 *Melopoiia* is the making of the whole song – words *and* music. 'Diction' will not do for *lexis* because Aristotle has already distinguished between 'song' and 'speech' – that is, between words with music and words without music – and he holds the distinction consistently.

20 The emphasis in this section is not on the tragic *poet* but on men acting, and on *drama* (doing, acting: see §7A) as the acting out by actors. The interlocking of *mimeisthai* and *prattein* through this section underlines the processive and dynamic nature of *mimesis*.

21 In §6 the men-of-action-acting had moral quality that distinguished them as serious or trivial ('heroic' or mean) – 'character' in the moral and political, but not in the theatrical, sense. Here Aristotle first discriminates the activity of *dramatic* persons or figures into 'character' and 'thought' – a distinction that turns out to be fundamental to his position. *Dianoia* (thought) is the capacity for making deliberate choices and taking decisions: see later in this paragraph. "On a man's *dianoia* depends his power to assess a situation, on his *ēthos* (character) his reactions to it" (Lucas).

22 A spurious interpolation athetized by Kassel.

23 Not any action whatsoever, but the action specific to tragedy disclosing itself as 'serious': see §19 n21.

24 This parenthesis is expanded in §23. Though *pragmata* means 'deeds', 'acts', I follow Else in translating 'events' so that the word 'action' may be reserved for the special word *praxis*. Again, Aristotle now uses *muthos* (plot) consistently as the schema of action distilled from the *logos* (story), thereby desynonymizing *logos/muthos* and removing *muthos* from the common sense of 'story'. The *muthos* – "the soul of tragedy" in §25 – when acted out is the *mimesis* of the action.

25 If *opsis* and *melopoiia* are ignored (because Aristotle does not discuss them further and regards them as marginal or almost inessential) the order is pretty much the order of importance as Aristotle now proceeds to discuss them in detail.

for the 'look' (*opsis*)[18] [of the actors and stage]; then song-
making (*melopoiia*) and the [devising of] speech (*lexis*), for
these are the 'matter' (in-what) the *mimesis* is done in. By
35 'speech' I mean [simply] putting together the [non-lyrical]
verses, and by 'song-making' just what the word implies per-
fectly clearly.[19]

§ 19   Since [tragedy] is a *mimesis* of an action, and [since it]
is acted out by certain people acting,[20] and these must neces-
sarily have a certain kind of character and cast of mind[21] (for
1450ᵃ it is in the light of these that we say that their actions are of a
certain kind,[a] and according to [their actions] they all succeed
or fail):[23] and [since] the plot is the *mimesis* of the action (for
5 I use 'plot' in this sense – the putting together of the events)[24]
and the 'characters' are what allow us to ascribe certain quali-
ties to the actors, and the 'thought' is the places where [the
actors] by speaking prove some point or declare wisdom –
because of all this, the [number of] 'aspects' to tragedy[-mak-
ing] as a whole that account for tragedy as a distinct [species]
10 must be [exactly] six: plot and characters and speech and
thought and 'visuals' and song-making.[25] The 'matter' (in-
what) of *mimesis*, you see, accounts for two 'aspects', the

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a There are two natural causes of actions – thought and character[22]

26 The distribution according to the three differentiae (§2) is: 'matter'
    (in-what) – *lexis, melopoiia;* 'subject' (of-what) – plot, character,
    thought; 'method' (how) – *opsis* (visuals).

27 I follow Else in omitting here a vexed phrase of five words – a notori-
    ous crux. The text is corrupt and resists clear translation. Else also
    omits the rest of the sentence in his *Translation* but not in his *Argu-
    ment.*

28 A spurious interpolation athetized by Kassel.

29 There is no precise English equivalent for *telos* (end). It implies both
    the decisive issue for tragedy-making and – for the tragedy itself –
    the condition in which the tragedy simply is an action. The word
    'end', canonised by long use in Aristotelean translation, is probably
    the least misleading. Here *telos* is the dominant aim for the poet.

30 The persons in tragedy have to be "persons of a certain kind" other-
    wise they cannot initiate a *praxis;* so *aēthēs* cannot mean "without
    characters," but rather (as Bywater pointed out) "deficient in charac-
    ter." Aristotle's argument is: if the delineation of character were the
    main thing in tragedy, an *aēthēs* tragedy would be inconceivable; but
    there are in fact many such tragedies in our own time; therefore
    character is not the main thing. The relation between 'character'
    (*ēthos*) and 'thought' (*dianoia*) is that 'character' is revealed in
    action, 'thought' in speech. 'Thought' shows in speech what deliber-
    ate moral choice is being taken and so indirectly reveals the charac-
    ter of the person making the choice.

31 "The business of tragedy" (*tragōidias ergon*) is to produce a *mimesis* of
    an action. The phrase occurs again in §38, and in §39 is shown to
    include the inducing of a certain emotional effect.

32 I follow Castelvetro (and Else) in transposing this sentence from
    §24. The transposition was accepted by practically all nineteenth
    century editors; Vahlen argued convincingly for it until, in deference
    to manuscript Parisinus 1741, he changed his mind and has carried
    almost all recent editors with him. See Else, *Argument,* 260–1.

33 This paragraph has the air of a later addition, the last sentence per-

method (how) one, and the subject (of-what) three; and beyond these [six] there are no more.[26]

The Primacy of Plot over Character

§ 20   These then are the shapings ('forms') they [? i.e. the poets] take into account;[a] and actually the whole thing [i.e. the art of making tragedy] consists simply of visuals and character and plot and speech and song, and thought too of course. But the most important of these is the putting together (? structuring) of the events. For tragedy is a *mimesis* not of men [simply] but of actions – that is, of life.[b] That's how it is that they certainly do not act in order to present their characters: they embrace their characters for the sake of the actions [they are to do]. And so the [course of] events – the plot – is the *end* of tragedy, and the end is what matters most of all.[29]

§ 21   Furthermore, you can't have a tragedy without an action (*praxis*), but you can have it without [clearly defined] characters.[30] In fact the tragedies of most of the new [dramatists] are deficient in character (*aēthēs*), and generally speaking there are plenty of poets [who work] that way – like Zeuxis as compared with Polygnotus if we're thinking of painters, Polygnotus [being] a good delineator of character, but Zeuxis' painting showing no [feeling for] character at all.*

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§ 21A   *[*an addition by Aristotle.*] Again, if a person strings together character-revealing speeches, well-turned in style and argument, he will not [by that means] carry out what it was agreed was the business of tragedy[31]; actually that is much more likely to happen in the tragedy that uses these things more sparingly, as long as it has a plot, a structured action. <It's very much as it is with painting: if you smothered a canvas with the most beautiful colours it wouldn't be as good as a clean piece of drawing on a white ground.>[32] And anyway in

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a not a few of them [? actors] so to speak[?][27]

b a happiness; and the end [of tragedy] is a certain action, not a quality. The persons [in the drama] are of certain kinds because of their characters, but they are happy or unhappy because of their actions.[28]

haps being a separate addition. "Reversals and recognitions" may well have been current critical terms, but Aristotle does not (otherwise) mention them until his discussion in §35.

34 In Aristotle's logic *sēmeion*(a sign) means a probable argument in proof of a conclusion, as distinct from a demonstrative or certain proof.

35 *Archē* in the historical section (Pt. II) means 'beginning' or 'origin'. Anaximander first used it to mean 'first principle', and Aristotle so uses it in the *Metaphysics*. Here in the light of Aristotle's dynamic conception of the self-discovery of tragedy, the word carries both meanings – source and shaping principle. The word 'first' happens to fall in with the hierarchic sequence: second (characters), third (thought), fourth (*lexis*).

36 An especially emphatic statement. The soul is the 'form' of the person, in Aristotle's terms, and prior to the body. The parallel for plot in relation to tragedy is to be taken in exactly this sense.

37 The sentence transposed to 1450^a39 above occurs here in the vulgate text.

38 I take this phrase as exactly parallel to the opening of §6, reading the genitive (*tōn prattontōn*) as objective, and with Lucas take it that the *mimesis* is of the prime agents rather than the actors. Else, who in the *Argument* read the phrase as "a *mimesis* of [i.e. done by] the actors," finally translates: "the imitation ... imitates the persons primarily for the sake of their action."

39 With Montmollin and Else, I take this for an intrusive marginal note; but it doesn't make very much difference.

40 The old-fashioned 'political' way placed ethics in the context of the *polis* (city) and so was ethical and gnomic, as several passages elsewhere in Aristotle make clear. The new 'rhetorical' way – intellectual, generalizing, and applying deliberate skill – may already have been less reputable in Aristotle's view. It pointed towards the recently cultivated skill in verbal manipulation "for the sake of the argument" that the Sophists were to turn into sophistry. Else, in his translation, paraphrases the two adverbs as "like men and citizens" and "like conscious speech-makers."

41 This phrase is bracketed by Kassel as spurious; it seems to be a doublet anticipating the phrase immediately following.

42 A difficult section. Aristotle gives first a general definition of 'thought' as the ability to say what is proper to the action. Then he adds, without preparation or transition, two sub-varieties: (*a*) thought-speeches that reveal 'character' because they clarify moral choice; (*b*) thought-speeches that are argument-discussions about particular details in the plot or along general lines. The shift is from

tragedy what engages our feelings most powerfully is the ele-
50ᵃ35   ments of the plot – the reversals and recognitions.[33]

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§ 22   Again, there is a sign too[34] in the way people who are
trying their hand at [poetic] making can get things right in
their dialogue and characters before they can put together the
[line of] events; and this is the case with almost all the earliest
poets.

1450ᵇ3   § 23   So it follows that the first principle[35] of tragedy – the
soul, in fact[36] – is the plot, and second to that the characters:[37]
it is a *mimesis* of an *action* (*praxis*) and therefore particularly [a
mimesis] of men-of-action in action.[38]

§ 24   Third [in order of importance] is the 'thought': that
is, being able to set forth what is contained [in the action] and
what is proper to it: and this[a] is a function of either the 'polit-
ical' or the 'rhetorical' art (for the ancient poets used to make
their characters speak in the 'political' way and modern poets
make them speak 'rhetorically'[40]). Now 'character' (on the
one hand) is [shown in the sort of speech that] clearly reveals
the choice [that is being made] and shows what its [moral]

10   quality is[b] – so 'character' is not involved in the speeches in
which it is not clear whether the speaker is [deliberately] mak-
ing or avoiding a choice; but 'thought' (on the other hand) [is
involved in the speeches] in which the actors prove or dis-
prove something or declare some general position.[42]

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a in the case of the speeches[39]

b in which it is not clear whether he is making or avoiding a
   choice.[41]

statement of intention implying 'character' to the thought-speeches the actors actually utter, either revealing 'character' or not. *Proairesis* is a considered decision taken by a person of mature judgment after due deliberation (Lucas).

43 Marked by Kassel as questionable; perhaps a marginal note.

44 Bywater (and he is not alone in this) renders this phrase as "the same thing with verse and prose." But one of Aristotle's concerns (in Ch. 22 and in the *Rhetoric*) is to draw a sharp distinction between the diction of poetry and the diction of prose. (For the *Rhetoric* references, see Else, *Argument*, 275 n192.) In §18 Aristotle had distinguished between *lexis* of 'verses' and *melos* as words-and-music; here *lexis* refers primarily to 'speeches'. So whether we think of 'verses' or 'speeches', *lexis* means the same – utterance in words. In either case, *lexis* is an 'aspect' of tragedy-making, not a component part of the finished/written tragedy. *Lexis* sometimes means 'style', but here it means the ordering of words into meaningful patterns. Lyric is omitted from Aristotle's scheme.

45 In §17 Aristotle had spoken of the "heightened language" (*hēdusmenon logon*) of tragedy; here he uses the noun *hēdusmata* (seasonings).

46 Aristotle's word is *skeuopoios* – a maker of masks and costumes, not a stage-manager or maker of scenery.

47 This section, continuing to the end of §33, deals with the general properties of the well-constructed plot. The discussion moves from aesthetic/artistic qualities to substantive/philosophical considerations.

48 Particularly the six 'aspects' discussed in §§18–26, but presumably also the five opening chapters (§§1–17).

49 For the distinction between *praxis* (action) and *pragmata* (events), see §19 n24.

50 See §17 n10.

51 The proposition about 'beginning', 'middle', and 'end' invokes *internal* necessity: the dramatist is bound by *tragic* necessity, not by the plausible sequence of biographical or historical events. The formula "likelihood or necessity" which Aristotle introduces a little later reinforces this position and provides the dynamic inner law of poetry. See also §28 n53. In this phrase Aristotle uses the singular *meson*; in §58 he uses the plural *mesa* in referring to epic. Nevertheless, Aristotle is aware that a tragedy can have identifiable parts as a *meson*. (See §30 n68). The word for 'end' here is not *telos* (as in §20) but *teleutē* – termination, conclusion.

52 *To kalon* – 'beauty', as later in this same sentence. But in order to

§ 25   Fourth is the 'wording' (*lexis*):[a] meaning, as I said
before, that *lexis* is expression in words – and this holds true
for both 'verses' and 'speeches'.[44]

§ 26   [b]Of the remaining ['aspects' of tragedy] song-making is
the most important of the sensory resources ('seasonings');[45]
and *opsis* ('visuals') affects our feelings all right, but it is the
least artistic element and least integral to the poietic [art]; for
the effect of tragedy holds even if there is no public perfor-
mance and no actors, and anyway the execution of the 'visuals'
20   is of more concern to the maker of masks and costumes[46]
than to the poet.

Plot-making   1. How to Make a Plot Dramatic[47]

[Simple] Plot: Its General Characteristics

§ 27   Now that we have made these distinctions,[48] let us next   7
discuss what the structuring of the events[49] should be like,
since this is the first and most important thing in [the art of]
25   tragedy. We have already agreed that tragedy is a *mimesis* of an
action – purposeful and whole – and of magnitude[50] (for it is
possible for a thing to be whole and yet not have magnitude).
A 'whole' is [something] that has a beginning, a middle and
an end.[51] A 'beginning' is what does not necessarily have to
follow anything else, but after which something naturally is or
happens; an 'end', the other way round, is what naturally is
30   after something else, either of necessity or usually, but has
nothing after it; a 'middle' is what comes after something else
and has something else after it. Well-constructed plots, there-
fore, must neither begin at an accidental starting-point nor
come to an accidental conclusion, but must have followed the
principles we have given.

a of the speeches[43]
b Fifth

preclude the assumption of a Platonic Idea, I have made it particular in the first instance.

53 The *pragma* (here 'artefact') is anything made up out of parts by human agency. Aristotle uses it for the tragedy-as-construct just below (51ᵃ10, translated 'work'). Aristotle here uses *zōion* (living thing) unfiguratively; but the word is a favourite of his and it recalls Plato's use of the word to illuminate the nature of a work of litera- ture (*Phaedrus* 264C): "Well, there is one point at least which I think you will admit, namely that any discourse ought to be constructed like a living creature, with its own body, as it were; it must not lack either head or feet; it must have a middle and extremities so com- posed as to suit each other and the whole work."

54 Unity, the theme throughout this section, is here first mentioned and in a very direct form – *to hen*, 'oneness'.

55 The word is now *mēkos* (length), instead of *megethos* (size): this takes us back to §16. "*Mēkos* in plots corresponds to *megethos* in objects" (Lucas).

56 Is it didactic irony on Aristotle's part that produces this statement on the unity and order of the tragic plot in a sentence that is anything but *eusunopton* (easily discernible, something that can be well taken in at a single glance)?

57 Else omits this phrase.

58 The text is corrupt (Kassel), and the phrase is omitted by Else. There is no record that this was ever the case. It is noticeable that Aristotle does not say whether the external limitations of the contests and the audience's range of attention interfered with the 'ideal' limit given at the end of this paragraph.

59 Aristotle shows no general preference for the tragedy that ends cata- strophically over the tragedy that ends in prosperity.

60 In the second part of this sentence Aristotle uses *praxeis* and *praxis* (where the translation has 'actions' and 'action') in a neutral sense not identical with the special sense established in §17.

61 The Greek word is *hamartanein* – make a mistake, go wrong, miss the mark, fail in one's purpose.

62 Aristotle chooses extreme examples: there were three cycles of Hera- cles legends, and the Theseus legend attracted to itself much materi- al that did not belong to it.

63 Although the discussion is now concentrated on tragedy, the exam- ples of false unity are taken from epic – not because epic is sub- sumed with tragedy under *spoudaios* (morally serious), but because epic offers outstanding examples of failure to control size (*megethos*): cf. §16.

64 The wounding of Parnassus *is* in the *Odyssey* (XIX 392–466). It may

Size and Unity

§ 28   Moreover, since something beautiful,[52] whether [it be]
35   a living thing or a complete artefact,[53] must not only have an
orderly structure but must also have a size that is not arbitrary
– for beauty is a matter of size as well as of order, which is why
an extremely small creature does not get to be beautiful
(because you get a close [enough] look [at it] just at the
moment that it goes out of focus), and neither can a very huge
1451[a]   one [be beautiful] (because then a [single] view is not possi-
ble at all – its unity[54] and wholeness elude your vision) as
would be the case if a creature were a thousand miles [long] –
so, in the same way that with [inanimate] bodies and living
creatures [a just] size is needed ([a size] that can be well taken
5   in at a single glance), so also with plots: they must have a
length[55] such as can readily be held in memory.[56] The limit of
length is established in one sense by [the conditions of] the
[dramatic] contexts and [the scope] of [human] perception;[a]
for if they had to hold a hundred tragedies in contest [? in one
day], they would be competing by the water-clock.[b] But the
10   limit [set] by the very nature of the work itself [is this]: in
every case, the longer [the action], provided it is perfectly
clear [as a whole], the more beautiful [it is] in terms of size;
or, to give a general definition, the largest size in which, with
things happening according to likelihood or necessity and in
[due] order, a change can occur from bad fortune to good, or
15   from good to bad[59] – that is a just limit to the size [of a
tragedy].
§ 29   But a plot doesn't get to be unified, as some people   *8*
think, [simply] by being about one person: a lot of things – an
infinite number of things – happen to one person, and a good
number of these have nothing to do with a single [action
(*praxis*)]; and in the same way, there are many of one person's
actions from which no single unified action arises.[60] That's
20   obviously why all those poets were adrift[61] who have made a
Heracleïd or a *Theseïd* and poems of that kind:[62] they think that
because Heracles was one person the plot will also lie single to
hand.[63] But Homer, different in this as in [everything] else,
seems to have seen this perfectly clearly too, thanks either to

a not of the art[57]
b as is said to have been the case in other times[58]

be argued that, being an episode and not an integral part of the
main story, it does not damage the unity of the whole. In any case,
Aristotle's point is that Homer was *making* the structured plot of an
Odyssey, not simply transcribing 'from the life'. For two attempts to
unravel the "undeniable clumsiness" of Aristotle's argument here,
see Else, *Argument*, 298–9 and Lucas, 116–17.

65 Cf. §17 n6.
66 "Wholeness guarantees that no part is missing which should be
    there; unity, that nothing is there which belongs somewhere else"
    (Else).
67 The two Greek verbs are medical or surgical metaphors – "disjointed
    and dislocated." Bywater pointed out that they are as much Platonic
    as medical.
68 For the possibility that some tragedies might have separable parts
    added to the central action like the episodes of an epic, see also §40.
69 See also §3A.
70 I have not taken the famous phrase *philosophōteron kai spoudaioteron* at
    face value. 'Philosophical' could mean – to Aristotle as to Coleridge
    – "the affectionate pursuit of wisdom" as much as it could mean the
    exercise of logical and abstractive technique; 'speculative' is a
    reminder of this possibility. *Spoudaioteron* might mean 'more
    demanding, more exacting in the moral sphere', but it is better here
    to keep a connexion with Aristotle's special use of *spoudaios* (which I
    have consistently rendered '[morally] serious'). The historian deals
    with *ta genomena* (what actually happened in its actual sequence); the
    (tragic) poet deals with *praxeis* – actions of the sort that only a
    spoudaios is capable of initiating (see §17 and n9) and that only a
    spoudaios poet is capable of tracing out. In this section, as throughout
    the *Poetics*, Aristotle is talking about *poiesis* or *poiētikē* (the art or
    process of *making* [poetry]), not *poiemata* (poems as things-made,
    products of the poietic art). It is clear that not all poems are "more
    philosophical and more serious" than all histories. Aristotle in any
    case pays little attention to history as an art (a non-mimetic art); and
    it is noticeable that although he several times refers to Herodotus,
    he refers to Thucydides – who might well be thought to deserve the
    name of *philosophos* and *spoudaios* in his tracing of *praxeis* – only once
    and then in a submerged quotation (*Ath. Pol.* 33.2). Aristotle's
    point, by implication, is that the historian observes and records, the
    poet discerns and constructs, *making* his construction even when the
    materials are 'actual' (see §33).
71 Whether or not Aristotle actually believed that any genuine tragedy
    could be composed in this way, his concern is to place the primary

25   art or nature; for in making an *Odyssey* he did not take in every
last thing that happened to [Odysseus] – how he was wound-
ed on Parnassus, for example, and how he pretended to go
mad at the muster, neither of which [events], merely by hap-
pening, made it in any way necessary or likely that the other
would:[64] instead, he constructed the *Odyssey* around a single
action of the kind we are talking about, and [made] the *Iliad*
the same way.

30   § 30   It must be, then, that just as in the other mimetic
[arts][65] the unified *mimesis* is [the *mimesis*] of a single thing, so
also the [tragic] plot, being a *mimesis* of an action, [must] also
be [a *mimesis*] of an action [that is] unified and whole in
itself,[66] and the constituent events [must] be so put together
that if one of them is shifted or taken away, the whole [struc-
35   ture] is disrupted and thrown out of kilter.[67] For a part that
clearly does nothing by being present or left out is no *part* of
the whole.[68]

The Subject of Poetry: The Universal

§ 31   It is clear too from what has been said that the poet's   **9**
business is to tell not what is happening but the sort of things
that might [be expected to] happen – things that, according
to likelihood and necessity, *can* [happen]. For the distinction
51^b   between the historian and the poet is not whether they give
their accounts in verse or prose (for it would be possible for
Herodotus's work to be put into verses and it would be no less
a kind of history in verse than [it is] without verses).[69] [No,]
the [real] difference is this: that the one [i.e. the historian]
5   tells what happened, the other [i.e., the poet] [tells] the sort
of things that *can* happen. That's why in fact poetry is a more
speculative and more 'serious' business than history:[70] for
poetry deals more with universals, history with particulars.
'Universals' means the sort of things that according to likeli-
hood and necessity a certain kind of person tends to say or do,
10   and this is what poetry aims at, putting in names afterwards;[71]

emphasis on the plot as an abstract dynamic schema (rather than a
sequence of events drawn from life), and later to show the integral
relation of characters to plot.

72 Lucas suggests that Alcibiades is chosen because he was a notoriously
idiosyncratic person.

73 According to Aristotle's 'history' of the evolution of comedy, the
'iambic' error of thinking that a single person as subject would unify
a play was corrected by the later comedians who constructed a true
plot and then "put in the names." Does Aristotle imply that tragedi-
ans had not yet made this important and fundamental discovery?

74 That is, the names of 'real' people that, according to legend, took
part in the action. Aristotle seems to accept – or at least does not
examine narrowly – the historical status of legendary figures like
Achilles and Heracles.

75 The *Antheus* is not preserved; it must have been an extreme case
(Agathon's reputation was for daring innovation), and is the only evi-
dence that there was even one Greek tragedy with an entirely invent-
ed plot. We know, from the works of Sophocles alone, that the great
tragedians altered the details of the traditional legends with consid-
erable freedom. This section shows that Aristotle was well aware of
this important fact; and in developing his argument he must have
been appealing to what every acute witness of tragedy in his time
knew well.

76 For pleasure as the end of tragedy, see §41.

77 Reading, with Else, *homoiōs* for *homōs* (equally).

78 Aristotle had rejected in §3A the notion of the poet as a mere
'maker of verses'.

79 "The paradox inherent in Aristotle's concept of *mimesis* rises to a cli-
max in the last sentence ... What the poet 'makes' ... is not the actu-
ality of events but their logical structure, their meaning ... A poet,
then, is an *imitator* in so far as he is a *maker*, viz. of plots" (Else). The
poet, in using *ta genomena* (actual events), uses them selectively, tak-
ing those that can be constructed into a *praxis* – the specific kind of
action the *mimesis* of which alone can produce a tragedy. Una Leigh-
Fermor admirably describes the *praxis* as "a brief, shapely series of
related deeds such as sometimes emerges from the chaos of events in
daily life or historical record" (quoted by Lucas, 124). Aristotle is
very much aware that, whatever role 'invention' plays in the poietic
art, selection and arrangement are of paramount importance.

80 These are not discussed until §35. This paragraph is uncomfortably
placed here, but it is difficult to find a better location for it. It could
continue logically after §30, but that separates it even farther from

'particulars' [means] what Alcibiades [for example] [actually] did or what happened to him.[72]

§ 32   Now in comedy this [procedure] has clarified itself in the course of time; for the comic poets put their plot together in terms of likelihood, and only then put in arbitrary names[73] – not the way the [old] 'iambic' poets used to build [their work] around a particular person. But in tragedy they [still] cling to the actual names [that go with the stories].[74] And the reason [is] that what is possible is [certainly] plausible: we are not actually certain that what has not yet happened *is* possible, but [we *are* certain] that what has happened obviously *is* possible, for [(we may say)] it doesn't happen if it can't happen. Nevertheless it is the case that even among the tragedies [known to us] there are some in which one or two well-known names occur and the others are made up; but in some [tragedies] [there are] no [familiar names] at all – for example, Agathon's *Antheus*;[75] there the events are made up as well as the names, and [yet] it gives no less pleasure [on that account].[76] So poets shouldn't try desperately to cling to the traditional stories that our tragedies have been about. Actually it's ridiculous to go hunting along this line: the well-known names are familiar to [only] a few people, yet [tragedy] gives pleasure to everybody in the same way[77] [wherever the names come from].

The Poet as Maker Even of the Actual

§ 33   So it is clear on these grounds that the [tragic] poet must be a maker of his plots rather than [merely a maker] of verses,[78] particularly if he is [considered] a maker in terms of his *mimesis* and if what he represents is actions (*praxeis*). And indeed even if it turns out that he is making [his work] out of *actual* events, he is none the less a poet – a maker: for nothing prevents some actual events from being the sort of things that might probably happen[a], and in such a case he is the *maker* of those events.[79]*

§ 33A   * [Among] simple plots and actions[80] the episodic ones are the worst. By an 'episodic' plot I mean one in which

a and could happen

§35 and raises a question whether the whole first part of Ch. 9 is a
later addition by Aristotle. Else says that in its position in the vulgate
text it is "unexpected rather than illogical." Since it is not integrally
related to its context I have treated it as a note.

81 If the traditional chapter-numbering were to make sense, Ch. 10
should begin here rather than at the beginning of §35. The discus-
sion in Ch. 7–9 (§§27–33) has been – as Vahlen pointed out – "how
the plot should be constructed in order to be *dramatic*; now the ques-
tion is how it should be shaped in order to be *tragic*" (Else).

82 A new theme which provides an emotional centre where previously
only structural and tactical matters have been in question. It appears
without preparation, unless we take it that the phrase in the general
definition of tragedy (§17) is not a projected afterthought. 'Pity and
terror' provides a large part of the subject of the next five chapters.
For a general discussion of 'pity and fear' (and *catharsis*), see Lucas,
Appendix II.

83 *Di' allēla* – "through (*or* because of) each other." Else translates: "log-
ically, one following from the other." This is one of the key phrases
in the *Poetics* (Else). The 'unexpectedness' is matched and satisfied
by the "inner logic" of the events.

84 *Thaumaston*, and in the following parenthesis *thaumasiōtata*: wonder-
ful, marvellous, inspiring wonder – not 'surprising'. Neither 'wonder-
ful' nor 'marvellous' any longer conveys readily what, on the face of
it, it means – 'productive of wonder'. In the parenthesis I have writ-
ten 'striking'. The phrase for 'unexpectedly' is *para tēn doxan* – con-
trary to expectation.

85 Else translates "while he was attending a festival"; but *theōrounti* could
also mean "while he was looking at it." The verbatim repetition of
Plutarch's version of the story of Mitys in *De mirabilibus auscultatio-
nibus* (fourth or fifth century AD) is "almost the only clear reference
to the *Poetics* in ancient literature" (Lucas).

86 *Kallious* (more beautiful), which Else translates "artistically superior."
I have preferred to accentuate the emotional centre of pity and ter-
ror which Aristotle has suddenly singled out in the first clause of this
cumulative sentence.

87 *Peplēgmenoi* – plaited, twined, involute; for which the Latin *complexus*
is the equivalent. To restore the metaphorical force now lost from
the English word 'complex', the word 'intricate' might be used, and
for *haploi*, 'plain' rather than 'simple'.

88 *Euthus* – 'immediately', which can also mean 'by their own nature' –
or, from the form they assume as they come into existence.

89 That is, unified, without the intrusion of inessential matter.

35   the episodes [come] one after the other without regard to
      likelihood or necessity. This sort of thing is done by bad poets
      because of themselves [i.e. they are bad poets], and by good
      poets because of the actors; for when they are making compe-
      tition-pieces and drawing out the plot beyond what it can
1452^a stand, they are forced to twist the continuity time and time
      again.

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2   How to Make a Tragedy *Tragic*

[Complex] Plot: General Description[81]

§ 34   Now since the [tragic] *mimesis* is not only [a *mimesis*] of
a full-grown action but also of [events] terrifying and pitiful,[82]
and since the events are especially^a [so] when they happen
5   unexpectedly and [yet] out of [inner] logic[83] – for that way
they will be more wonderful[84] than if [they happened] all by
themselves or [(as we say)] by chance (since even among
chance happenings those seem to be the most striking that
appear to have happened by design: as when the statue of
Mitys in Argos killed the man who was responsible for his
death, by falling on him when he was at a festival,[85] because it
10   doesn't seem likely that such things happen by *chance*); there-
fore plots of that kind must be more compelling[86].

Simple and Complex Plots

§ 35   Some plots are simple, some complex[87]; and in fact the   *10*
actions of which the plots are *mimeses* fall into these [two]
15   kinds right from the start.[88] I call an action 'simple', if, as it
works out in a continuous[89] and single line according to our

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a and rather (*or* more)

90 See §§29 and 30, which in turn refer back of §§27 and 28. Part of
    the definition of the unity of tragedy was the norm of length in
    §28.
91 *Peripeteia* is sometimes translated 'reversal', sometimes anglicised
    into 'peripety'. I have transliterated the word to remind the reader,
    by the unfamiliarity of the word, that it means a *sudden* reversal of
    fortune or direction, and that (as this context implies) it is a special
    instance of the general 'change (*metabolē*)'.
92 *Knowing* is the root of both Greek *anagnōrisis* and Latin *recognitio*.
    The element of knowing and not-knowing is crucial in Aristotle's
    analysis of tragedy. See also on *hamartia* §39 n123. Later on (e.g.
    in §43) I translate *anagnōrein* as 'realise' when a person not only
    recognises who the afflicted person is but also from that recogni-
    tion understands the implication of his deed – 'realises' (as we say)
    what he has done.
93 Reading, with Else, *hēs hexēs* instead of *ex hēs*.
94 This has not been said before in any obvious way. The most likely
    reference is to the beginning of §34 (52ᵃ4) (Lucas).
95 For the difficulties raised by the references to *Oedipus* and *Lynceus*,
    see Else, 517–22 and Lucas, 129–31.
96 *Philia* is 'love' in the specific sense of the bond implicit in blood
    relationship. *Echthra* is 'hatred' generally, but in this context it is
    also presumably meant to apply particularly within the compass of
    blood relationship.
97 Literally "it is possible to happen with respect to." The *unexpected-
    ness* of the change affects the audience certainly; but the actor's
    realisation of the change and his emotional reaction to it are essen-
    tial to the 'recognition'.
98 This is the one place in the *Poetics* where Aristotle writes "pity *or* ter-
    ror." Pity and terror are parallel forms of 'change'; for the distinc-
    tion between them see §39 (53ᵃ5).
99 Literally "of which-like actions tragedy was laid down as a *mimesis*."
100 The emotional power of the tragic recognition, secured through
    the complex Aristotle has so far generally described, lies in the pro-
    tagonist's discovery that he is fatally involved, or in danger of being
    fatally involved, with a blood-relation. The recognition concen-
    trates the full emotional charge on a single event – a change in
    awareness. Both *peripeteia* and recognition – which need not coin-
    cide in time – are principles of concentration and intensification,
    not simply 'structural' elements. Recognition is less integral to plot
    than *peripeteia* is; but for Aristotle it is of the deepest import. Aristo-
    tle, like Plato, saw happiness and unhappiness as modes of know-
    ing. The tragic recognition is an abrupt act of self-knowing.

definition,[90] the change [in fortune] occurs without *peripeteia*[91] or recognition (*anagnōrisis*)[92] and 'complex', if – [the action] being continuous[93] – the change occurs with recognition or *peripeteia* or both. But these things must come from the structure of the plot itself, so that, from what has hap-
20 pened before it turns out that these things would necessarily or probably happen; for it makes a big difference whether things happen *because of* [what has gone before] or [merely] *after*.

Peripeteia and Recognition

§ 36   *Peripeteia* is a [sudden] change [over] of what is being   11
done to the opposite in the way we have said,[94] and – as we have [also just] said – according to likelihood or necessity: as
25 for example in the *Oedipus*, the [messenger] who has come to cheer Oedipus and free him of his fear about his mother, by disclosing who he is [actually] does just the opposite; and in the *Lynceus*, when he [i.e. Lynceus] is led away expecting to be killed, and Danaus follows him expecting to kill him, it turns out from what had happened before that [Danaus] is killed
30 and [Lynceus] is saved.[95] 'Recognition', as indeed the word implies, [is] a change from not-knowing to knowing, in [matters of] love or hatred [within a blood relationship],[96] in people who have been marked out for success or disaster. The finest recognition [is] when it happens at the same time as the *peripeteia*, as occurs in the *Oedipus*. There are of course other [kinds of] recognition too; for it can happen, in the way we
35 said, in cases where inanimate things and accidents are involved,[97] and it is possible [also] to tell whether somebody had done [a certain thing] or not. But one [kind] that is particularly [integral] to the plot, and to the action, is the one we spoke of [just now]; for a recognition and *peripeteia* of that
1452ᵇ kind will involve either pity or terror[98] (and it is of [precisely] such actions that in our definition tragedy is a *mimesis*)[99] because disaster and good fortune will also tend to come about from events of that kind.[100] Now since the recognition is a recognition between persons, there are some [recognitions made] of one person only by the other, when it is [already]
5 clear who the other is; but sometimes both must do the recognising – Iphigeneia, for example, is recognized by Orestes by

101 Ch. 16, ill-placed where it stands by tradition in the text (for it
breaks into a sentence that begins in Ch. 15 and is resumed in Ch.
17), is self-contained and is a later addition. Logically it could
come after Ch.14, where the analysis of 'recognition' would follow
the analysis of *pathos* (as Vahlen suggested). But I agree with Else
that it goes best as a pendant to Ch. 11. In any case it is simply an
account of the techniques of 'recognition', moving from the most
mechanical to the most artistic; no connexion is drawn in Ch. 16
between the technically best 'recognition' and – the concern of Ch.
11 – the emotionally best. The 'kinds' discussed in order are: (1)
by signs and tokens, (2) those contrived by the poet, (3) by recol-
lection, (4) by inference, (5) arising out of the action – the best.

102 In §36.

103 The superlative of *atechnos*, which had been used in the superlative
in §26, is used once again in the positive and once in the compara-
tive in §36A, and in the comparative in §40. Elsewhere I have used
the word 'artistic' to render forms of the adjective *kalos* (beautiful).

104 A birthmark traditionally found on all the *Spartoi* – the "Sown
Men."

105 The sentence here changes direction, reading literally: "as in the
Tyro [the recognition occurs] through the little ark."

106 The Greek simply says "better or worse."

107 Literally "better." The comparative often has the force of "rather
[good]," of which the colloquial "not bad" is taken as approximate-
ly equivalent.

108 Aristotle never uses the term 'hero' in the *Poetics*, and the more
proper term 'protagonist' he uses only once, and then metaphori-
cally (§12: 1449^{a}18). Although many Greek tragedies took their
title from the name of the foremost figure, Aristotle's account of
the 'forms of *pathos*' in §43 turns not upon a single 'hero' but upon
the relation between two people. The term 'hero' did not come
into critical play until the Italian commentators of the sixteenth
century extrapolated from the figures of 'the heroic age', who were
the usual figures of Greek tragedy (see §40A), the term 'hero' as
applying to the foremost figure in a tragedy. Boileau took the term
over from the Italians, and Dryden got it from Boileau, by which
time – if not earlier – it had the air of Aristotelean parentage. See
Lucas, 140.

109 This phrase is repeated in an interpolation to §49 (55^{b}9–11).

her sending the letter, but another recognition is needed for
his [identification] to Iphigeneia.*

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§ 36A   * [*a later note by Aristotle, on Kinds of Recognition*][101]   *16*
What recognition is was explained before;[102] now for the *kinds*
1454^b20   of recognition.
First the least artistic[103] kind, and from poverty [of imagina-
tion] the most common – [the kind] that [works] through
signs [and tokens]. Some of these [signs] are inborn (like
"the lance the Earth-born bear,"[104] or star[-marks] such as
Cracinus [uses] in his *Thyestes*), some are acquired – and of
these some are in the body (scars, for example) and some are
25   external (like the amulets [some people wear] or the [little]
ark in the *Tyro*[105]). It is possible to use these [signs] more or
less effectively[106] (for example, Odysseus was recognised by his
scar in one way by the nurse and in another by the swine-
herds); the ones that are [introduced] to establish an identity
30   and all such [uses] are pretty inartistic, but the ones
[involved] in *peripeteia* (like the one in the bathing scene [in
the *Odyssey*]) are not bad.[107]
Second are the ones made up [deliberately] by the poet and
for that reason inartistic: for example, the way in the *Iphi-
geneia* Orestes was recognised as Orestes – [Iphigeneia is
recognised] by her letter, but [Orestes] himself says what the
35   poet wants, not what the plot [needs]. So this is much like
the mistake already mentioned – he might as well have worn
some [token]. And the same for "the voice of the shuttle" in
Sophocles' *Tereus*.
The third [kind is the one that occurs] through recollec-
1455^a   tion, when a certain feeling [flows from] seeing a certain thing
– like the case in the *Cypriotes* of Dikaigones when [the
'hero'[108]] seeing the picture weeps, or in the story told to Alci-
nous when [Odysseus] hears the lyre-player and remembers
[the war] and bursts into tears – and from this they are recog-
nised.
Fourth [is the kind that] turns on a logical inference. For
5   example, in the *Coephoroi* [it is reasoned out that] "somebody
like me has come; there is nobody like me except Orestes;
therefore *he* has come." And the case of the *Iphigeneia* [cited]
by Polyeidos the sophist: Orestes (he said) would probably
reflect that "My sister was sacrificed and now it is my turn to be
sacrificed."[109] And the one in the *Tydeus* of Theodectus: "I

110 *Pathos*, however, like *peripeteia*, belongs to the simple plot as well as to the complex.

111 The primary sense of this pair of words is "destructive [of life] or painful." I have translated them "murderous or cruel" in order to place emphasis on the quality of the act as experienced by the sufferer in relation to the person who inflicts the *pathos*, rather than simply on the quality of the act 'in itself'.

112 *Pathos* (from *paschein*, 'suffer') primarily means something 'suffered', something that happens to a person – the complement to something done. Yet Aristotle says that a *pathos* is a *praxis*, an 'act'. I find it difficult to agree with Lucas that *pathos* in this short section is not a special term comparable to *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*. The paradoxical term *pathos-as-praxis* seems to imply that the crucial event is to be seen both as suffered and as inflicted. Aristotle's choice of the word *praxis* – which he regularly uses elsewhere of the single overarching tragic action as distinct from the separate *pragmata* (events) of which the *praxis* is composed – suggests further that the *pathos* as an event is both pregnant and determinate, the beginning of a process. *Peripeteia* and 'recognition' heighten and concentrate emotional force: *pathos* is the key event/act that provides substantial foundation and focus for the *peripeteia* and recognition (see also n116). I have therefore rendered *praxis* here as a 'transaction' to indicate the *pathos*-action paradox and to preserve the processive potential of the word *praxis*. Aristotle analyses the tragic quality of various *pathē* in Ch. 14 §§42, 43.

113 The phrase *en tōi phanerōi*, literally "in the visible [sphere]" (that is, 'openly, visibly'), is traditionally translated here as "on stage." The root *phainein* (cause to appear, bring to light, reveal, disclose) naturally claims the notion of presentation to the sense of sight. Else, in the *Argument*, states convincingly that "The real function of the pathos is not to shock the audience by its physical occurrence. It is a *premiss* on which the plot is built," and translates the phrase "in the visible realm"; but in his 1967 translation he returns to the traditional phrase "on stage" – which Lucas considers "the obvious meaning." Lucas's argument that "on stage" is correct because there are several instances of a *pathos* rendered on stage is less than compelling since he admits that "such horrors are rarely shown on the Greek stage." Aristotle is here giving a brief definition; it is unlikely, then, that he could include in his definition an element of rare occurrence unless he drew attention to it as essential though rare. Else, I think, was on the right track in the *Argument*. *Phaneros* is used in the phrase for '*real* property' and ' *hard* cash', i.e. property or money that can be shown to be substantial. I have used the

came looking for my son, and I have come upon my own
10   death." And the one in *The Daughters of Phineus*: when they
see the place, they work it out that it was their destined fate to
die here because they had also been exposed here [as babies].
And there is also a [sub-species] compounded with mistaken
inference [drawn] by the audience, as in *Odysseus the False Mes-
senger* – that he and nobody else [can] bend the bow, and his
saying that he would recognise the bow when he had not [in
15   fact ever] seen it – [this] is the poet's invention, a [planted]
premiss; the fallacy [rests in the fact] that [the poet] had made
this up so that somebody else could make the recognition [by
false inference].

The best recognition of all [is] the one [that comes about]
from the events themselves, when the shock of surprise arises
from likely circumstances, as in Sophocles' *Oedipus*, and in the
20   *Iphigeneia* – naturally she wanted to send the message. For
recognitions of this kind are the only ones [that work] with-
out *invented* signs and amulets. Second [to these] are the ones
[drawn] from inference.

Pathos

§ 37   These then – *peripeteia* and recognition – are two ele-
1452^b10   ments of the [complex] plot; a third [element is] *pathos*.[110]
[Two] of these – *peripeteia* and recognition – have [already]
been discussed. A *pathos* is a murderous or cruel[111] transac-
tion,[112] such as killings – [taken as] real[113] – and atrocious
pain and woundings and all that sort of thing.

phrase "[taken as] real" – 'real' as distinct from 'actual' – to imply that the killing etc. is held in a direct physical and perceptual sense, or as Whitehead would say "in the perceptual mode." The issue does not turn upon whether the *pathos* is actually witnessed or not: however the *pathos* is presented, whether on stage or reported, it must be substantial enough to act as functional centre for "the moral and mental events which transpire as peripety and recognition" (Else). Whatever is held "in the perceptual mode" is – if only momentarily – 'real', whether or not it is actual. The phrase *en tōi phaneroi* points not to the method of presentation but to the quality of apprehension secured in the presentation: in Coleridgean terms it points to the "illusion of reality" that it is the function of imagination to secure. This interpretation incidentally also removes the apparent conflict from Aristotle's statement in §41 that a reader can feel the tragic horror and pity "without [actually] *seeing*" the events. It also gives additional depth to the injunction in §48 (55^a22) – that in putting plots together and fitting them to language "you must above all keep things before your eyes."

114 Referring to §18–19 – the six 'aspects' (*merē*) of tragedy-making; there is a direct verbal echo of the opening of §20. The difficulty in both passages is the collocation of *merē* (parts) and *eidē* (forms, kinds). In both places I take *eidos* to be a shaping principle in the making of tragedy rather than a type or class of tragedy. In §52 (55^b32) – a note – Aristotle uses *eidē* of the four 'kinds' of tragedy corresponding to the four [!] 'aspects' of making; and in §55 (56^a33) *eidē* is a synonym of *merē*. And this reminds us that Aristotle does not use even his own central terms in a consistently quasi-technical manner. In §20, to which Aristotle refers here, he was speaking of the *merē* as the six 'angles of approach' in making tragedy, not as constituent elements out of which *a* tragedy is constructed. To read *eidē* as 'shaping principles' recalls Aristotle's Platonic background and is harmonious with his notion of literary 'kinds' as self-finding and self-determinate.

    I follow Else in taking the rest of Ch. 12 (on the physical sub-divisions of a tragedy) as non-Aristotelean, and print it as Appendix A. Like Ch. 16 (see §36A n101) it breaks into an otherwise coherent sentence.

115 This is implied rather than stated in §36. Aristotle's general premiss is not only that each 'kind' tends to realise its potential but also that the most highly developed form is to be preferred.

116 Literally "must be 'imitative' of terrible and pitiful events" – that is, capable of arousing feelings of terror and pity.

How to Get Terror and Pity through the Structure of Plot

§ 38   The 'aspects' of tragedy[-making] that must be regard-   *12*
15   ed as shaping principles we discussed earlier;[114] what to aim at   *13*
and what to watch out for in putting plots together, and where
30   the [particular] function (*ergon*) of tragedy comes from,
would have to be considered right after what has just been
said.
§ 39   Since, then, the structure of the finest tragedy must be
not simple but complex[115] and [since] this must be a repre-
sentation of terrible and pitiful events[116] (for that is the pecu-

117 For important discussion of 'pity and fear' and of *catharsis* see Else,
    Argument, 221–32, 371–5, 324–5, 436–46 – all but the second of
    which are reprinted in *Tragedy: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed.
    L. Michel and R.B. Sewall (Englewood Cliffs: 1963), 290–5. See
    also Lucas, Appendix II, "Pity, Fear, and *Katharsis*."

118 The word *epieikēs* raises difficulties here and in the rest of §39; cf.
    the similar word *chrēstos* in §45 (54^a17, 19, 20). If *epieikēs* is ren-
    dered 'good' or 'virtuous', as is the case in all translations I have
    seen, and is allowed to become a synonym for *spoudaios*, the defini-
    tion of the *spoudaios* protagonist in (*d*) fails because the *epieikēs* man
    of (*a*) is virtually equivalent. (The position is even more absurd if,
    with Hardison, we read *epieikēs* in the sense of *Nicomachean Ethics*
    1137^b as the "unqualifiedly good" man.) The variety of words used
    here – *epieikēs, mochthēros, ponēros*, but not *spoudaios* or *phaulos* – sug-
    gests that Aristotle is preparing a definition of the tragic protago-
    nist (as maker of the tragic action) less crude than midway between
    the very good and the very bad; his concern in this section is with
    the structure of the plot that induces pity and terror, and he needs
    a more complex criterion of the well-made tragic plot than that it
    has a happy or unhappy ending. For the suggestion that, in 'plac-
    ing' the tragic *spoudaios* in the tragic plot, Aristotle's definition
    involves two pairs of opposed terms rather than a simple opposition
    of very good and very bad, see Excursus Note I. On this basis I
    translate *epieikēs* as 'capable' or 'able', *mochthēros* as 'dissolute' or
    'depraved', and *ponēros* as 'evil'.

119 The feeling naturally aroused by witnessing any unfortunate human
    circumstance. Aristotle, of course, assumes that an audience or
    reader will 'sympathise with' – that is enter vicariously into – the
    human action presented in the play or poem.

120 Literally "structure"; I have used 'scheme' to recall the notion of
    the plot as abstract *schema* given in §31 (41^b10).

121 This interpolated note echoes *Rhetoric* 1385^b13, 19–22.

122 In short, pity and terror will be aroused only if a certain kind of
    change happens to a certain kind of person. Pity and terror, howev-
    er, are not the exclusive preserve of tragedy: they can also occur in
    epic – see e.g. §67 (62^b13).

123 Most modern classical commentators take *hamartia* to be a 'mistake'
    or 'error' – largely, I suppose, because that is what the word means
    ('missing the mark'). The nineteenth century notion of *hamartia* as
    a 'moral flaw', probably reinforced by the New Testament Greek
    meaning, which is 'sin', was encouraged, perhaps unwittingly, by
    Butcher and still persists balefully in non-classical criticism and with
    a few classical commentators. If *hamartia* meant a 'moral flaw', it

liar thing about this kind of *mimesis*)[117], it is clear (*a*) that capa-
35   ble men[118] should not be shown changing from prosperity to
disaster because that is not terrible or pitiful but [simply]
repulsive; and (*b*) dissolute men [should not be shown chang-
ing] from bad fortune to good, because that is the most
untragic thing of all – it has none of the requirements [for
1453[a]   tragic action] because it doesn't engage even 'sympathy'[119] let
alone pity or terror; and again [it is clear] (*c*) that the thor-
oughly evil man should not fall from good fortune into bad,
for such a scheme[120] would arouse 'sympathy' [perhaps] but
not pity or terror (for the one [i.e. pity] is to do with the man
5   brought to disaster undeservedly, the other [i.e. terror] is to
do with [what happens to] men like us)[a] and that way the
result will be neither pitiful nor terrible.[122] (*d*) There is still
the man in among these, though – the sort of man who is not
of outstanding virtue and judgment and who comes upon dis-
10   aster not through wickedness or depravity but because of
some mistake[123] – [one] of those men of great reputation and
prosperity like Oedipus and Thyestes – notable men from that
kind of family.

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a pity for an undeserving man, terror for a man like us[121]

would be an integral part of the character and therefore a pre-
dictable determinant outside the plot. The fact that Aristotle dis-
cusses *hamartia* in this section – the subject of which is clearly not
character but plot – shows that *hamartia* is a functional element in
the structure of plot. (The word appears in only two other passages
of the *Poetics*: §36A (54^{b}35) and Appendix C (60^{b}15, 17).) *Hamar-
tia* is the correlate of 'recognition'. 'Recognition' is the abrupt
change from unknowing to knowing; *hamartia* is the act of igno-
rance, the moment of moral blindness or moral indolence, that
makes the tragic action possible. Else points out (in the course of
an important discussion at pp. 379–85) that tragedy involves not
simply ignorance but ignorance of universals, and that ignorance of
particulars (on the other hand) typically arouses 'sympathetic' pity
and encourages forgiveness. See also Lucas, 143–4, 146, and
Appendix IV.

124 The word here translated "really *must*" – *anankē* ([it is] necessary) –
is strongly emphatic. *Anankē*, in this apparently prescriptive sense, is
found in only four other places in the *Poetics*, all of them key posi-
tions in the argument: to mark the centrality of the *spoudaios/
phaulos* distinction (§§6, 19), to point to 'pity and terror' as the
function of tragedy (§34) and to mark *philia* as the essential bond
in the tragic *pathos* (§42). The weaker injunction *dei* – 'it is needful
that', 'you should', 'you must' – appears three times in §27, once
each in §§28, 33, 35, and occurs eight times in §§38–43; it is even
more insistent in §60–66. All the earlier group – in §§27–43 – fall
within the discussion of plot, and a noticeable proportion of the
second group are related with the structure of plot. Contrary to the
Renaissance (and later) assumption that Aristotle was (as Coleridge
puts it) "the infallible dictator" in the *Poetics*, I take it that his use of
dei is not prescriptive, but a dramatic device in teaching.
    The 'double plot' is discussed later in this paragraph. In §39
(52^{b}31) Aristotle had spoken of 'simple' and 'complex' plots – that
is, the plots that have or do not have *peripeteia* and 'recognition'.
The 'single'/'double' distinction here refers simply to the 'thread'
of the plot.

125 A *big* mistake – a mistake of moral implication, pregnant with disas-
ter.

126 Literally "and what is happening [is] a sign."

127 That is, from the beginnings to Aeschylus.

128 Sophocles and after.

129 For a detailed exploration of these examples, see Else, 391–9; and
cf. Lucas, 145–6. Else concludes that the list "has the closest possi-
ble connection with his prescriptions for the best tragic plot."
Oedipus and Thyestes had been mentioned at the end of §39.

The Well-made Tragic Plot: A Summary

§ 40   So the artistically made [tragic] plot really *must* be sin-
gle, not double as some claim;¹²⁴ and the change must not be
15   from bad fortune to good but the other way round from good
fortune to bad, [and] not because of depravity but because of
a serious mistake¹²⁵ made by the sort of man we have spoken
of or [in general] the better kind of person rather than the
worse.* From the artistic point of view, then, the finest tragedy
30   comes out of precisely this structure.† Second [to this] is the
structure that some say is the best – the one with a double
scheme, the way the *Odyssey* is, ending up in opposite ways for
the 'good guys' and the 'bad guys'. This is *supposed* to be first
class [simply] because of the [critical] feebleness of our audi-
35   ences, and the poets – as you can imagine – fall into line [by]
making what the audience wants. But the pleasure [that
comes from this kind] is not the pleasure peculiar to tragedy:
it belongs rather to comedy.ᵃ

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§ 40A   * [*a parenthesis by Aristotle, possibly of later date.*] You see
this clearly in actual practice;¹²⁶ at first the poets ran through
[whatever] stories came their way,¹²⁷ but now the finest
tragedies are put together around [the figures of] a few
20   [great] houses¹²⁸ – Alcmeon, for example, and Oedipus and
Orestes and Meleager and Thyestes and Telephus¹²⁹ and all

a for there [i.e. in comedy] people who are the bitterest enemies in
the legend, like Orestes and Aegisthus, walk off at the end as
friends and nobody kills anybody.

130 Thereby providing the appropriate *pathē* for tragedy, as described in
     §37, and considered in §42 and the rest of Ch. 14.

131 The "same mistake" is not preferring the double to the single plot,
     but the failure to recognise that the strongest tragic effect depends
     upon the threefold structure just described: single rather than dou-
     ble plot, *hamartia*, and disastrous ending. "This", contrary to what
     the interpolator thought, refers to the threefold complex. By defini-
     tion, then, Euripides would be "thoroughly tragic" whenever he
     achieves that complex. The fact that he doesn't always do so (see
     Lucas, note on 53ª25) has no bearing on Aristotle's statement that
     Euripides [? when he did this] was recognised as "the most tragic of
     our poets." Aristotle is reporting on the opinion of audiences,
     which we cannot verify – and which Gudeman's statistics of unhap-
     py endings does nothing either to clarify or assail.

132 Not 'spectacle' but masks and costumes. See Else, *Translation*, 96
     n95: "Aristophanes jeers repeatedly at Euripides' beggar-king Tele-
     phus, who aroused the commiseration of the heroes – and the audi-
     ence – by appearing in rags… There is a tradition (*Life of Aeschylus*)
     that some spectators fainted with fear at the dreadful appearance of
     the Furies in the *Eumenides*."

133 Literally "earlier" – that is, logically prior, or earlier in the process
     of the tragic making, closer to the *archē* (for which see §23 n35).

134 The word is *muthos*. There is some disagreement whether in this
     place Aristotle means the story of Oedipus, or the plot of the *Oedi-
     pus* (as here rendered), or the play read but not acted. Else argues
     that the use of *muthos* as "the traditional story" – or "myth" in one
     of our current uses – is not an Aristotelian use. In any case, *muthos*
     is Aristotle's regular word for 'plot', and after what he has said
     about the peculiar structure of plot that is needed to arouse the
     peculiar tragic emotion, he would be unlikely to concede that the
     mere 'story' of Oedipus would produce that effect. In addition,
     Aristotle seems to imply that if the plot is constructed in a tragic
     way it will have the tragic effect even if you hear it read without see-
     ing it acted.

135 Literally "needing a *choregus*." A *choregus* was a wealthy citizen who
     trained and equipped the chorus. By extension *choregia* sometimes
     refers to expense in general, sometimes lavish. In this case the
     function of the *choregus* is extended to include the principal actors
     and also implies considerable expense.

136 Literally "have nothing in common with tragedy."

those others who happen to have suffered or done appalling things.[130]

§ 40B   † [*a parenthesis by Aristotle, possibly of later date:*] You see
25   then why those who accuse Euripides of doing [just] this *a* in
his tragedies make the same mistake;[131] because actually,
according to our definition, he was correct. [There's] very
strong evidence: in the dramatic contests tragedies of this
kind are recognised as the most tragic, and Euripides – even
though (as in fact is the case) he doesn't manage some things
30   well – is recognised [by audiences] as the most *tragic* of our
poets.

Pity and Terror Should Come from the Plot

1453[b]   § 41   Now it is possible for an effect of pity and terror to come   *14*
from the 'look' [of the actors] (*opsis*);[132] but it can also come
from the very structure of the events, and this is nearer the
heart of the matter[133] and [the mark] of a better poet. For in
fact the plot should be so put together that even without *seeing*
5   [anything] a person who hears the events unfolding trembles
and feels pity at what is happening; and that's exactly what any-
body would feel in hearing the plot[134] of the *Oedipus*. To try to
contrive this through the masks and costumes (*opsis*) is a pret-
ty inartistic way [of doing things] and depends [of course] on
10   [what] backing [you have].[135] Those who only try to get, by
this sort of [visual] means, not an [effect] of terror but a
shocking [effect], don't come within miles of tragedy;[136] for

a and most of his plays end in disaster

137 The pleasure peculiar to tragedy had been hinted at in §37 in the definition of exactly what kind of person suffering what kind of change makes a tragedy. In this passage the word 'pleasure' (*hēdonē*) occurs only once, but is implied a second time in a sense somewhat different from the first: in the first, as general and undifferentiated and therefore disreputable, in the second, as specific to tragedy. I mark this shift by inserting "frisson of" to indicate the pleasurable effect that 'the shocking or monstrous' (as distinct from 'the terrible') can be expected to induce.

   If the 'pleasure peculiar to tragedy' is taken to be the 'function' (*ergon*) of tragedy, there are few other references to it: §32 (51^b23), §40 (53^a36), §58 (59^a21); 62^a16 and 62^b13 are scarcely to the point.

138 That is, through a dynamic structural relation between life and the play.

139 If *catharsis* is the purifying process that flows out of tragic terror and pity, then it is a matter not only for the audience but also for the persons engaged in the action.

140 This is the only place in the *Poetics* where Aristotle uses *oiktra*; his usual word for 'pitiful' is *eleeinon*. The two words *deina* and *oiktra* may stand for the double nature of the *pathos: deina* for *pathos* as an afflicting act, *oiktra* for *pathos* as suffering. See also n141.

141 After dealing with *philia* (blood-relationship) – which was included in the account of *peripeteia* in §36 – and *hamartia* (mistake), Aristotle now comes to *pathos* (the tragic act). The *pathos* is in one sense the suffering of the person injured by the terrible deed, and in another (and simultaneous) sense the *act* on the part of the person who does the terrible deed. As Aristotle's analysis develops, the act dissolves, leaving as the central element the intention or motive that guides the act. (This is analyzed in detail by Else.) For the tragic action three things are needed in complex relation: *hamartia*, *pathos*, and 'recognition'. As we shall see in §43 the actual deed can be dispensed with, either by being removed from the action of the play or by being averted; but the intention is indispensable to the tragic action.

142 Notice the shift from discussion in §39 of the *kind* of person involved in a tragic action, to the *relation* between persons needed as the fulcrum for the tragic act (*pathos*).

143 The reference is to Sophocles' *Epigoni* and to the lost *Alcmeon* of Astydamas; in both cases son kills mother. A little later in this paragraph, Aristotle says that Alcmeon did the murder unwittingly, and in the *Nicomachean Ethics* 1110^a28 Aristotle said that it was ridiculous that Alcmeon was *compelled* to kill his mother. According to the legend Alcmeon killed his mother deliberately.

you must try to get from tragedy not just *any* [frisson of] plea-
sure, but [the pleasure] peculiar to tragedy.[137]

The Acts that Arouse Pity and Terror

§ 42   Since the poet must arrange for a pleasure that comes
out of pity and terror through *mimesis*,[138] obviously this [func-
tion] must be built [right] into the [structure of] events.[139] So
let us find out what sort of things strike people as terrible
15 (*deina*) and what as pitiable (*oiktra*)[140]. Now surely it *must* be
that such acts [are done] to one another by [persons who are]
blood-relations or enemies or neither. If [they are done] by
an enemy to an enemy, there is nothing either in the doing or
in the intention that arouses pity except for the actual suffer-
ing [inflicted] (*pathos*);[141] nor [does it arouse pity] if the
agents are neither [blood-relations nor enemies]; but when
the tragic acts (*pathē*) happen within [the bond of] blood-rela-
20 tions – for example, when brother kills brother, or son [kills]
father, or mother [kills] son, or son mother, or intends to kill,
or does something else of this sort – *that*'s what we should look
for.[142]

Four Possible Variations of the Tragic Nexus

§ 43   Now it isn't possible to dissolve tightly interwoven [tra-
ditional] stories; I mean, for example, [you can't get rid of the
fact that] Clytemnestra was killed by Orestes and Eriphyles by
25 Alcmeon;[143] you have to find [the right thing], and [if you
are] using traditional material you must make artistic use of

144 Literally "it is necessary to use [them] beautifully *(kalōs)*." I am
    tempted to use, instead of 'artistically', the word 'imaginatively'
    which, though anachronistic, would convey Aristotle's meaning to
    us vividly and directly, and without distortion.

145 On the evidence of the inferred Arabic ms, this sentence is pre-
    sumed to have been in Aristotle's text though it is not in fact pre-
    sent in any Greek manuscript. The conjecture is supported by the
    presumption of completeness at the end of this paragraph –
    "beyond these there is no other way" (53^b36) – and by the hierar-
    chical arrangement of the four variations in §44.

146 "Third," that is, not counting the missing variation given in pointed
    brackets above; see n145, above.

147 In the third and fourth variations – the 'most tragic' kinds – 'recog-
    nition' and *hamartia* play a vital part: in the third, *hamartia* secures
    ignorance until after the *pathos* has been committed; in the fourth,
    'recognition' intercepts the intended action which rested on igno-
    rance and the *pathos* is not carried through. 'Recognition', then, is
    a sudden reversal *(peripeteia)* of the *hamartia*, when *hamartia* is con-
    strued as a state of not-knowing.

148 The Greek simply says "of these." Else translated "of these modes";
    but I prefer the word 'variations', as used in musical composition.

149 *Miaron*, 'morally repulsive', had been used in §39 (52^b36) with
    regards to the effect of showing the *epieikēs* man brought from pros-
    perity to disaster, and it occurs again a few lines later in this para-
    graph (54^a3). 'Pity and terror' – not *to miaron* – is the effect proper
    to tragedy; and that effect, according to §17 (49^b28), secures
    catharsis pathēmatōn – a phrase that we suggested had been project-
    ed forward into §17 from §§42–44 where 'pity and terror' is the
    topic of discussion. In an important and unorthodox section of the
    Argument (425–50), Else points out that *catharsis* is the purification
    of the repulsive guilt of spilling the blood of a person who is within
    the bond of *philia.* "The catharsis is not a change or end-product in
    the spectator's soul, or in the fear and pity ... in his soul, but a
    process carried forward in the emotional material of the play by its
    structural elements, above all by the recognition ... The catharsis,
    that is, the purification of the tragic act by the demonstration that
    its motive was not *miaron* [morally repulsive], is accomplished by
    the whole structure of the drama, but above all by the recognition.
    This interpretation makes catharsis a transitive or operational factor
    within the tragic structure itself, precedent to the release of pity,
    and ultimately of the tragic pleasure, rather than the be-all and
    end-all of tragedy itself" (*Argument*, 439). See also, however, Lucas,
    Appendix II.

it.[144] But let us say more clearly what we mean by an 'artistic use'. It is possible (*a*) for the tragic action (*praxis*) to be done with [full] knowledge and understanding, in the way the old [poets] handled it, and the way Euripides makes Medea kill her [own] children. <Or it is possible (*b*) knowingly to refrain

30 from doing the deed.>[145] Or it is possible (*c*) to act, but to do the frightful deed (*deinon*) unwittingly and then to realise after [that there was] blood-relationship, as Sophocles' Oedipus does; this admittedly happens outside the play, but [it can occur] inside the tragedy itself as in [the case of] Astydamas's Alcmeon or Telegonus in the *Wounded Odysseus*. And still,[a]

35 beyond these it is possible (*d*) to intend in ignorance to do something murderous (*anēkestos* – fatal) and to realise [what is involved] before committing [the deed].[147] And beyond these [four] there is no other way: for it *must* be [a matter of] doing or not doing [the deed], either knowing or not knowing.

Assessment of the Four Variations

§ 44   Of these [variations],[148] the weakest (worst) is knowingly to intend [the deed] and not to carry it through [i.e. (*b*)]:   that is repulsive (*miaron*)[149] but not tragic because there

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[a] third[146]

150 The intention knowingly to kill a blood relation is *miaron* certainly; and according to this statement of Aristotle's, if there is no *pathos*, no actual tragic act, the tragic feeling is not aroused. Yet in the fourth variation – the 'best' kind – the deed is averted after the initiating ignorance has been converted to 'realisation' in 'recognition'. "The ultimate root of tragedy is ignorance, and its actualization must have led or threatened to lead to an act which runs counter to man's deepest moral instincts" (*Argument*, 420).

151 *Ekplēctikon* – a shattering or astounding [effect].

152 *Cresphontes* was a tragedy by Euripides, now lost; the story was dramatized by Matthew Arnold in his *Merope*. Nothing is known of *Helle*. There is an apparent conflict between the 'best' variation here and the statement in §40 that the best tragedy moves from good fortune to disaster. The question of the relative date of composition of various parts of the *Poetics* has a bearing on the question of apparent inconsistency: certainly it was not all written at one time, nor was it ever carefully revised to produce a treatise consistent in all internal details. Lucas suggests that "the least awkward solution" to this particular contradiction is to suppose that "Aristotle thought the *Oedipus Tyrannus* the best type of play, but that *Cresphontes* and *Iphigeneia in Tauris* contained each a finer scene." A less laborious solution, proposed by Else, is offered in n150 to §44.

153 Like the two parentheses to §40 this may be a later addition by Aristotle and may have been made at the same time. The reference to what was said "a while back" is to §40A.

154 A usual translation of this sentence is: "For this is the reason, as was said some time ago, why our tragedies are about only a few families." But the 'reason' is not to be found in the preceding paragraph, and 'this' refers to what follows. It is important to notice that Aristotle, far from stating that good tragedies can only be drawn from traditional *muthoi*, recognises that tragic plots have to be 'invented', even if they are based on traditional materials. Here he is trying to account for the accident that most of the best tragedies are in fact based on traditional stories.

155 *Ouk apo technēs all' apo tuchēs* – "not according to 'art' but according to chance" – perhaps an echo of an epigram of Agathon's quoted in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1140ᵃ19. It is difficult to see what 'art' might be involved, since the art of tragedy is the precise shaping of the plot. Aristotle clearly implies that the early tragedians were not very sure what they were looking for and therefore could not search skilfully or knowledgeably; by luck, empirically, they came on some good things – the way artists tend to work anyway – for what in the end turned out to be their purpose. But that series of strokes of luck

1454ᵃ   is no *pathos* [i.e. no tragic act].[150] That's why nobody makes
            [his plot] that way, or only rarely as (for example) [in the case
            of] Haemon [threatening] Creon in the *Antigone*. Next [weak-
            est] is to do [the deed] [knowingly] [i.e. (*a*)]. Better [is
            where the deed] is done in ignorance, but realising [what was
            involved] when the deed has been done [i.e. (*c*)]; for [then]
            the repulsive [quality] is not present and the 'recognition'
1454ᵃ 5   [has a] profound [emotional] effect.[151] But the best is the last
            [in the list] [i.e. (*d*)] – I mean the way in the *Cresphontes*
            Merope is on the point of killing her son, but recognises him
            and does not kill him; and [the same] in the *Iphigeneia* [with]
            sister and brother, and the *Helle* [the way] the son on the point
            of handing his mother over to the enemy recognises her.[152]*

            § 44A   * [*a parenthesis by Aristotle, possibly a later addition:*][153]
            Now the reason for the thing we mentioned a while back, that
      10   the finest tragedies have to do with a few [great] houses,[154] is
            this: searching at random rather than systematically,[155]
            [poets] found this sort of thing provided in the traditional sto-
            ries, and so were forced to make do with [just] those houses in
            which appalling acts of this sort had happened.

does not, Aristotle says, imply that a principle of selection for the future was thereby established.

156 This sentence parallels the opening sentence of §38 (52^b28).

157 *Chrēstos* – good of its kind, serviceable, capable – a virtual synonym of *epieikēs* (cf. *Rhetoric* 1418^b1) which gave trouble at its single occurence in §39. As far as *chrēstos* refers to a good human speci-men, the word implies a degree of moral goodness and moral fibre as constituents of the person's 'capability'. The usual translation (used also by Else) is 'good', but that tends to identify *chrēstos* and *epieikēs* with the more comprehensive and 'higher' term *spoudaios*. I take it that *chrēstos* (like *epieikēs*) is a moderate term ('below' *spoudaios* though included in it, and certainly below the paragon of virtue) indicating a minimum moral standard for the tragic (or epic) figure: hence my insertion of "at least." I translate *chrēstos* as 'capable' or 'strong' depending on the context, to indicate a better-than-average human specimen with a corresponding moral sense. Such a person is not identical with the *homoios*, the man 'like us', for most of 'us' are either at or near the border of the *phaulos* coun-try when not actually or intermittently inside it (see e.g. §45A – 54^b9). See also §45A n166 and Excursus Note I.

158 See §24 (50^b8–9).

159 Following Vahlen's emendation of an apparent lacuna.

160 Not 'plausible', but rather befitting the particular class in the hier-archy: hence the immediate reference to a woman and a slave – the woman who acts in a 'manly' way is acting in a manner unbefitting the 'kind' of woman. Else translates this 'appropriate'; 'becoming' would be another possible word.

161 The text is uncertain; the word *houtōs* ('in this way') is troublesome because there is nothing previously said that it can refer back to unless *andreia*. To reject the corrupt passage, as Else does, seems to deprive women altogether of the virtue of bravery, and that is prob-ably not Aristotle's intention here, no matter how morose his atti-tude to women.

162 *To homoion* – 'likeness': that is, likeness to human nature, capable of error despite capability and strength. Commonly in the *Poetics* *homoios* means 'like us'; but here Aristotle cannot mean 'like us' in any lenient sense.

163 Literally "as they were defined" – that is, according to the two crite-ria already given above. The text is corrupt. Kassel reads "as was said before," but the meaning is much the same.

164 The same phrase, indicating the general moral area in which the tragic (? or epic) figure is to be found, was used in §6 (48^a5) and in §40 (53^a16-17). Since *beltīon* is the comparative of *agathos*, usually

Character-making

Four Aims in Making Characters

§ 45   Well then: that ought to be enough about the structur-
15   ing of events and the kind of thing our plots should be. As for
the characters [in tragedy and epic] there are four things to
aim at.[156] First and most important, [to arrange] that they be
[at least] 'capable' (chrēstos)[157] people. [A person] will have
'character' if, as was said [before],[158] his speech or action
clearly declares [the quality of] some [moral] choice, whatev-
er it may be[159] – a strong (*chrēston*) character if a strong
20   [choice is made]. And 'character' is [to be seen] within each
class [of persons]; for there is [such a thing as] a capable
woman or an able slave, even though probably [the first] of
these [classes] is inferior and the other utterly worthless (*phau-
los*). Second [is that they be] fitting[160] [as characters]; for it is
possible for a character to be brave (manly), yet it is not fitting
for a woman to be brave and clever [? in a manly way].[161]
1454[a]25   Third [is] naturalness[162]: for this is different from making the
character (in our terms)[163] 'capable and fitting'.* Fourth
[is] self-consistency; and [this applies] even if the person

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§ 45A   *[*a later addition by Aristotle.*] Since tragedy is a *mimesis*   (*15*)
of people better than us,[164] you should follow the example of
1454[b]10   the good portrait-painters; while they make likenesses by giv-
ing the 'true shape' [of their subjects] they also paint them
better-looking (more beautiful); so too the poet, when he is
representing men [who are] hot-tempered or easy-going or
with any other such [idiosyncrasies],[a] he [should] make them
like that [certainly, but at the same time] 'capable' men

_____

a in their characters

translated 'good' but in §45A recalling another common meaning, 'capable', we may be reminded that although 'good' is a moral term it is not exclusively so – e.g. in the phrase immediately following, the 'good portrait-painters' are *agathoi*. For the Greek, moral and physical capacity and beauty are concomitant. When the emphasis falls on the side of the capability of the 'man of action', *agathos* tends to be replaced by *epieikēs* or *chrēstos*. The comparative and superlative *kreitton* and *kratistos* ('stronger', 'strongest') come into play as virtual synonyms of comparative and superlative of *agathos*, with altered emphasis: e.g. §6 (48^a6) of people, §44 (54^a4) of plot, §66 (62^a13) and §67 (62^b14) of tragedy. Only in these shifts of emphasis in his terminology does Aristotle seem to introduce the notion of moral *strength* as a distinguishing mark of the tragic figure.

165 In this context I take *agathos* to mean 'capable' rather than (as is usual) 'good': see n164 above. Liddell & Scott note a number of instances of this use, in (among others) Homer, Plato, Aeschylus, and Sophocles. The text is corrupt. Some read *Agathōn* (that is, the tragedian) instead of *agathon*, which does not let Aristotle make his point. Lobel's conjecture, preserving *agathon* and supplying *Agathōn*, makes the best of both. In §32 (51^b21) Aristotle had already noticed Agathon's *Antheus* as a tragedy in which both the names and plot were wholly invented.

166 Else supplies *homoion* ('like us'). Though the text of this paragraph is corrupt and difficult to reconstruct with much certainty, the line of argument is clear when compared with point three in §45 – for which reason I have transferred the paragraph from its position in the manuscript as the second of two notes inserted between what looks like the end of the brief formal discussion of 'character' (54^a36) and the short concluding statement (§47). The tragic figure is not so *chrēston* (? able, and morally strong) that he is incapable of making a 'big' mistake; and Achilles is not so *agathos* ('able') that he is incapable of a sullen stubbornness that might well interfere with his quality as a fighting man. Both have to be *homoios* – human enough – or they do not secure the action specific to the tragic (and epic) *praxis*. Noticeably, however, Aristotle says nothing about *hamartia* in the 'character' section, but only when he is discussing the function of tragic plot (§36A, 39; cf. Appendix C, 60^b15, 17).

167 Lucas suggests "supplied [by the myth]" but Aristotle's attention seems more generalised than that, and it is clear that Aristotle regarded the tragedians' reliance on 'myths' (traditional stories) to be a lucky accident.

(*epieikēs*), the way Homer made Achilles[a] [both] able (*agath-*
15   *os*)[165] and <human>.[166]

_____

1454ª26   providing the *mimesis* is an inconsistent person, or that kind
of person has been proposed [for a theme][167] – he would
still have to be consistently inconsistent. There is an example

a a model of stubbornness

168 Literally "a not-necessary wickedness" – that is, a wickedness not ful-
     filing any necessary function in the plot. For a repetition of this
     charge, see Appendix C (61^{b}21).

169 For detailed discussions of these examples, see *Argument*, 465–8 and
     Lucas, 160–1. The first reference is to Euripides' *Orestes*; the sec-
     ond to the lost *Scylla* – a dithyramb by Timotheus – mentioned
     again in §65 (61^{b}32); the third to Euripides' *Melanippus the Philoso-
     pher* which survives only in fragments; the fourth to Euripides' *Iphi-
     geneia in Aulis*.

170 At this point in the manuscript two notes are inserted, which are
     here printed as §51A and §45A.

171 With the two paragraphs 51A and 45A redisposed, the reference is
     clearly to the things said in the two previous paragraphs on 'charac-
     ter' (§§45, 46), not to the whole discussion of tragedy beginning at
     §17 and certainly not to the topics of the two items that preceded
     §47 in the manuscript.

172 Literally "the things contrary to what follows (? or enjoins) the
     aisthēseis in the poietic [art]." *Aisthēseis* (a processive noun from
     aisthanomai, to perceive) are 'sense-perceptions'. The rendering
     'perceptual mode' is connected with the phrase *en toi phaneröi* in
     §37 (52^{b}12), to which see n113.

173 Presumably the lost dialogue *On Poets*.

174 The formal discussion of plot had closed with the opening sentence
     of §45 – the last sentence of Ch. 14 (54^{a}13–15). A brief, and not
     very satisfactory, discussion of 'character' follows in §§45, 46, and
     trails off into (what is here printed as) §47 – two sentences that may
     be a later note but which I treat as part of the main text because
     the first sentence refers back to the subject of §§45–6 and the sec-
     ond – with its reference to "my published work" – provides some
     sort of ending to the account of 'character'. Clearly, from the end
     of §46 (54^{a}36) to the beginning of Ch. 19 (§55: 56^{a}33), the argu-
     ment has lost the shaping purpose that commanded the first 14
     chapters and the text is in some disorder; and the general topic is
     again plot-making. The text bristles with difficulties – corruptions of
     the manuscript, lacunae actual and suspected, a style unusually
     elliptical and sometimes tortuous, and many serious problems of
     interpretation. The commentaries of Else and Lucas can be consult-
     ed for detailed discussion of the many textual conjectures and alter-
     native interpretations that cluster around the cruces in these para-
     graphs. The main discussion is resumed at the beinning of Ch. 19
     (§55) with a treatment of the two remaining 'aspects' – 'thought'
     and *lexis* (*opsis* and *melopoiia* being disregarded as not particularly
     the poet's business).

30

of pointless wickedness[168] in a character [in] Menelaus in the
Orestes; of unsuitableness and unfittingness [in] Odysseus'
lament in the *Scylla* and the speech of Melanippe; of inconsis-
tency [in] *Iphigeneia in Aulis*, for the girl who makes the
[speech of] supplication is nothing like the girl [who pleads]
later.[169]

The Necessary and Likely in Character

35

§ 46   In [shaping] the characters, as also in putting together
the events [in a plot], you must always seek [to get an effect]
either of the necessary or the likely, so that [it will appear]
either necessary or likely that that sort of person would say or
do that sort of thing, in the same way that [in a plot] it is nec-
essary or likely that this [particular thing] should happen after
that.[170]

The Poet Must See and Hear What He Is Making

1454b15

§ 47   Watch out particularly for these things,[171] and for any-
thing that violates the perceptual mode that is necessarily
[involved in] the poietic [art],[172] because you can make mis-
takes over that often [enough] too. But this has been ade-
quately dealt with in my published work.[173]

How to Turn a Plot into a Play
(a series of more or less disconnected later notes)[174]

Respect for the Perceptual Mode in Composition

1455a22

25

§48   You should put your plots together and elaborate them   *17*
into speech while keeping [things] as far as possible before
your eyes; for in this way, if you see everything very distinctly
as though you were [actually] present in what is happening,
you invent what fits [the action] and are least [likely] to over-
look inconsistencies. (An example of this [kind of inconsis-
tency] is [seen in] the censure [levelled] against Carcinus: [in
his play,] Amphiaraus comes back out of a temple [which he
had not been seen to enter]; [Carcinus][a] overlooked this from

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a [the audience] *or* [the poet]

175 The word *sunapergasthai*, translated 'elaborate' here and in
     55^{a}21–2, seems to imply precise coordination of autonomous ele-
     ments: cf. *artikroteisthai* (56^{a}12), a metaphor of oarsmanship. Aris-
     totle's advice is simply – "judge by the physical test of the senses –
     look and listen; visualise the action so that you are sure it is consis-
     tent, and listen to what you make the actors say to make sure that
     their utterance is in tune with the emotional drive of the action."
     This need not mean that the poet has to act out and speak out all
     the parts; some (as we know) do that, others work in laconic still-
     ness and silence but with no less acute sense of physical immediacy.
     The word *schēmasin* is often taken to refer to the gestures of the
     actor, but I follow Else in referring it to the patterns of language (as
     in *Rhetoric* 1408^{a}10 where Aristotle discusses the precise 'figures'
     (*schēmata*) that turn up in language as expressions of certain states
     of emotion). Aristotle is here considering the *physical* basis of com-
     position in two ways: engaging the physical senses, and finding
     proper patterns in the physical substance that the play is made in –
     language. Gesture is 'physical' too; but given the words as pattern
     of feeling, the gestures should follow naturally.
176 Literally "in their emotions" – or as we might more naturally say
     "out of their emotions."
177 For the distinction between *euphuēs* ('well-endowed') and *ekstatikos*
     ('manic'), see Else, 496–502 and Lucas, 177–9. Yeats catches this
     well in *Essays and Introductions*, 253: "in Life courtesy and self-pos-
     session, and in the arts style, are the sensible impressions of the free
     mind, for both arise out of a deliberate shaping of all things, and
     from never being swept away." Aristotle's distinction seems also to
     go beyond the notion of the 'well-endowed' man as more versatile,
     the 'manic' man more fixed: he seems to catch a glimpse of what
     Lipps, in about 1912, technically called empathy – the double state
     of the artist or critic, in which he achieves sympathetic identifica-
     tion with somebody (or thing) other than himself, and *at the same
     time* watches critically what is happening to him.
178 *Katholou* ('as a whole'), often translated 'generally' or 'universally'
     here, is more properly rendered 'abstractly' – that is, without
     regard to particular details. The second part of the sentence is liter-
     ally: "and then 'episode' and extend it." Since Aristotle elsewhere
     uses 'episode' for an event not essential to the plot, I translate
     'scenes' (which presumably *are* dramatically essential), and intro-
     duce the metaphor of the plot finding its body because Aristotle
     had referred to the plot earlier (§23) as the 'soul' of tragedy.
179 Kassel marks this phrase as an interpolation. Again the word is
     katholou. Schema is a useful noun for the sort of abstract diagram

not *seeing* [the action] and [the play] was hissed off the stage in performance because the audience were put off by this
30 [detail].) And also, as far as possible elaborate [the action] in the patterns [of speech].[175] Most convincing are those [who speak] in a state of feeling,[176] because [they speak then] out of [human] nature itself – the man who feels distress represents distress most truly and the angry man is [really] angry. (That's why the poietic art is more a business for a 'well-endowed' man than for a 'manic' man: the one – [the 'well-endowed' man] – is [highly] adaptable, the other is carried outside himself.)[177]

How to Work from an 'Argument'

§ 49   Now the 'argument' [of a play], whether ready-made or
1455[b]1 actually being invented, should be set out in abstract terms, and then [and only then] embodied in 'scenes'.[178] Let me say how an abstract [argument] can be looked at in this way, [using] the example of the *Iphigeneia*. A certain young woman is [to be] sacrificed but has been spirited away without her sac-
5 rificers knowing; she has been set up in another country where it is the custom to sacrifice [all] strangers to their goddess, and has attained priesthood [in this cult]. Some time later, the priestess's brother happens to come there (the fact that the god has ordained that he will go there,[a] and for what

a for what reason, is outside the abstract *schema*[179]

Aristotle has in mind. The interpolation is a double gloss, referring to the two phrases that follow.

180 Thereby excluding the action of the gods from the essentially *human* action of tragedy.

181 A glossator has misunderstood 55ᵃ6 (§36A) which is close-by in the manuscript. Polyidus was a sophist, not a dramatist.

182 Literally "his deliverance." For discussion of this example, see Else, 506–11.

183 Omitting *en* (in) which would refer, not to the man Orestes, but improperly to the *Orestes*. Claiming that the goddess's statue has been contaminated by the presence of the parricide Orestes, Iphigeneia and Orestes get to the seashore on the pretence of purifying the statue, and so escape by sea taking the statue with them.

184 Length (*mēkos*) is a dimension established in terms of sense perception: see §§16, 27–9. Aristotle is drawing attention to the unifying and concentrating function of the abstract argument. This is considered again in §§53, 60, and 66.

185 A glossator has identified the god; but a particular identification of that sort is not proper to an abstract 'argument'.

186 The Greek in this section is full of participles; I have turned it freely into the style usually used in English for condensed dramatic summaries – but in doing so I cannot escape the way Else also translates it.

187 *To idion* – that is peculiar to, essential to, the *Odyssey*: the substance without which it could not be recognisably what it is. Else translates 'core'. The terse unity of the central plot of the *Odyssey* had already been noted in §29.

188 Butcher's words 'complication' and 'unravelling or *dénouement*' are cumbersome and misleading. *Dénouement* has for too long been applied to the final swift unravelling of all the threads of plot; 'complication' suggests perhaps too specifically the process in which, in the complex plot, recognition and *peripeteia* come into play. Aristotle's 'untying' goes farther back into the play than *dénouement*, and his 'tying' is evidently meant to apply to all kinds of plots, not just the complex.

189 The Greek verb here is "is."

190 The *desis-lusis* scheme implies a firmer and more comprehensive principle of unity in the plot than the earlier account in §§29-30. Here Aristotle recognises that the poet selects an *archē* (both source and beginning: see also §23 and n35) from among the *propepragmata* (things done before) and makes this the starting-point for his *praxis*; even though the starting-point may be 'outside' – that is, not acted out in the play – it is nevertheless the point from

purpose, is outside the plot[180]); when he has arrived and been
captured and is on the point of being sacrificed, he makes
10   himself known to <his sister>,[a] and from that [circumstance] is
saved.[182] After [reaching] this [stage in the conception], and
not before, you may assign names and develop 'scenes'. But
[see to it] that the scenes are suitable – for example, the [fit
15   of] madness through which he is captured, and their escape by
means of the purification-rite [are appropriate] to Orestes.[183]

Length of Argument, Length of Episodes

§ 50   Now in dramas the episodes (scenes) are brief, but epic
is lengthened out by the episodes.[184] Yet the argument of the
Odyssey is <not> long.   A certain man who has been away from
home for many years is carefully guarded by the god[b] against
20   returning, and is alone; yet matters at home are such that his
wealth is being squandered by suitors and a plot laid against
his son. He arrives [home] by himself, driven by storm; he
makes himself known to certain persons, himself mounts an
attack, and survives to wipe out his enemies.[186] This is the
essence[187] [of the *Odyssey*]; the rest is episodes.

Tying and Untying the Plot

§ 51   Every tragedy has its 'tying' (*desis*) and its 'untying'   *18*
25   (*lusis*).[188] The [events] outside [the play], and often some
inside, [provide] the 'tying', the rest [is] the 'untying'. By
'tying' I mean what[ever] runs[189] from the beginning to that
section which is the last from which the change towards hap-
piness or misfortune [begins to] take place; and by 'untying'
[whatever runs] from the beginning of the change to the end.
30   For example, in the *Lynceus* of Theodectus [the] tying consists
of what has happened beforehand *and* the capture of the little
boy *and* the identification of those [two] people [Lynceus and
Hypermnestra, of Lynceus and Abas]; the untying is the [part]
from the accusation of murder to the end.*[190]

a either the way Euripides or Polyidus made him do, by saying (nat-
urally enough): "Not only my sister, then, was destined to be sacri-
ficed, but I too."[181]
b Poseidon[185]

which the arc or trajectory of the tragic action springs. (But cf. §49 which, in the way of these disconnected notes, is not entirely consistent.) The 'tying', anchored outside the acted-action, is one moment (? or vector) of a single energy system, the 'untying' is the complementary moment. The plot then becomes (as E.M. Forster says of the plot in a novel) like a compressed spring, and a principle for the ordonnance of 'episodes' is, at least by implication, provided. Else argues that 'tying' and 'untying' would apply only to the complex plot; but if the figure of *desis* (or *plokē*) and *lusis* is seen in terms of energy rather than of elements, the 'tying' in a single plot could be the movement up to the crisis and the 'untying' the movement away from it.

191 In the original position of this paragraph in the manuscript, 'then' (*oun*) refers directly back to the statement in §46 (the immediately preceding sentence) that character must be shaped with the same sense of necessary or probable connexion as the elements of the plot – Aristotle pointing for the first time (unless also in §38) to the dynamic interrelation of plot and character: the 'character' must be the sort of person who would certainly or probably act as he does both in initiating the *praxis* and in responding to what he has initiated. But if, with the most persuasive authorities, we read the crucial word in 54^b1 as *muthou*, not, as a lost early manuscript is thought to have read, *ēthou*, the paragraph is clearly to do with plot, not character. Once the paragraph is moved from §46 to §51, the reference for *oun* is less tenuous: for in §51 Aristotle is thinking of 'tying' and 'untying' not simply as devices of plot but as the internal unifying principle of the plot. In any case, this paragraph belongs to the more highly developed thinking found in §51 and in the whole group of notes from §48 to §54.

192 This is the crucial *muthou* mentioned in n191 above.

193 Most manuscripts read "in the *Iliad*," but Hermann's emendation to "in the *Aulis*" makes better sense and is followed here. Lucas, however, argues vigorously for the *Iliad* reading.

194 This ironic aside discloses Aristotle's view that the centre of tragedy is *human*. Cf. §49 n180 and Appendix C (60^b35–61^a1).

195 A serious crux; but the difficulty is mitigated a little by recalling that this note is not integrated into the main argument as we have it. The word translated 'shapes' is *eidē*; the word translated 'moments' is *merē*. The usual translation of *eidos* is 'kind', although its primary meaning is 'form' or 'shape'. We have elsewhere taken *merē* (usually 'parts') to be, not constituent or component 'parts' of a tragedy, but the distinguishable 'aspects' or lines of sight along which the making of tragedy can be conceived. If the *merē* are con-

§ 51A   * [*a note on the integrity of plot, appearing in the ms*
1454ª37   *after §46;*] Clearly, then,[191] the untying of plots should be   *15*
1454ᵇ   brought about through the plot itself,[192] and not through the
'machine' [of divine intervention] as in the *Medea*, or through
[some coincidental circumstance like] the ships sailing away
in the *Aulis*.[193] Actually the 'machine' is more properly used
for what happens outside the drama, either what has hap-
pened before that a person couldn't know about, or whatever
5   [will happen] afterwards and needs to be foretold or report-
ed; for we grant, of course, that the gods see everything.[194] But
[there must] be nothing illogical inside the [compass of] the
events, and if there is [it should be] outside the play as in
Sophocles' *Oedipus*.

Four Shapes of Tragedy

1455ᵇ32   § 52   There are four shapes [that] tragedy [can assume] – in
fact, the same number of shapes [as the number of] 'mo-
ments' (*merē*) that have been picked out [for tragedy]:[195] (1)
the complex [tragedy], which is entirely taken up with

sidered from the point of view of the tragedy-coming-into-being, rather than from the maker's point of view, the *merē* become dynamic 'moments' associated with primary centres of force. Ideally all the 'moments' should be brought into integral relation; but what usually happens is that one 'moment' becomes dominant to produce a tragedy of distinctive emphasis: upon *peripeteia*-and-recognition, upon *pathos*, upon character, or upon episode. If, by the time Aristotle wrote this note, he had drawn up such a four-term scheme of *merē*, we have no record of it. (But see also §59A.) This seems to be the one place where Aristotle looks critically at tragedies as things-made, capable of classification and analysis according to the characteristics they disclose as 'things out there'. The point of the note, in any case, seems to be to insist that a just critic will compare like with like, noticing that within the broad category of tragedy certain specialised 'shapes' (? malformations) can be detected. Butcher, by transferring the last two sentences (on critical comparison) to the beginning of the note provides a direct link with the *desis-lusis* notes (§§51, 51A) and provides a secondary context for the four *eidē*.

In §55 (56ᵃ33), as in §20 (50ᵃ13) and in §38 (52ᵇ14, cf. 25), Aristotle uses *eidē* where consistent usage would suggest *merē*. This arises – as here – from the ambivalence of Aristotle's dynamic way of looking at things: an 'aspect' is a shaping principle (*eidos*). For an attempt to reconcile the various uses of *merē* and *eidē* in the *Poetics*, see Excursus Note II.

196 The Greek word is *pathētikē*, which Butcher (and others) transliterates as 'pathetic'. But the English word 'pathetic' does not immediately convey what Aristotle meant – a *pathos*-centred tragedy; neither, I think, does Else's 'fatal'. The solution seems to lie in avoiding English adjectives. The term ' *pathos*-tragedy' implies a tragedy in which the *pathos* – the murderous or cruel act – is the centre of force. Lucas's suggestions that this class is limited to those plays in which the *pathos* is presented *en tōi phanerōi* seems unnecessarily constricting. In his note to 56ᵃ1, however, he suggests that the *pathos*-tragedy gives fullest rein to passion – *pathos* being taken to mean 'passion' rather than the tragic act.

197 Butcher again transliterates the Greek adjective *ēthikē* as 'ethical'; Else makes it 'moral'. I take the adjective to mean 'centred on *ēthos* (character)'.

198 The text is corrupt and very difficult. For possible emendations, see Lucas and Else. I follow Else in reading *epeisōdidēs*, but do not hold with him that this would refer exclusively to the *haplēs* (simple) plot; for a poet could concentrate upon the development of partic-

1456ᵃ   *peripeteia* and 'recognition'; (2) the *pathos*-tragedy,¹⁹⁶ such as
the Ajax plays and the *Ixions*; (3) the 'character'-tragedy,¹⁹⁷
like *The Women of Phthia* and the *Peleus*; (4) <the episodic>
[tragedy],¹⁹⁸ like *The Daughters of Phorcys* and *Prometheus* and all
the Hades plays. Now a [poet] should try to involve (have) all
these ['moments'], or if [he can] not [manage] all [of them],
5   then the strongest and as many as possible, especially consid-
ering how unjustly critics attack the poets nowadays. There
have been good poets in each kind, but [the critics] expect
each individual [poet] to surpass the strength of the masters
[in each and every kind]. But the just way [to criticize] is to say
[simply] that one tragedy is different [from another] – or the
same – in terms of nothing so much as plot – that is, [having]

ular episodes or 'scenes' at the expense, but not to the exclusion, of
the more important 'moments' of plot.

199 In §51 Aristotle uses *desis* (tying) and *lusis*; here, with only a light
shift in metaphorical image, he uses *plokē* (weaving) and the cog-
nate verb *plektein*. The presumption is that §51, 51A (associated
with §48 in the manuscript), and §52 are of similar, but not per-
haps identical, date.

200 Accepting, with Rostagni and Else, Immisch's emendation
artikroteisthai – a metaphor of oarsmen keeping in time. Lobel's
emendation of Moerbecke's thirteenth century Latin translation
provides the word *coadunare* (to join together), which happens also
to be a key word for Coleridge.

201 Literally "much beyond your expectation."

202 That is, by selective emphasis: not by working at the material a
'part' at a time, but by selecting a 'part' that will provide a strong
and unifying thread for the whole tragic structure. Else happily
translates it as 'part-wise'.

203 The Greek has "Niobe," but it is hard to make sense of that.

204 The usual translation is "failed in this respect alone," and Else
translates "in this play alone." I take it to mean that Agathon was
exepesen – driven from the stage – only when he produced a play
constructed in this (inappropriate) way. There may be a lacuna
between 'this' and 'only'.

205 The text is defective and an interpolated phrase follows. Tyrwhitt's
emendation gives "surprising things," which makes sense. The poets
who failed by trying to use the whole epic content were trying for
the same *effect* as those who used the same material 'selectively' – *to
thaumaston* (the surprising) – but they failed because the material
was too massive and shapeless to take on the precise pointedness
that tragic action requires.

206 The pitiful, the terrible, and *to philanthrōpon* came together in §39
(52^b38), but not as a triad; for in the same paragraph (53^a2) *to phil-
anthrōpon* is regarded as too weak and diffuse to provide the emo-
tional fulcrum for tragedy.

207 Aristotle quotes this epigram of Agathon's in *Rhetoric* 1402^a10 and –
in even more telescoped form than here – in Appendix C (61^b15).
This paragraph is exceptionally defective; its discontinuities, partic-
ularly in the matter of Sisyphus, suggest either that essential ele-
ments of the text are missing or that what we have here is incoher-
ent jottings – an impression heightened by the relative inconse-
quence and weak end of §54 which turns out (in the manuscript)
to be the last statement on tragedy.

the same 'weaving' (*plokē*) and 'unravelling' (*lusis*).¹⁹⁹ But
10 many [poets] weave well and then unravel clumsily; both have
to be coadunated.²⁰⁰

Selecting a Tragic Plot from a 'Whole-story'

§ 53 You must remember something that has been said
often: don't [try to] make an epic-style construction into a
tragedy (by 'epic-style' I mean [made up] of many stories); for
example, [just imagine] if somebody were to make the whole
story of the *Iliad* [into a tragedy]. There [i.e. in the epic],
because of its length, the parts assume their proper size, but
15 in dramas they work out in a very unpredictable way.²⁰¹ Here's
evidence: those who have worked up the sack of Troy as a
whole [piece] and not selectively²⁰² (the way Euripides did
with Hecuba,²⁰³ but not the way Aeschylus did), all fail utterly
or [at best] fare badly in the competitions – Agathon's only
failure was in this [kind of play].²⁰⁴ [It is] in their 'reversals',
1456ª20 however, and in plain actions, [that the tragedians] aim for
what they want – effects that take you by surprise.²⁰⁵ᵃ This can
happen [even] when [for example] a man who is clever but a
bit of a rogue is cheated (as Sisyphus was), or a brave but
unjust man is done down. And this actually makes sense, in the
25 way Agathon puts it: "As you might expect, many improbable
things do happen."²⁰⁷

a for this [is] tragic and moving (philanthrōpon)²⁰⁶

208 That is, an integral function of the play, and not merely an impressive 'seasoning' added on (so that it might in itself sway the verdict).

209 This is the only place where Aristotle says anything about the function of the chorus, and what he says is important: that the chorus should be organically related to the plot, and that in the competition the choric passages should represent the poet's own work and not somebody else's. Aristotle goes on to talk about the songs because in §26 he had said that "song-making is the most important of the 'seasonings'" (the sensory delights) yielded by the tragedy. For the possibility that in the last two sentences of §54 Aristotle is complaining about the reprehensible practices of Athenian producers rather than about poets themselves, see Else, 554–7.

210 *Muthos* has been discussed in great detail (§§ 27–44, 48–54), *ethos* briefly (§§45–47); *opsis* and *melopoiia* were noticed (in §§18–19) but given no extended discussion (cf. §§43, 54), and are not further discussed here (as might have been expected) because strictly they are not part of the art of tragedy-making. That leaves only *lexis* (speech) and *dianoia* ('thought').

211 There is another reference to the *Rhetoric* in §21A: see Else, 562–4. Two other interpretations are possible here: "let that be left to the *Rhetoric*" or "let that be relegated to the field of rhetoric." Lucas points to six probable references to the *Poetics* in the *Rhetoric* (xiv n1), but because of the stratification of the *Poetics* (? and the *Rhetoric*) the cross-references are little help is establishing relative dating. The point at issue here is the distinction between the art of rhetoric and the art of poetry; and the question is how far – if at all – rhetoric has a place in tragedy. For Aristotle on rhetoric as arousing emotion, see *Rhetoric* 1354^a15, ^b19ff; 1356^a16-17.

212 The Greek word is *logos* (? speech); but I have rendered it 'speeches' to avoid the abstract implication of our word 'speech' and as a reminder that we are concerned with the making of tragedy (and epic). 'Thought' and speech are inseparable; and 'thought', as the origin of speech, is treated first. The account is brief and not very clear.

213 Literally "The parts of these [are]:" – 'parts' here meaning 'the roles they play', 'the purposes they fulfil'. It is in this meaning that *meros* and *eidos* most clearly meet. Cf. §52 n195 and Excursus Note II.

214 In *Nicomachean Ethics* 1105^b21 Aristotle gives the following longer list of *pathē* (emotions, passions): lust, anger, fear, courage, envy, joy, love, hate, longing, ambition, pity.

215 Cf. §§47 and 48 on the use of the "perceptual mode."

The Chorus as Actor

§ 54   And the chorus – it should be considered as one of the actors, [as] an [integral] part of the whole [action] and an ally in the competition[208] – not in Euripides' way, but in Sophocles'. [You see,] in the other [? later] [plays] the things that get sung have no more to do with the plot [of the plays they go with] than with some other tragedy: so they sing 'import-
30   ed' songs (and Agathon[a] first started that). Yet what's the difference between singing 'imported' songs and jobbing in a speech from one [play] to another?[b209]

(The Six Aspects of Tragedy-making, resumed)

Thought (dianoia)

33   § 55   Well then, the other 'aspects' have been discussed;   *19*
what is left is to speak about 'speech' (*lexis*) and 'thought'.[210] For 'thought', see my [book on] rhetoric, for this is [a matter] more proper to that inquiry.[211] But [here] what belongs to 'thought' are those things that have to be rendered in the speeches.[212] The functions (*merē*) these serve are:[213] (*a*) to prove and disprove; and (*b*) the rendering of emotions
1456[b]   (*pathē*), such as pity, fear, anger, and such-like.[c214] Now it is clear that in [tragic ? and epic] actions we must also use ['thought'] for the same [two] purposes (*ideōn*): when we have to make things pitiful or terrible, or [else] important or
1456[b]5   plausible. But with this much difference [in the theatre] – [in a tragic action] the [emotions] must declare themselves without exposition,[215] [whereas elsewhere] things in logical discourse must be rendered *in* speech, by the speaker, and

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a the poet
b or a whole episode
c and also exaggeration and belittling

216 The use of the particles *men* and *de* in the second part of this sen-
     tence shows that *two* situations are being considered, not three (as
     might appear at the casual glance). The distinction is simply
     between what is done with *didaskalia* (overt descriptive and logical
     exposition) and what is done without *didaskalia*; between what an
     actor can do on the stage and what (say) a lecturer can do on the
     podium. This, of course, does not remove *dianoia* from tragedy,
     nor deny the need at times for logical argument on stage. Lucas dis-
     misses this sort of reading but offers no plausible alternative.

217 The text seems to be corrupt. According to Else, two alternatives
     are present: (*a*) what is the use of speech if emotions can be
     aroused without it? (*b*) what is the use of rhetoric in drama if emo-
     tion can be aroused by action alone? My translation implies: If you
     can make do without words, why use words?

218 Nowhere in the *Poetics* is there any mention of lyric poetry or of
     choral lyric. This makes it highly unlikely that *lexis* can be translat-
     ed as 'diction'. In §18 *lexis* is distinct from *melopoiia*, and *melopoiia* is
     the making of words-with-music; and see §25 and n44. I take it
     then that in the main text of the *Poetics lexis* means dialogue specifi-
     cally, and more generally 'speech' as the singular of 'speeches'.
     However, the long inserted section on *lexis* (Appendix B) deals with
     linguistics in a primitive way and with the ordering of words.

219 Else translates this "modes of utterance." The correct control and
     accenting of the voice was an important element in Greek elocu-
     tion because of the absence of punctuation in their manuscripts.

220 This paragraph does no more than deny that the theory of *schēmata tēs
     lexeōs* has anything to do with the art of poetry. Presumably because
     the discussion of *lexis* is so brief and unsatisfactory, a long extract from
     some other manuscript of Aristotle's has been introduced next (Ch.
     20–22: 1456^{b}20–59^{a}14): it is printed here as Appendix B.

221 The word *kai* (usually 'and') is here explanatory ('that is'). Since
     comedy has not yet been discussed, "*mimēsis* in action" can only
     refer to tragedy (and epic); and the terms *prattein* (used here) and
     praxis (used in the central definition of tragedy in §17 and of epic
     in §58 (59^{a}19)) are firmly affiliated with *spoudaios*: see also §17 n9.

222 Literally "Let it be [? agreed] that what has been said is enough for
     us." A similar formula marks the end of the formal discussion of
     plot (before the brief discussion of character and the introduction
     of the later miscellanous notes on plot): see §45 (54^{a}13–15).

223 The reference is now all the way back to §17 and the promise to
     discuss epic later. But the discussion is still under the general head-
     ing of *spoudaios*: see §16.

224 Heinsius suggested the emendation "in hexameter," recalling §17.
     The contrast however is not between verse and prose but between

[must] come out of [the content of] the speech.²¹⁶ For what
would the *speaker's* job be if he could get across this idea with-
out using words?²¹⁷

*Speech (lexis)*²¹⁸

§ 56   One kind of study of the things to do with *lexis* [deals
10   with] the [various] ways of speaking;²¹⁹ a knowledge of this
[involves skill] in speaking and mastery in [poetic] interpreta-
tion – [knowing,] for example, what is a command, what a
prayer, a statement and a threat, a question and an answer, and
such-like. Now no censure that turns on knowledge or igno-
rance of these [matters] carries any weight in [the field of]
15   poetry. Who would [ever] accept, for example, Protagoras'
critical objection that [Homer] made a mistake by giving a
command when he thought he was saying a prayer, when he
says "Sing, goddess, the wrath – "? – to order [a person] to do
something or not [to do something], he says, is a *command*! So
let us disregard [issues of this sort] as [subject for] a different
inquiry and as having nothing to do with poetry.²²⁰

Conclusion to the Discussion of Tragedy

1459ᵃ15   § 57   Well then, about tragedy – that is, *mimesis* in action²²¹ –   (22)
we have probably said enough.²²²

B. Epic (and Tragedy)²²³

The Unity of Epic Plots

§ 58   [Now] about the narrative [art] which does its *mimesis*   **23**
in verse,²²⁴ it is clear that the plots [of epics] have to be put
together, as in tragedies, *dramatically*: that is, [built] around a
20   single action (*praxis*) whole and complete, that has a begin-

'plain verse' (verse without music) and the verse-with-harmony used in tragedy. The singular form *en metrōi* in any case implies a *single* verse-form, which in the context could only be hexameters.

225 *Mesa* (plural) as compared with *meson* (singular) in §27. If (as defined in §27) a 'middle' is simply what comes between the beginning and the end, there is no *prima facie* reason why a 'middle' cannot be subdivided into 'scenes' or episodes.

226 The word here is *dēlōsis*, not *mimēsis*; history is an *amimetic* art. In much the same way, in §31 (51^b4) Aristotle uses the verb *legein* (to tell) rather than *mimeisthai*. At the beginning of this paragraph the adjective *diēgēmatikos* and *mimētikos* are joined by 'and'; in §62 the phrase *diēgēmatikē mimēsis* (narrative mimesis) is twice repeated (59^b33, 36).

227 The contrast with history recalls §31. The point here is not that history-making is less 'philosophical' than poetry-making, but that poetry requires organic unity while history is committed to record what in fact happened – which may or may not be unified, but probably is not (see §32). But the text is uncertain. This is the only hint in the *Poetics* of a passage that might have led to the false notion of "unity of time." Aristotle clearly regards time sequence as a weak link, and no substitute for the logical *necessity* postulated for the unity of action. Furthermore, this sentence may be a later addition by Aristotle.

228 Does Aristotle have Euphorus, not Herodotus, in mind? See Else, 575–8. There may be an implied contrast between two methods of historiography – the synchronistic and the thematic.

229 The only epic poet named by Aristotle in the *Poetics* is Homer, so we cannot tell what writers he had in mind here.

230 In §29 Aristotle had said something like what follows, but not exactly this. He now says that if epic is to have dramatic quality – as it does in Homer – it must be at least selective, even though, unlike tragedy and like history, it is bound by what 'actually happened'. Cf. §52.

231 The word *mēde*, being ambiguous in the context, allows of two possibilities: either 'not ... one war' or 'not ... one man'.

232 *Merē*, elements, parts; not episodes.

233 This list seems to represent topics rather than actual plays; but of the ten, seven may be identifiable and possibly an eighth. Else suspects that the list may have been taken from Photius's summary of Proclus, but Lucas feels that this suggestion "does not compel agreement."

234 Cf. also §52

235 I decline to regard this parenthetic phrase to be a spurious and unintelligent interpolation, as Else claims. See n237 below.

ning, middle,[225] and an end, so that like a single and complete
living thing it may produce its peculiar pleasure; and [clearly,
epic] structures [should] not be like histories, in which dis-
closure[226] is necessarily made not of a single [line of] action
(*praxis*) but of a single span of time – everything that hap-
pened involving one or more persons in that [period of time],
and each of these [events] bearing to the others an accidental
25   [? random] relation.[227] (For in the way that the naval battle at
Salamis took place at the same time as the battle with the
Carthaginians in Sicily, [though] no way contributing to the
same outcome, so in the successive periods of time it often
happens that one event [takes place] at the same time as
another, yet no single result comes out of them.)[228] But most
[epic] poets actually work in this way [i.e. like historians].[229]
30   § 59   And so, as we have already said[230] and in this very sense,
how divine Homer is compared with [all] the other [epic
poets]; he did not try to make a 'whole' of the war,[231] even
though it had a beginning and an end. For the story could
tend to be much too long and not easy to take in at a glance,
or if it were of moderate length, [it would tend to be] too con-
35   fused in its variety. Actually he [? has] picked out one part [of
the story] and used many of the other [parts] as episodes
(such as the catalogue of ships and other intermezzi) and pro-
vides relief for the poem with these [episodic materials] break-
ing up [the poem]. But the other [epic poets] make[their
1459^b   epics] around one man or [out of] one [period of] time,
thereby producing one action [it's true, but] of many parts,[232]
like the man who made the *Kypria* and the *Little Iliad.* So it is
that one tragedy could be made from the *Iliad* and [one from]
the *Odyssey,* or two at most; but from the *Kypria* and the *Little*
5   *Iliad* many [have been made].^a*

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§ 59A   * [*a later note by Aristotle.*] Furthermore epic ought to   *24*
be of [literally 'have'] the same kinds as tragedy: [it can be]
either simple or complicated, and either character-centred or
10   *pathos*-centred;[234] and its parts – not counting song-making
and *opsis*[235] – are the same, for it needs *peripeteias* and recogni-

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a eight – <more>: namely the Award of Arms, Philoctetes, Neop-
tolemus, Eurypylus, Beggar-expedition, Spartan Women, Sack of
Troy, and Sailing of the Fleet <and *Sinon* and *Trojan Women*>.[233]

236 The three 'parts' (*merē* – 'phases') of epic plot correspond to the
    three specified for tragedy in §38: *peripeteia*, recognition, and *pathos*.
    For epic, *pathē* would presumably be accounts or descriptions of
    shocking acts of the kind that are usually reported by messengers in
    tragedy.

237 This looks like a careless overflow or drift into the six *merē* (phases
    of composition) in tragedy-making: plot, character, *lexis*, thought,
    melopoiia, and *opsis*. Plot and character together account for the
    four *eide* (kinds) of tragedy and of epic: (1) *peripeteia* and recogni-
    tion produce the complex plot; (2) concentration on *pathos* (the
    third *meros* of tragic plot) produces the *pathos*-centred tragedy or
    epic; (3) concentration on character (the second *meros* of tragedy)
    produces the character-centred tragedy or epic; (4) absence of
    peripeteia and recognition (two *merē* of tragic plot) produces the
    episodic plot in tragedy, to which the simple kind of plot in epic
    corresponds (cf. §36). The text is extremely difficult, and the diffi-
    culty is not lightened by the shift from *eidē* (kinds) to *merē* (parts,
    phases); but a cool head will not lose its way even here. Even the
    parenthesis of 59^{b}10 makes a kind of sense: if *lexis* and thought are
    added to the derivatives of plot and character, two of the *merē* of
    §18 are still left – *melopoiia* and *opsis*. *Opsis*, as we have seen earlier
    (§25, and cf. §41), is least integral to the art of tragedy-making, and
    of course has no place in epic-making. If we imagined that epic
    poems were thought of by Aristotle as performed to a musical
    instrument, there might be a place for *melopoiia*; but he ignores it
    for epic, and pays little attention to it in tragedy, presumably
    because of his insensitiveness to the lyrical aspects of poetry. But see
    §66.

238 One difficulty remains, however. In §52 the four 'shapes' of tragedy
    are: (1) complex, (2) *pathos*-centred, (3) character-centred, (4)
    episodic (? = simple); and Aristotle had made clear his view that the
    complex plot was the only one worth considering – that is, that the
    pathos-centred and the character-centred plots are varieties of the
    complex. But in §59A Aristotle treats simple/complex and *pathos*-
    centred/character-centred as pairs. This would allow – if we follow
    this scheme with complete strictness – of four varieties: simple and
    pathos-centred; simple and character-centred; complex and *pathos*-
    centred; complex and character-centred. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey*
    account for two of these: simple and *pathos*-centred, and complex
    and character-centred. Both §§52 and 59A are elliptical and incom-
    plete (quite apart from the textual difficulties in §59A). The classifi-
    cation is not completely four-square in either place; but §59A at
    least does not overlook the fact that the simple/complex distinction

tions and *pathē;*[236] also the thoughts and wording (*lexis*) [must be] beautifully handled.[237] And all this Homer managed for the first time and appropriately. For in fact each of his poems is specifically framed, the *Iliad* being simple and *pathos*-cen-
15   tred, the *Odyssey* complicated (for [there is] recognition all the way through) and character-centred;[238] and beyond this he has surpassed everybody [else] in wording and 'thought'.

Differences between Epic and Tragedy

§ 60   But epic [?-making] differs [from tragedy] [in two respects:]   in respect of (*a*) the length of the composition, and (*b*) the verse-form [used].

is not logically exclusive. However, Aristotle would have dismissed a character-centred simple plot as inadequate to tragedy; and it is noticeable that the pairing in Homer's case links weak with strong in each case – simple with *pathos* (implicitly action) and complex with (weak) character.

239 See §28

240 Cf. *eusunoptos* in §59, for which 'con-spicuous' would be a good word if only it were not appropriated to more spectacular uses.

241 The normal length of the Greek epics known to us is approximately 4200 lines for a tragedy performed as part of a trilogy and for the central action of the *Iliad* and of the *Odyssey*. Each of Homer's epics, in its episodic variety, is much longer: *Iliad* 15,693 lines; *Odyssey* 12,105 lines. See also §62A.

242 An inference on Aristotle's part: the adaptation was complete and established in the Homeric poems, and Aristotle knew no earlier epic. Aristotle's notion that the 'kinds', e.g. epic and tragedy, disclose their *physis* and are not 'invented' by poets, is not at variance with his inference here, but rather reinforces it: for by accommodation, the proper verse 'finds itself' in realizing the nature of the 'kind' it is intended to utter.

243 Else dislikes the word 'stately' for *stasimos*, but I use it to recall the slow-moving, leisurely, detached deportment of Aristotle's *megalopsychos* – 'great-souled man'. There is no reason why Aristotle himself should not have this connexion in mind, for it is the word he uses in *EN* 1125^{a}14 of the speech of the great-souled man, meaning slow-moving – a good contrasting term to the word used here for 'active', 'full of movement', *kinētikos.*

244 The Greek for "hard words" is 'glosses', which, as used again in 1457^{b}35 (Appendix B) means foreign or strange words. At 1459^{a}10 (Appendix B) Aristotle says that although 'glosses' are proper to epic, metaphors are proper rather to iambic verse (see also *Rhetoric* 1406^{b}3). In this passage, however, Aristotle may mean by 'metaphors' extended similes which are characteristic of epic and proper to it.

245 On Chaeremon's "mixed rhapsody" see §3A and n15.

246 This need not refer further back than the beginning of §62, but it cannot hurt to recall §12 on the way tragedy progressively realised its own nature.

247 Although this digressive paragraph is not to do with the comparison of epic and tragedy, it is perhaps not far removed from §61 where Aristotle had charged epics with being excessively long. Homer was not named there, yet Homer's epics were far and away the longest in existence, with the single exception of Antimachus's *Thebaïs*. For an account of the actual length of the Greek epics, see Else, 604–5.

§ 61   (*a*) Length: Now the limit of length [already] considered is the proper one;[239] for it should be possible to encompass the beginning and the end in one view.[240] This would be so, if the poems were to be shorter than those of the old writers, and [if they] were to be something near the size of the tragedies that are presented to us for a single hearing.[241] But the epic has a peculiar [way] of greatly stretching out its length; because in tragedy it is not [possible] to represent several parts of the action as happening at the same time, but only the part [that is occurring] on the stage and [being acted] by the actors, whereas it is possible, by narrative [means], for several parts [of the action] to be going forward at once, and [it is] because of these – provided they are proper [to the subject] – [that] the bulk of the poem is increased. So this has the advantage[a] of affecting [the listener], namely, [by] varying [the poem] with diverse episodes; for it is lack of variety [i.e. likeness, monotonous similarity] and the quick satiety [that it brings] that can make tragedies flop.

§ 62   (*b*) Verse or Metre: The heroic verse has been adapted [to epic] as a result of experiment.[242] For if anybody had made a narrative *mimesis* in some other verse [form], or in several others, [the procedure] would declare itself as inappropriate. For the [verse] is the most stately[243] and weightiest (that's why it is most accommodating of both hard words and metaphors,[244] for narrative *mimesis* assumed [a form] peculiar [in this respect] compared with [all] other [forms]; whereas iambic [trimeter] and [trochaic] tetrameter, on the other hand, are active and nervous [full of movement], the one suited to dancing, the other to action. It would be very inappropriate if a person were to mix these together as Chaeremon [did].[245] So nobody has made a long poem in any other [verse] than the heroic, for – as we said[246] – the very nature [of the 'kind'] teaches [us] how to choose what [verse] fits it.*

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§ 62A   *   [*a digression by Aristotle on Homer's dramatic quality.*] But certainly Homer is worthy of praise for many [reasons], and particularly because only he of [all] the poets was well aware what [as a poet] he should be making.[247] For a poet should speak as little as possible in his own person – that is not

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a in encouraging the grand manner

Marginal line numbers: 20, 25, 30, 35, 1460[a]

248 The Greek word here is *mimētes*, not *poiētes*.

249 The Greek reads literally: "they imitate few things" but that word-
     ing is too crude to convey what Aristotle means.

250 Here Aristotle uses the word *ēthos* (character) to mean *persona* – the
     only time he does this. Lucas suggests that for "some other figure"
     we should extend Aristotle's series and think of "gods, ghosts, chil-
     dren?"

251 Throughout the discussion of epic, Aristotle has Homer continu-
     ously in mind rather than epic altogether. Aristotle admired
     Homer's dramatic power and saw in it the origin of specialized
     drama. If his elevation of the dramatic qualities of Homer inter-
     feres with his discussion of the more specifically narrative qualities
     of epic, the gain is for the cause of poetry in general even if, in the
     process, the account of the *physis* of epic loses some distinctness of
     outline.

252 In §34 the element of surprise was associated with the illogical or
     paradoxical, and so with *peripeteia* and recognition in the complex
     tragic plot. Tragedy and epic have a similar emotional end (*telos*),
     and so use similar resources. *Catharsis*, however, is not a necessary
     part of the scheme for epic.

253 A defect in tragedy when it occurs, since all must be according to
     an inner logic (see §35). But there is an obvious connexion
     between surprise and the illogical when the surprise comes about
     through a break in the logic of expectation.

254 Literally, "it is a sign that."

255 Cf. §36A.

256 Literally, "but this is false" – that is, there is no logical connexion.

257 *Odyssey* 19.220–48

258 The word translated as "possible" is *dunaton*, which simply means
     'possible'; it is not the equivalent of *anangion* (necessary) which in
     §28 and elsewhere is distinguished from *eikos* (likely).

259 In §53 there was a hint that the writers of epic-style tragedies were
     misled by their pursuit of the surprising thereby deflecting atten-
     tion from the central and unified/unifying plot that tragedy
     depends upon.

260 The Greek reads *en tō dramati*, which in the light of §7A reminds us
     that the radical meaning of the word *drama* is 'action'.

how he [serves his function as] a *mimesis*-maker[248]. Now the
other [poets] get in on the act [*literally* 'take part in the con-
test'] the whole time, and do little in the way of *mimesis*[249] and
10   that seldom; but Homer makes a few introductory words by
way of preface, and immediately brings on a man or a woman
or some other figure,[250] and not one of them 'flat', but [each
single one] a person of character.[251]

The Surprising and Illogical in Epic

§ 63   Now surely you should use the element of surprise [or
wonder] in tragedies,[252] but in epic-making more [scope] is
allowed for the illogical – the main source of surprise[253] –
because [in epic] we do not [actually] *see* the actor doing the
15   action. For example, the details of the pursuit of Hector
would look ridiculous on stage – [the Achaeans] standing
there and not pursuing [Hector] and [Achilles] waving them
back; but in the epic we do not notice [this absurdity]. Sur-
prise, anyway, is a pleasure: you know how[254] anybody telling
a story exaggerates in order to please [his listeners]. But
Homer especially has also taught the other [poets] how to tell
20   lies tellingly. And this is [a matter of inducing] false infer-
ence.[255] People think that if a certain thing *B* exists or hap-
pens, and exists and happens *after* another thing *A*, then *A*
being prior [to *B*] also exists or happens, [even though] there
is no necessary connexion[256] between the two; so [the poet]
must add [*B*] to the first false statement *A*, [representing it] as
25   necessarily being or happening; so our mind reasons incor-
rectly that the first thing *A* is true because the second *B* is true.
There is an example of this in the foot-washing episode.[257]

The Possible and the Plausible

§ 64   You should choose [to render] things that are impossi-
ble but [will look] plausible, rather than things that are possi-
ble[258] but [look] unbelievable, and not put together your plots
out of illogical elements; above all you should use nothing
illogical [in your plots], or if you *must*, it should be outside the
30   [main] plot[259] (like [Oedipus] not knowing how Laius died) –
certainly not inside the [main] action[260] (like the [people]
reporting the Pythian games in the *Electra*, or the man in the
Mysians who has come [all the way] from Tegea to Mysia with-

261 That is, annulled, rendered totally illogical.

262 The Greek text is uncertain and elliptical. Another interpretation, less convincing because less continuous with what follows, is: "if a poet does this and it appears that he could have done so less irrationally, it is absurd [as well as ridiculous]."

263 In *Odyssey* 13 he is put ashore in Ithaca miraculously rather than by choice, and so arrives in his native land at the nadir of his fortunes, alone and "tempest-tossed."

264 Aristotle's prescription turns out to be hierarchical: (1) avoid the impossible/illogical; (2) if you must use the impossible/illogical, keep it out of the main plot; (3) if you decide to use it, handle it so that it seems plausible.

265 At this point Ch. 25 (1460^b6–61^b25) on the 'Homeric Question' is omitted: it is printed here in Appendix C. See also the "General Note to the Appendices."

266 Aristotle, who had raised the question before in §13, was not the first to raise it. Plato in *Laws* 658D had given the preference to epic as the choice of the old people or 'grown-ups', arguing that tragedy was more to the taste of educated women and to boys and (wearisome) to a cultivated person, hence 'popular', appealing to the vulgar taste. Is the unnamed critic in §65 perhaps Plato?

267 The text is corrupt and difficult here. Another possible reading is: "... that <always> appeals to the better audience, [it would be] clear that the most widely representative ['kind' of art] is the most vulgar." For Plato's condemnation of blunderbus art, however, see *Republic* 397A.

268 Overacting in tragedy became increasingly prevalent as time went on; so, by inference, the earlier the performance and the older the actor, the purer. Hence Aristotle's comment in *Rhetoric* 1403^b33 that actors had become more important than poets. For the adverse effect of a degenerate taste in the audience on the writers of tragedies, see §40.

269 The point presumably must have been that Callippides moved his audience by his excessively realistic performances. Yet Aristotle says elsewhere that an ape is like a man but funnier.

270 Of the three flute-players named – Mynniscus, Callippides, and Pindarus – the first two, and probably the third, were celebrated actors of the fifth century, long before Aristotle was born; and matters had got much worse since then (§66).

271 See §3, the inserted phrase about the dancers. The comment here is ironic: the actor was not meant to be a dancer.

out uttering a word). It is ridiculous to say that the plot would
be ruined [otherwise];²⁶¹ for right from the beginning you
should not put together [plots] of that kind. But if [a poet]

35   does put in [something illogical] and it looks pretty convinc-
ing, it is acceptable even though absurd.²⁶² When [we consid-
er] the illogical elements in the *Odyssey* to do with Odysseus

1460ᵇ   going ashore in Ithaca,²⁶³ they would clearly not be acceptable
[literally 'tolerable'] if [it were] a second-rate poet handling
them; but as it is, the poet [Homer] makes the absurdity dis-
appear by 'spicing' it with other good things.²⁶⁴ But you
should take special pains with your language in the unexciting
passages where neither character nor intellect [is in play]; for

5   contrary [to expectation] too dazzling [a use of] language
can overshadow both character and 'argument'.²⁶⁵

The Superiority of Tragedy to Epic

Arguments in Favour of Epic

§ 65   The question might be raised which is the better, the
epic *mimesis*, or the tragic.²⁶⁶ For if the less vulgar ['kind'] is
better, and this (such) is the one that appeals to the better
[kind of] audience, it would be clear that [the 'kind'] that rep-
resents the widest range of things (literally 'everything what-
soever') is the vulgar ['kind'].²⁶⁷ For [on the principle that]

1461ᵇ30 the audience do not get the hang of [the piece] unless [the
actor] overacts, they are roused to all sorts of movement, like
the bad flute-players who wallow about if it's a matter of doing
the flight of the discus, or pluck-and-drag-and-haul at the cho-
rus-leader when they are doing the *Scylla*. So, [they argue,]
that's the way tragedy is – the way the old-time actors used to

35   think of the modern ones;²⁶⁸ Mynniscus for example, calls
Callippides an ape for his excessive overacting,²⁶⁹ and there

1462ᵃ   was the same sort of view of Pindarus.²⁷⁰ As these [i.e. the mod-
ern actors] stand to those [i.e. the old-timers], so the whole art
[of *mimesis*] stands to epic-making. So people say that the one
[i.e. epic] [appeals] to a superior audience who have no need
of dance-figures,²⁷¹ and that the other [i.e. tragedy] [appeals]
to a low-brow audience. If then [tragedy] is vulgar, it is obvi-
ously inferior.

272 Literally "[dancing] of the low persons."

273 Literally "he represented not-free (i.e. low) women." Not that he acted the parts of servile or coarse women, but that his gestures were of a kind that resembled the gestures of loose or coarse women.

274 An obscure passage. Else refers *tonto* to *katēgoria* (reproach, accusation); but it is ham-acting (as Aristotle has already argued), not the censure, that is not essential to the nature of tragedy. Else translates: "this deficiency need not be reckoned against it."

275 Aristotle says in §16A and confirms in §59A, that four of the six *merē* ('parts', phases) are common to epic and tragedy; tragedy alone has *melopoiia* and *opsis*. See also §59A n237.

276 The word here translated 'music' is *mousikē*, a word frequently used by Plato; but this is the only time Aristotle uses it in the *Poetics*. Cf. §26 where *melopoiia* – song-making, both words and music – was described as the most important of the 'sweetenings' of tragedy.

277 Cf. §48: the poet, while composing, must "see [everything] right before his eyes."

278 That is, primarily in terms of length (*megethos*) rather than of time, hence a direct comparison with epic. Else translates: "the end of the imitation comes in a shorter span" – which Lucas considers "odd Greek." Aristotle is here clearly invoking a principle of *economy* rather than the unity (span) of time.

279 The word is *kekramenon*, a metaphor of wine diluted with water. Cf. *hydratē* below, "watered-down."

280 An extreme example, the *Iliad* being the longest epic Aristotle knew. See §61 n241.

281 The phrase that follows here in the manuscript is transposed by Else to the end of the sentence. I print it as a footnote by Aristotle.

282 See §61 where this proposition is developed at greater length.

283 The word is actually "mouse-tailed," but the tails of cats are more likely to end abruptly than the tails of mice – and it is an abrupt ending that Aristotle has in mind.

284 Perhaps another glimpse of 'the great-souled man': see §62 note 243.

285 The "such parts" are the actions or episodes that could be developed into a tragedy.

286 Aristotle had reminded us at the opening of §58 that epic, like tragedy – if it is to be dramatic – must have a single action which is whole and complete.

Arguments in Favour of Tragedy

§ 66   In the first place, the accusation is not against the *poiet-ic* art but against the art of acting; surely it is possible to over-act the part in reciting [an epic], as Sosistratos used to do, or in singing in a contest, as Mnasitheus of Opus used to. Again, not every [sort of dramatic] movement is to be rejected out of hand, if [we accept that] it is not dancing that is [to be cen-sured] but only low-brow dancing[272] – which is what Callippi-
10   des was censured for, and others nowadays – that he acted like a coarse woman.[273] Further, tragedy can make its [effect] even without movement as well as epic [can]; for its essential nature can be seen by reading. If then it [i.e. tragedy] is superior in other respects, this [style of performance] does not necessari-ly belong to it.[274] Secondly, since it [i.e. tragedy] has every-
15   thing that epic has[275] (and can even use the [epic] verse), and music[276] besides*a* – no trifling [additional] element – by which the enjoyment [of the audience] is most vividly aroused; again, it also has the [element of] vividness, both in reading and in
1462b   performance.[277] Further, it fulfills the purpose of the *mimesis* in shorter compass;[278] for a thing when rather concentrated is more enjoyable (sweeter) than when it is diffused[279] over a considerable time: for example, I mean the sort of thing [that would happen] if you were to set Sophocles's Oedipus [*Tyran-nus*] in as many verses as the *Iliad* [has].[280] Even less [enjoy-
5   able] is the so-called 'single' *mimesis* of the epic writers:[281]* if

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*[*a footnote of Aristotle's*] A sign of this: out of any [epic] *mime-sis*, whatever qualities it has, several tragedies can be made.[282]

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they make [what they call] a 'single' plot, it is either given in short form and seems bob-tailed,[283] or it matches the stride of the [epic] verse[284] and seems watered down. I mean the sort of thing [that happens] if it is compounded of many actions: the *Iliad*, for example, has many such parts,*b* and [each of]
10   these in itself has [a certain] size,*c* and it is put together as well as [the epic art] permits, seeing that it is above all a *mimesis* of a single action.[286]

a and the element of *opsis*

b and the *Odyssey*

c and such-like poems[285]

287 One art for tragedy and epic, since both were considered together
     as dealing with 'serious' subjects and people.

288 In §§41 and 58.

289 Although the end (*telos*) is not specified here, and although the
     theme of pity and terror is not once mentioned in the discussion of
     epic, Aristotle emphatically – here at the end of his examination of
     mimēseis tōn spoudaiōn and looking back over the argument as a
     whole – states that tragedy and epic have the same 'end'. The 'end'
     of tragedy is mentioned in only two places: §41 – "a pleasure that
     comes out of pity and terror through *mimesis*" – and §58 – "the
     peculiar pleasure" that comes from "unity and structural perfection
     of plot."

PART IV

1   The closing words. Whether or not the second book actually existed
     cannot be conclusively proved, but the evidence for its existence is
     strong and various. The words in pointed brackets were deciphered
     by Landi in manuscript Riccardianus 46 in 1925; they are accepted
     (with varying degrees of hesitation) by all recent editors except
     J. Hardy and Daniel de Montmollin.

Tragedy Is Superior

§ 67   If then it [i.e. tragedy] is superior [i.e. differs] in all
these respects and also in the [central] function of the art[287]
(for these [two kinds – tragedy and epic –] should produce
not a casual pleasure but the pleasure [already] discussed[288]),
it is evident that it [i.e. tragedy] must be superior, inasmuch as
15   it fulfills the purpose [of the art] better than epic [does].

Conclusion to 'Serious' Poetry

§ 68   Well then, of tragedy and epic, and their forms and
'parts', and how many they are and how they differ, and the
causes for [things turning out] well or not, and criticism and
'solutions' – about [all these], let this be an end.[289]

PART IV   'LIGHT' POETRY

§ 69   <Now, about 'iambics' and comedies ...>[1]

cetera desunt

Aristotle is discussing the various forms of 'single' plot to see which forms arouse pity and terror. Roughly speaking, he considers three of the four permutations produced by an action that, for a 'good' man and a 'bad' man, leads to a fortunate or disastrous conclusion. Since the quality of the action and the quality of emotional involvement are for Aristotle functions of the quality of the person acting, Aristotle distinguishes the various plot-actions with such emphasis on 'character' that some commentators have mistakenly supposed that in this section he was considering 'character' rather than 'plot'. But the structure of the *Poetics* up to this point shows clearly that Aristotle is not only dealing here with the structure of plot but with part of the question how to make a plot *tragic*. In approaching a definition as crucial as the one at the end of §39 Aristotle can be expected to move towards a refined specification of the person who can induce and be engaged in an action as subtle and elusive as the tragic action. The appearance of three words – *epieikēs, mochthēros, ponēros* – which had not appeared before in the *Poetics* and the absence of the earlier key terms *spoudaios* and *phaulos* suggests that some refinement is afoot. Indeed he is setting out a matrix of moral terms that allows him to 'place' the tragic protagonist in relation to the specific tragic *praxis* in rather more refined terms than a simple opposition between 'good/virtuous' and 'bad/wicked'.

Aristotle considers four possibilities for the tragic plot and their ability to arouse pity and terror: (a) the *epieikēs* man changes from prosperity to disaster, which is disgusting; (b) the *mochthēros* man changes from bad fortune to good, which fulfils none of the tragic requirements; (c) the thoroughly *ponēros* man falls from good fortune to bad, which is perhaps 'pathetic' but not a matter of pity or terror; (d) the man "between these" who is "not of outstanding virtue and judgment" and who because of "some mistake" comes to disaster: this is tragic. Some possibilities are here neglected by Aristotle, but our knowledge of Greek tragic protagonists prevents us from leaving him floating in the broad area between the "thoroughly wicked man" and the paragon who is incapable of making a mistake.

If we consider that Aristotle is not merely running through a group of ill-defined possibilities but really trying to reach an exact definition of tragic action, we will recognize that he is choosing his words carefully. Otherwise we identify *ponēros* with *mochthēros* and *epieikēs* with an

exalted version of [? *spoudaios*], and the possibility of a refined defini-
tion "between these" has been lost. The key word in refining the scale
of reference is *epieikēs*; for if we take it in the sense of *NE* 1137b as an
"unqualifiedly good" man it has become identifiable with the man "of
outstanding virtue and judgment," whereas "If there is a Greek word
which can be generally applied to the leading characters of tragedy it
is *epieikēs*" (Lucas, 140). If *epieikēs* equals *spoudaios*, then we should
expect a term to correspond to *phaulos*. This term would have to be
mochthēros, and *mochthēros* – as a term opposite to *epieikēs* – is our only
hope of pinning down the intended meaning of *epieikēs* in this crucial
context.

Lucas points out (on 52^{b}34–36) that "*epieikēs*, apart from a particu-
lar sense of 'fair' or 'equitable' ..., is a word of general, not very enthu-
siastic, approbation ... and implying [like *spoudaios* and *chrēstos*] some
social standing, in fact the kind of man who is described in Chs. 2 and
15 as the proper subject for tragedy." Else unfortunately does not com-
ment upon the word and translates it as 'virtuous' both in the *Argument*
and in his translation. Both Lucas and Else, then, appear to take
epieikēs as a synonym for *spoudaios*. Since there is a shift from *spoudaios*
to *epieikēs*, we can expect a shift from the standard opposed term *phau-
los*: in this case it is *mochthēros*, a more specific term than *phaulos*, so
presumably the shift from *spoudaios* to *epieikēs* is correspondingly a shift
from a general sense to a more specific meaning.

The primary lexical meaning of *epieikēs* is 'capable, able'. Although
the secondary meaning of *mochthēros* is 'rascally, knavish', the primary
meaning is 'wretched, in distress, in bad shape'. If we take *epieikēs* and
mochthēros in their primary sense, we have a contrast between the man
who is prosperous as a mark of his ability but not definitely much bet-
ter than he need be – perhaps on the border line between *spoudaios*
and *phaulos* – and the scruffy, wretched, dissolute man, morally inept
and definitely *phaulos*. Examples (a) and (b) account for this pair of
opposites. The shift in (c) to a much deeper level of wickedness than
mochthēros in the rather sinister word *ponēros* (definitely 'wicked', 'evil')
which is then accentuated with the adverb *sphodra* (exceedingly) pro-
vides the opposite term to the man "of outstanding virtue and judg-
ment" who is mentioned in, but is not the subject of, (d). We now have
two pairs of opposites, the first lying within the moral compass of the
second. In increasing order of virtue the scheme is then: *sphodra
ponēros*, *mochthēros*, *epieikēs*, the tragic protagonist [*spoudaios*], "the man
of outstanding virtue and judgment." If my reading of §6 is correct in
dismissing, with Else, the notion of a middle term *homoioi* (like us)
between the *spoudaioi* and the *phauloi*, it is of some importance to pre-
vent the tragic protagonist from drifting into the middle position 'like

us' that could follow from Lucas's (no doubt unguarded) phrase "a man who is neither very good nor very bad" (302). *Epieikēs* and *mochthēros* are evidently an antithetical pair and *sphodra ponēros* is obviously 'below' *mochthēros*. Therefore, the unexpressed antithetical term to *sphodra ponēros* (finally thrown away in the course of (d) as though it were a term already in mind) completes the frame in which Aristotle can say that the tragic protagonist is "in among these" (rather than 'between' because we have no clearly specified pair of terms for him to lie *between*). His exact location is specified in the course of (d). This interpretation provides a gradation of the general class *spoudaioi* (presumably with the *homoioi* on or just below the borderline of the *phauloi*) from the example of lay excellence (*epieikēs*) to the paragon of virtue. In the 'capable' man we cannot be certain that his ability will be matched by moral strength, and the man of outstanding virtue and judgment is 'too good' to be fallible, to be merely *spoudaios*: between these is the tragic protagonist who is capable of making a big mistake, and does. The gradation also implies the particular blend of ability and moral strength that is characteristic of the tragic protagonist. And by throwing the emphasis on the quality of the actors in the plot, Aristotle has submerged the crucial question about the protagonist's responsibility for what happens to him.

There is an apparent difficulty for this interpretation when *mochthēria* turns up twice before the discussion of the well-made tragic plot is finished (53^a9, 15). In the first instance the word is linked with *kakia* ('badness', 'wickedness', the opposite term to *aretē*, 'virtue') and is usually translated 'wickedness'. But *mochthēria* can as well be a variant as the second term of a doublet (approximate synonym) and I have translated it as 'depravity' – the state of a person not "thoroughly evil" but one who has "gone to the bad" or "gone to pieces." In the second instance *mochthēria* is the single term dismissed in favour of *hamartia* as the germ of the tragic action; but here, even more than in the first case, Aristotle need not be thinking of the profound or extreme badness implied by the word 'wickedness'. Indeed he had shown that there wasn't any hope for the thoroughly bad man as a tragic protagonist. His point about *hamartia* as the essential cause of tragedy is heightened if the alternative he dismisses is an attractive possibility – the scruffy, morally-down-at-heels, well-intentioned but variable man that is all too 'like us'.

Lucas gives a quick outline of §39: "The possibilities are put in terms of good or bad men changing to good or bad fortune. The solution is to be found in the misfortunes of a man who is neither very good nor very bad and who acts under the influence of *hamartia*, not frailty as opposed to badness, but error as opposed to evil intent" (302). Aristo-

tle's exactness of moral discrimination is called forth by his discrimi-
nating of the *praxis* peculiar to tragedy. What appears to be a scheme
based on simple-minded, even banal, distinctions turns out to be a pas-
sage haunted by the shifting lights on single words.

G.W.

EXCURSUS NOTE 2: MEROS AND EIDOS
(further to §52, n195)

Professor Whalley left the merest heading "*Merē* and *Eidē* " for a note
he clearly intended to be a substantial treatment of what he regarded
as two crucial terms in Aristotle's view of tragedy. Probably he would
have wished to indicate the variety of content Aristotle covered in the
word *eidos* (plural *eidē*): the word is as important as any in the entire
Aristotelian corpus and can mean 'form', 'essence', 'species', 'type', or
even 'shape' according to context. Although it can, in places where
Aristotle is distinguishing his position from that of Plato in discussions
of the Ideas and the nature of definition, assume a narrow, precise and
almost 'technical' sense, he is not in the least wooden in his use of
these central words and terms: he can use *eidos* narrowly or loosely and
its meaning depends very much on the argument he is pursuing at the
time. The word *eidos* (idea) is etymologically connected with the root
<*v*>*idere* (to see) and suggests the external appearance of an object, as
in contemporary "videotape" and so on; hence it has become usual to
stress that 'shape' is an important strand in the texture of meanings of
eidos and Professor Whalley was much concerned to emphasize this
aspect of the word. On the other hand, it may be doubted that this ety-
mological association detected by modern philology was much present
to Aristotle.

Merē is also a word of intractable difficulty for translators: the usual
rendering as 'parts' suggests the quantitative division of a sensible
object. Whalley felt (as do many commentators) that the English term
was quite inadequate to indicate the content of *merē* in the context of
the unity of a definition and its elements: for example, in defining
'water' as the unity of hydrogen and oxygen in certain proportions,
are the elements to be called 'parts' of the definition? Whalley was par-
ticularly sensitive to the inadequacy of 'parts' in relation to the inter-
nal distinctions contained in the *eidos* of tragedy. He talks in his note
on 1455b34 of 'aspects' of the 'shape' [*eidos*] of a tragedy and argues
that 'moments' is a better rendering: "the *merē* become dynamic
'moments' associated with primary centres of force." The use of

'moment' to indicate a distinguishable but related element in a unified whole (such as a definition) was imported into English critical discourse in the nineteenth century from German idealism; used with caution and explanation it is a serviceable addition to the repertoire of English terms available to the modern interpreter of Aristotle.

<div align="right">P.A.</div>

Appendices

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Appendices

Professor Whalley's manuscript contained no translation of certain chapters of the *Poetics*; these are given here as Appendices A, B, and C. His reasons for omitting chapter 12 [Appendix A (1452^b15–1452^b27)] and chapters 20–22 [Appendix B (1456^b20–1459^a14)] will be obvious to the general reader: Chapter 12 is of doubtful authenticity and though twentieth century opinion has been kinder to it than earlier scholarship, it adds little of value to Aristotle's treatment of tragedy, even if the notion of a play having "quantitative parts" is not without interest. Chapters 20–22 (Appendix B) will concern more the historian of grammar or etymology than the student of poetry: they contain material that is scarcely intelligible without some knowledge of the Greek language, though even here there are hints and glimpses of Aristotle's profound penetration of the poetic culture of the Greeks. The omission of the long chapter 25 (1460^b6–1461^b25) is more difficult to understand. Its dependence in some sections on (once again) a direct familiarity with Greek might have suggested their unsuitability for the Greekless reader and the internal coherence of the section has given rise to much scholarly debate, but the chapter is full of valuable Aristotelian insights into the 'Homeric Question' (as this was understood in the fourth century) and the nature of poetic composition.

The appendices are given here in the interest of completeness and a juster appreciation of the range and character of Aristotelian discourse rather than in any attempt at scholarly elucidation.

P.A.

1452^{b}15   We have spoken earlier of the 'parts' – in the sense in which   *12*
these should be regarded as constituent elements of the whole
or 'form' – of tragedy; but the 'parts' considered quantitative-
ly and into which as separate sections tragedy is divided are as
follows: *prologos* (prologue), *epeisodion* (episode), *exodos* and
the 'choral part' – which is further subdivided into *parados*
(entrance song) and *stasima*; these are common to all plays
while 'actors' songs' and *kommoi* are found in some but not in
others.

20   The *prologos* is that entire section of a tragedy which pre-
cedes the entrance of the chorus; the *epeisodion* is the complete
section of a tragedy which comes between complete choral
songs; the *exodos* is that complete section of a tragedy after
which there is no song from the chorus. In the choral part, the
parados is the first complete utterance of the chorus and a *stasi-*
25   *mon* is a choral song without anapaests or trochees; a *kommos* is
a dirge shared by both chorus and actors. We spoke previous-
ly of those 'parts' of a tragedy which ought to be regarded as
constituent elements of its essence; the quantitative 'parts' –
the separate sections into which it is divided – are these [enu-
merated here].

1456^b20   Language in general contains these parts: the letter, the syl-   *20*
lable, the connective, the noun, the verb, the article, the case
or inflexion, and the statement or sentence.

    The letter is an indivisible sound; not every sound, however,
is a letter but only one which naturally combines with others
[to make a sound that has meaning]. For the animals can utter
indivisible sounds but I do not call these 'letters'. These

25   sounds I mean may be either vowels, semi-vowels or mutes. A
vowel is a sound that is audible without any additional letter; a
semi-vowel that which is audible with the addition of another
letter – for example, s and R; a mute is a letter that has no
sound by itself when another letter is added but, when com-
bined with a letter that does have a sound of its own, becomes

30   audible – G and D, for example. These letters differ because
the shape of the mouth varies in uttering them and the place
in the mouth where they are produced differs; again they dif-
fer as they are aspirated or not, whether they are pronounced
long or short, or whether their pitch is acute, grave or inter-
mediate. The detailed investigation of these matters properly
belongs to metrics.

35   A syllable is a non-significant sound made up of mutes and
letters that have sounds of their own: for GR without the A can
be a syllable or with it as in GRA. To investigate these distinc-
tions also belongs to metrics.

1457^a   A connective is a non-significant sound which neither pre-
vents nor produces the union of many sounds into one signif-
icant sound and which cannot naturally stand at the beginning
of an utterance as, for example, *men, de, toi* and *de*; or it is a

5   non-significant sound which has the capacity of forming one
significant sound out of several sounds, each of them signifi-
cant as, for example, *amphi, peri*, etc.

    An article is a non-significant sound which marks the begin-
ning, end or divisions of an utterance: its natural position is
the beginning, middle or end of a phrase.

10   A noun is a composite significant sound, without any indi-
cation of time, formed out of sounds which have by themselves
no significance; even in two-part composite nouns the parts
are not regarded as significant in themselves: thus in Theodor-
us [the gift of god] the "doros" [gift] is not independently sig-
nificant.

A verb is a significant combination of sounds (no part of
15   which, just as in nouns, is independently significant) indicat-
ing time. Neither "man" nor "white" expresses time or the
when, whereas "walks" or "has walked" indicates present or
past time.
20   Inflexion belongs to both noun and verb and indicates
either the relation 'of', 'to', or the like; or it expresses number,
whether one or many, as in "man" or "men"; or it may indicate
a mode of utterance – a command or a question: "did he
walk?" (*ebadizen?*) and "walk!" (*badize!*) are inflexions of this
sort.
A sentence or phrase is a significant combination of sounds,
25   some of which are independently significant. Not every such
combination of sounds consists of nouns and verbs – for exam-
ple the definition of man – and it may dispense with the verb;
but it will always retain some part that is significant, as in the
sentence "Kleon is walking" the word "Kleon" is independent-
30   ly significant. The unity of a sentence or phrase may be of two
kinds: it may be one as the *Iliad* is one, by a linking of its parts;
or it may be one like the definition of 'man' because it indi-
cates one thing.
A noun can be either simple or double. A simple noun is   *21*
one made up of parts that are not independently significant,
e.g. *ge* (earth); a 'double' or compound noun is made up
either of parts that are not independently significant in com-
bination with parts that are independently significant (though
35   neither of these retains its nature in the compound) or it is
made up of parts that are independently significant. Such
compound nouns may have three, four, or multiple parts as
very many words in the dialect of Marseilles; for example "*Her-
mocaicoxanthus*" ...
1457^b   Every noun is either current or strange or metaphorical or
ornamental or newly invented or lengthened or abbreviated
or otherwise altered. By 'current' I mean a noun used by every-
body in a particular people; by 'strange' I mean one imported
or used by another people: clearly then the same word can be
5   both current and strange but not to the same people: thus, for
example, *sigynon* is current among the Cypriots for a kind of
spear, but to us it is strange.
Metaphor is the transference of a word of another signifi-
cance either from genus to species, or from species to genus
or from species to species or by analogy or proportion. By
10   "from genus to species" I mean an expression like "my ship

stands there," for lying at anchor is a species or kind of stand-
ing. From species to genus: "Verily ten thousand noble deeds
hath Odysseus wrought" where "ten thousand" is a large num-
ber and is used here in place of many. From species to species:
"with the blade of bronze drawing out the life" and "cutting
15   with the unwearied bronze" where "drawing out" is used in
place of "cutting" and "cutting" in place of "drawing out"
because both "drawing out" and "cutting" mean removing
something. Metaphor "by analogy or proportion" is when the
second term is related to the first as the fourth is to the third.
The fourth can then be used for the second or the second for
the fourth; sometimes even the term to which the proper word
20   is relative may be added: as the cup is to Dionysus what the
shield is to Ares, the poet may speak of the cup as "the shield
of Dionysus" or of the shield as "the cup of Ares." Or again: as
old age is to life so is evening to the day: one may then say the
evening is the day's old age, or to speak of old age as the
25   evening of life or (as did Empedocles) the sunset of life. Some-
times there does not exist a word for some terms of the pro-
portion but we can still use this kind of metaphor nonetheless.
For example, to scatter seed is called to sow but when the sun
scatters his flames it has no special word; still the action bears
to the sun the same relation as the sowing to the seed, there-
30   fore we find the expression "sowing the god-created flame."
There is further another way of using this kind of metaphor:
after applying the transferred term to something we may deny
one of its usual aspects: thus we might call the shield not "the
cup of Ares" but "the wineless cup."

An 'invented' word is one adopted by the poet himself but
which was not previously used by anyone else at all: there are
such coinings as, for example, when 'sprouts' is used for
'horns' or 'prayer-sayers' for 'priests.' A word is 'lengthened'
1458ᵃ   when a normally short vowel is changed to a long one or when
a syllable is inserted as '*poleōs*' for '*poleos*'and '*Peleideo*'for '*Pelei-
dou*'; it is contracted when some part has been omitted, for
example, *kri, do ... ops*. A word is 'altered' when one part of the
word is left unchanged but another part is invented, '*dexiteron*'
[right] for '*dexion*'.

*[Nouns themselves may be masculine, feminine or neuter
(intermediate). Masculine are those that end in 'n', 'r', 's' or
its compounds which are two: '*psi*' and '*xi*'; feminine are those
10   that terminate in long vowels – either those that are always
long as *eta* or *omega* or those that admit of lengthening as

alpha. The terminations, then, of masculine and feminine nouns turn out to be equally three in number – *'psi'* and *'xi'* are compounds of (the same as) *'s'* [*sigma*]. No noun ends in a mute nor with a vowel that is short by nature; only three end in *'i'* [*iota*] – *meli* (honey), *kommi* (gum), and *peperi* (pepper); five end in *'u'* [*upsilon*]. These terminations belong to neuter or intermediates, which also end in *'n'* and *'s'*.]

1458ª   The perfection of style is to be clear without being common.
20   Now the clearest style is that which is composed of current terms but this is common. Examples of this is the poetry of Cleophon and Sthenelus; on the other hand a style that is dignified and avoids colloquialism will use 'unusual' words. By 'unusual' I mean foreign or rare words, metaphor, or the lengthening of words – in short everything that is different
25   from standard usage. But if the style is entirely made up of such terms it is either a riddle or gibberish: it is a riddle if it is composed of metaphors and gibberish if it consists of foreign or rare words. The very idea of a riddle is to talk about ordinary facts in impossible combinations; this cannot be done by the arrangement of ordinary words but needs metaphor as, for
30   example, "I saw one man glueing bronze upon another man by means of fire" and other such instances. If the diction is made up of foreign or rare words the result is gibberish.

What is required, then, is a mixed diction. The use of foreign or strange words, of metaphorical, of ornamental and of the other sorts mentioned above will lift the style above the commonplace and colloquial while current vocabulary, on the
1458ᵇ   other hand, will render it clear. Not the least contribution to a clarity of style that is not colloquial is the lengthening, contraction and alteration of words; for by occasional difference from current usage and the accustomed way of speaking it will avoid the colloquial but by its usual closeness to normal dic-
5   tion it will maintain clarity. Therefore those who criticize this manner of expression and ridicule the poet are not correct as, for example, Eucleides the elder who said it would be a very easy thing to be a poet if only one was allowed to lengthen syllables arbitrarily ...

11   To use this sort of diction in an obvious way is indeed ridiculous but moderation is a common principle to be observed in all forms of poietic diction. For the same effect would have been produced had Eucleides used metaphors, strange or foreign words, or other such devices inappropriately and with the
15   deliberate intent of producing ridicule. But how great a dif-

ference the proper use of such forms can make will be seen if
ordinary terms are inserted into epic verses. So with foreign or
rare words, metaphor, or other sorts of devices if anyone will
replace them with words of current usage, he will see that what
we say is true. For example, Aeschylus and Euripides com-
20   posed the same iambic line: Euripides changed only one word
but this had the effect of making his appear fine [and of high
style] while that of Aeschylus by comparison appears cheap
and commonplace. (Aeschylus in the *Philoctetes* wrote: "the
ulcer is eating the flesh of my foot"; Euripides substituted
"feasts on" instead of "is eating.") Then again, in the line "...
25   humble, of no-account and shameful ..." substitute "... small,
weak and ugly ..." Or take: "he set an unseemly couch and a
30   humble table" and replace it with "he set an ugly couch and a
little table"; or if one made the change "the shores echoed" to
"the shores made a noise." Again Ariphrades used to ridicule
the tragic poets for the way they would employ expressions no
one would use in ordinary speech as "from the home away"
instead of "away from home" and "of thine own" in place of
"yours" or "and I unto him" instead of "and I to him" or
1459ᵃ   [reversing the order in] "about Achilles." But all these things,
precisely because they do not belong to current usage, elevate
the style above the ordinary. Ariphrades, however, did not rec-
ognize this.

It is a great matter to observe a sense of propriety in the use
of the devices we have mentioned, both in the use of com-
5   pound and foreign or strange words and, most of all, in
metaphorical language. This alone cannot be acquired from
another but is a sign of native, inborn talent, for making good
metaphors requires the ability to grasp resemblances.

Compound words are best suited to the dithyramb, rare
10   words to epic poetry and metaphors to iambic verse. Of
course, all these devices are useful in epic but in iambic verse,
which is the closest to ordinary speech, the most appropriate
devices are those found also in prose; these are the current
names of things, metaphor and ornamental words.

15   We have now said enough about tragedy and the art of
mimesis through acting.

1460ᵇ6   As for critical problems and their solutions it will become   25
clear what their number and character are, if we consider
them in the following way: since the poet is an imitator like the
painter or any other image maker, he must necessarily always
10   represent things in one of three possible ways – either (1) as
things were or are, or (2) as things are said or thought to be,
or (3) as they *ought* to be. These representations or imitations
are communicated in language which may be through terms
in current usage or include foreign words and metaphors:
these and many modifications of language we allow to the
poets. In addition, the same standard of correctness is not
required of the poet as of the politician or indeed of poetry as
of any other art.
15   There are within the poietic art two sorts of fault, one which
belongs to its essence and one which is accidental. If the poet
has chosen to represent something, but does not do it prop-
erly because of his incompetence, then the fault belongs to his
art itself; but if the fault lies in the initial (incorrect) selection
of the object to be represented – if, for instance, he depicts the
horse as throwing forward both its right feet at the same time
20   or if he commits a fault which belongs to the range of some
other art as, for example, medicine or any other art whatsoev-
er – then the fault is not intrinsic to his poietic art. It is by
means of these distinctions that in the discussion of the prob-
lems the questions raised by the critics can be answered.
First those that arise from the art itself. If impossibilities
have been represented, then a fault has been committed; but
25   this may be justified if the end of the art (what this is we have
already discussed) is attained in this way: that is to say, if by
these means this or any other part of the poem is made more
striking. An example here is the pursuit of Hector. On the
other hand, if the end could be just as well or better attained
without doing violence to the rules of the other arts, then the
fault was not justified; for if possible, no fault at all ought to be
committed.
30   Again the question arises: where precisely does the fault lie?
Is it connected with matters which belong to the poietic art
directly or an incidental error connected with something else?
For it is much less a fault if the painter did not know that the
doe does not have horns than if he painted her inartistically.

Truth in Poetry

35

Further there is the criticism that what the poet has said is not true: to this one may perhaps reply that these things are as they *ought* to be, as Sophocles said that he made men as they *ought* to be, but Euripides as they are and in this way meet the criticism. If neither of these defences is acceptable, then one may claim "This is the way men *say* things are" as in tales about the gods. For perhaps these stories are neither better than nor true to fact (and quite possibly are as Zenophanes represents them to be): nevertheless this is what men say about them.

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Again there are things it would be better not to *say* that they *are* so, but that they *were* so: as in the passage about arms "Their spears stood upright on their butt-ends" [*Iliad* 10, 152] for this was the custom in the past as it is today amongst the Illyrians.

Evil in Poetry

5

As to whether anything said or done by someone is right or not, one must not look only at the particular deed or saying itself to see if it is vile or noble but also at the person who said or did it, to whom, when, by what means, and for what purpose – for example it might be so that in this way a greater good can be realized or a greater evil avoided.

Faults of Diction

10

Other objections can be met by examining language [and usage]. As, for example, in the use of a strange word: when the poet says "First the mules" [*Iliad* 1, 50] he does not mean animal mules but human guards. Or again, when he says of Dolon that "he was indeed ill-favoured to look upon" [*Iliad* 10, 316], he may mean only that his face was ugly, not that his body was misshapen; for the Cretans use the word "good-looking" when they mean only "fair-faced." Again, "mix the wine stronger"

15

may not mean "leave it neat" as for hard drinkers, but simply "mix it more quickly."

Some expressions may be metaphorical, as, for example, in "All the gods and men were sleeping throughout the night" [*Iliad* 10, 1], when at the same time he says "often he would turn his gaze to the Trojan plain [marvelling at] the confused din of flutes and pipes"; 'all' is here used as a metaphor for

20   'many', all being a species of many. In the phrase "alone she
      shares not" [= alone is not washed in the streams of Ocean]
      [*Iliad* 18, 489], 'alone' is metaphorical, for the 'best-known
      individual' can be called 'the only one'. Or the solution may
      be a difference of breathing, accent, or pronunciation, etc. as
      when Hippias of Thasos solved the difficulty raised in the line
      "we gave him the right to" [*Iliad* 2, 15] by reading "give him
      ..."; or again in the line "a part of it is rotted by the rain" [*Iliad*
      23, 327] by reading "a part is *not* rotted by the rain." In some
      cases punctuation provides the answer, as in Empedocles
25   [Diels, fr. 35, 14–15] "Suddenly things became mortal which
      before had known immortality, and things became pure which
      before had been mixed." In other cases the ambiguity of
      meaning should be recognized, as in "more [than two thirds]
      of the night had passed" where 'more' means 'full' and is
      ambiguous.
         Yet other difficulties are resolved by appealing to normal
      usage: thus any mixed drink is still called 'wine' – so
30   Ganymede is called the 'wine-pourer' of Zeus even though the
      gods do not drink wine; the same is true when workers in iron
      are called 'bronze workers'. This, however, may also be a
      metaphor.
         When a word seems to involve a contradiction, attention
      should be paid to the variety of senses a word may bear in a
      particular passage: for example, in "and the spear of bronze
      was checked there" [*Iliad* 20, 267] we should ask in how many
      senses we can understand "[being] checked there."

The True Critical Approach

         We should approach these difficulties in a manner entirely
1461ᵇ to the contrary to that suggested by Glaucon. Critics, as he
      says, on the basis of certain quite unreasonable assumptions,
      condemn the poet and, reasoning on these assumptions,
      blame him for saying whatever they think he said, if it is con-
      trary to their own fancy. Something like this seems to have
      happened in the case of Icarius [the father of Penelope]; the
5   critics imagine he was a Laconian and deduce from this that it
      was strange that Telemachus [his grandson] did not meet him
      when he visited Sparta. But perhaps it is as the Cephalenians
      say; for they claim that Odysseus married from amongst them
      and that the girl's father was Icadius not Icarius. It is then just
      an error of fact which makes the criticism seem plausible.

In general, the impossible must be assessed by reference to
10   the requirements of poetry, to what is better [and nobler] or
to received opinion. As for the demands of the poietic art, an
impossibility that is believable should be preferred to what is
possible but beyond belief. If the criticism against Zeuxis is
that it is impossible that there should be men such as he paint-
ed them, it is true that he painted men better than they are but
the ideal type is to be preferred to the actual reality. To explain
irrationalities we can appeal to what men commonly say about
15   such matters; sometimes, too, the irrational is not really irra-
tional, because it is probable enough that improbabilities also
occur.

Things that sound contradictory should be examined in the
same way as in dialectical refutations: is the poet talking about
the same thing, in the same relation and in the same sense?
Therefore we should resolve the problem by reference to what
the poet has said in his own person or what a reasonable man
would suppose [from what has been said]. A justified criticism
20   is, however, fairly made against the irrational and wickedness
when there is no necessity for their introduction, as with the
irrational element in the case of Aegeus [in the *Medea*] of
Euripides and the wickedness of Menelaus in his *Orestes*. There
are, then, five sorts of unfavourable criticism: [poets' works are
censured because they say] what is impossible or irrational or
harmful or contradictory or contrary to the requirements of
25   correct art; solutions to these difficulties should be sought
from amongst the twelve we have suggested.

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The Aristotle-Coleridge Axis

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The Aristotle-Coleridge Axis

George Saintsbury wound up one of the final sections of his *History of Literary Criticism* (1917) with the sub-biblical declaration: "So then, there abide these three, Aristotle, Longinus, Coleridge." We are not concerned just now with all the figures in this arresting triad: the supposititious Longinus is printed in all the anthologies of literary-critical texts and has long received the subdued respect that we extend to documents of archaeological or genetic interest. The other two figures have a more pervasive ambience – Aristotle often as a menacing undertone, Coleridge as a mercurial presence that with luck one might be able to ignore. If we consider the succession of translations of Aristotle's *Poetics* achieved in this century alone, the interminable discussions of the nature of tragedy in schools of English (and elsewhere), the post-war wave of neo-Aristotelianism at the University of Chicago, and the intrusion into critical terminology of a number of Aristotelian terms (often mispronounced, and not seldom introduced with less scrupulous regard for propriety than in search of an honorific effect), we could hardly say that Aristotle had not put in an impressive appearance in twentieth-century literary criticism. Coleridge's writing has attracted no such diligent attention: it is said that he wrote in English, and he is alleged to be 'a romantic.' It is true that four or five important studies of Coleridge's criticism have been published in recent years, and that a few cautious suggestions have already been made *en passant* that there is some connection between Aristotle and Coleridge, but this has not (as far as I know) been pursued in circumstantial detail, partly perhaps because both are difficult to explicate, partly because Aristotle and Coleridge are commonly thought to represent opposite poles in criticism. I am aware therefore that my title is mildly scandalous, and that it is all the more scandalous for the unrepentant use of the definite article – *The* Aristotle-Coleridge Axis.

To establish a clear identity of critical purpose between Aristotle and Coleridge would I think be possible, but this is not the time to attempt it; the question is in any case complicated by the fact that Coleridge considered that "There are but two possible philosophies – [two] possible seekings after wisdom" – the Platonic and the Aristotelian, and he was sure that his own position was Platonic. What I find interesting in the 'axis' is the possibility that there may be a way of coming at a critic's or a philosopher's way of thinking and working in much the same way we find out how a particular poem actually *functions*. From that functioning we can discover and release the self-declarative drama of a poem – no matter what kind of poem it is, for I hold (with Croce and others) that Art is one, not many. I should like to consider the critical thinking of Aristotle and of Coleridge in its dynamic mode, and the way language becomes a dramatic (rather than a merely semantic) representation of thinking; in short, to look for similarities between Aristotle and Coleridge – identity even – not on grounds of some coincidence in the terms they use or the nature and weight of the conclusions they reach, but by their way of looking at things, the way of sustaining attention, the way of dealing with evidence and of using – and imparting – a guiding insight.

The test of a critic, in my view, is not that he says things that we can repeat with approval and that we can without uneasiness induce others to repeat, but that he uses and encourages us to use liberating and fertile ways of perceiving and thinking; that he purifies our perception and tones the muscles of our minds. In our knowing and in our getting-to-know we navigate by recognitions, by (what Yeats calls) hound-voices, rather than by impregnable propositions or imperious *gnomae*. To work out something for ourselves, by whatever means, because we must, and then to find it already noticed – and usually more trenchantly – by an Aristotle or a Coleridge is reassuring; such felonious anticipations are among the purest delights of the intellectual life. There are some matters that can be set down for good and all, some that can be carried an irreversible step closer to finality. But the haunting and inexhaustible questions about life and art can be answered only in fugitive glimpses which, no matter how triumphantly set down, have neither life nor meaning until we rediscover them as at once necessary and ineffable. Eliot puts this well in *East Coker* – speaking of poetry, it is true, but it suits poetics just as well.

> And so each venture
> Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
> With shabby equipment always deteriorating
> In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,

Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer
By strength and submission, has already been discovered
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
To emulate – but there is no competition –
There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss.
For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

In my view Aristotle in the *Poetics* achieved an exceptional insight into the nature of poetry, a view so comprehensive and incisive, so spare, elusive, and paradoxical that it needs through submission to be discovered and rediscovered over and over again, being too radical and clear to be paraphrased or to be held long intact in the mind. And Coleridge – surprisingly Aristotelian in his critical mentality and procedure, no matter how much he may drift Plato-wards in some of his early poems and in much of his later philosophy and theology – provides a complement to Aristotle through his immensely more sensitive and profound understanding of the poetic way of mind – an understanding based upon his exceptional gift of psychological observation and his power of introspection into his own experience in making poetry. For Coleridge suffered a quality of poetic experience that no critic of comparable stature has ever enjoyed. Add to this, in Coleridge, a mind capable of sustained heuristic inquiry that for its suppleness and acuity is difficult to dissociate from certain distinctive qualities of the Greek mind as we hear it embodied in the Greek language finely uttered.

My own critical position rests upon a small number of premises. (a) The end of a critical act is not an overt evaluation of the work or an explanation of the work or a theory about the work; rather it is an extension of awareness shaped by the work under attention and – starting from the focus of that work – reverberating outward to engage other works and other ideas in a cognitive process. (b) The end of a critical theory is to prepare and stimulate one's capacities for acts of criticism, and if possible to provide the means of sustaining critical reflection upon works of literature. (c) The end both of a critical theory and of the experience of satisfactory acts of criticism is to affect, enlarge, adjust, and extend our capacity to recognize each literary work simply for what it is; good critical theory is strictly speaking *theoria* – vision, a way of seeing. (d) Critical theory must be sensitive enough to ensure that the work-to-be-known shapes and controls the cognitive process itself; otherwise the theory becomes a tautological imposition upon the work under inquiry. All these taken together

imply that successful critical activity depends upon the sensitive sub-
missiveness of the critic, upon his deft use of his intellectual capacities
in appropriately modifying his vision stage-by-stage; in short, that a
critic should expect to be a self-effacing mediator rather than a pre-
ceptive authority. (The claim that literary criticism should be or can be
'scientific' is either self-deception or an instrument of self-aggrandize-
ment.)

The connection between these statements and my sense of the sem-
inal grandeur of the *Poetics* may not be immediately obvious: Aristotle
is not talking about criticism in the *Poetics*, and anyway the *Poetics* seems
to cover much less than the whole field of poetry. The *Poetics*, as we
have it, devotes only a small amount of space to a general considera-
tion of poetry, much of its space to a discussion of tragedy-making, a
little to epic; there seems to have been a sizable section on comedy but
we have no part of it. No classical scholar has to be reminded that the
Poetics is a fragmentary document, bristling with textual questions
which have profound bearings not only upon the interpretation of sin-
gle terms and passages but upon the nature, intention, and status of
the whole document. These very considerable difficulties can be rea-
sonably resolved only by coming to terms resolutely with the Greek
text. We need also to 'place' the *Poetics*, warily and sensitively, in the
context of Aristotle's other writings; we need to place it also in the con-
text of what is characteristic and peculiar in Aristotle's way of seeing
and knowing. None of this can be done satisfactorily – that is, without
grave hazard – either through a translation or through an exposition
of Aristotle's thought that does not see his mind as more daring and
heuristic than the Middle Ages left it, or than the nineteenth century
on the whole took it to be.

Admiration of the *Poetics* in this century has been blunted by two
assumptions: that Aristotle's view of poetry is severely limited by the
fact that he said little about anything except tragedy; and that what he
said about tragedy was confined to a set of deductions drawn from the
narrow and special limits of Greek tragedy, the Greek mind, and
Greek theatre (which Dryden seems to have said first, and it has stuck
like a bur). I am inclined to dismiss both these qualifying assumptions.
What Aristotle says about tragedy is not limited by the *genre* he seems
to be discussing; it applies very well to any *genre* – which is precisely
what is to be expected if in examining tragedy he was paying close
attention to what he took to be the most highly developed kind of
poetic art. Again, because Artistotle consistently works, not by deduc-
tion and generalisation, but by inference – and clearly does so in the
Poetics – the limits of inquiry, for such a mind and such a habit of think-
ing, are set not simply by the extent of material he examines (which in

his case is usually encyclopaedic), but by his ability to reach inferences of broad and penetrating application. Furthermore, in the *Poetics* Aristotle uses the paedagogic device of dramatic presentation: let us suppose (he seems to say) that you are capable of making tragedies, and I'll tell you what things it is well to think about. Instead of producing a prescriptive or regulative formula – the do-it-yourself tragedy-kit that Italian and French pedants seem always to have hoped the *Poetics* would turn out to be – the *Poetics* allow us to overhear Aristotle brooding over the nature of poetry as a highly developed and complex form and offers us a way of looking at poetry that is at once incisive, universal, and allusive. Being allusive, what Aristotle says is patient of a number of different plausible, though partial, assumptions, interpretations, and conclusions. The only way we can feel reasonably confident that we have grasped what Aristotle *meant* to say is by declining to regard "the words themselves" as though they were written in an abstract notation that – like an inscription in an ill-known language – has to be deciphered word by word or else surrounded with an aura (or fog) of hypothetical readings and conjectural interpretations. Given a reasonable text, language is somebody speaking intelligibly; it is dynamic, self-declarative in the way it goes, a meaningful gesture. Through what is written it is surely possible to enter imaginatively into Aristotle's way of seeing, the dynamic of his mind, so that we find that the words he uttered fall as they do because they did not in fact go otherwise.

Without venturing on a detailed excursus of the *Poetics*, and as preliminary to what I want to say about Coleridge, let me suggest what seems to me peculiar to Aristotle's vision of poetry in his discussion of tragedy. He sees the making of poetic constructs as a necessary human activity which engages its own peculiar pleasure both for maker and for witness. He recognizes that a poem is complex but unified, that the whole is logically prior to the parts, and that each part bears intimations of the whole; a poem is not something put together out of components, but a whole which – both in the making and in the remaking – can be regarded from various angles of vision. That poems are made of words he has no doubt, but he notices that the life of poetry is 'action' – *drama* – and he is the first person to use the term *drama* in this pure-plain-emphatic way to point simply to action, movement, life – that is, self-declarative action. The principal thing he has to say about tragedy is that tragedy is a special action with profound human and moral implications, disclosing matters radical to our human nature and to our situation in the moral universe. If he had emphatically drawn a distinction between the word *drama* (action, simply) and the word *praxis* (action of a certain quality done by a person of a certain

quality) it would be clearer to us that he is saying: if a tragic poet is to trace out the *drama* peculiar to tragedy – that is the action that will disclose to us what it alone can disclose – the action needs to be specified and shaped with fine precision within very strict limits. Unlike hortatory, philosophical, and moralistic procedures, tragedy does not trace out an action that begins with an assumed 'moral' or hypothetical proposition, nor does it end in a conclusive statement. What it has to disclose can only be disclosed obliquely, opened to our fascinated – even horrified – gaze; we have to be able to see from the trajectory of the action itself what is to be known about (say) human destiny or human dignity; it is given to us *dramatically*, in the form of action, because there is no way adequately either of discovering or disclosing it by means more prosaic or descriptive.

If *drama* is conceived of as an action traced out in psychic space, it ceases to be an action if it is not a whole, unified action – as single as a trajectory, a gesture, a dance. And if it is to be apprehended as a single action or gesture, it needs to imply its own initiative, direction, amplitude. But since what is tracing the action is a man conscious and purposeful and not an inert projectile passively acted upon, the 'flight' once started must be capable of being modified; yet the modifications must be consistent with the origin, impulse, direction, and final fulfilment of the action. The six *merē* (aspects) of tragedy-making that Aristotle sets forth are in one sense the limiting factors that make the tracing of a tragic action possible, the factors that are needed to secure the required degree of precision and depth of implication. Starting at the outboard end of the list there are physical considerations, the stage being in any case a stylized representation of the possibility of free and self-initiating action within limited compass: the physical senses – the eye and ear – must be engaged by 'visuals' and music at least, since physical engagement is at the roots of any imaginative activity whether of making or remaking. More internal and specifically human is the aspect of 'wording' (*lexis*), the physical stuff the action will be made in (for the tragic *frisson* can be achieved by reading as well as by witnessing); and more internal yet, the 'thought' (*dianoia*), the choices that aim and redirect the flight. The list ends with the two crucial terms, plot and character, more intimately related than any other pair of *merē*. All these 'aspects' are in indissoluble dynamic relation with each other in order to *define*, to delimit in the tracing-out of it, a particular moral trajectory, an action that is specifically tragic. If those are the limiting and shaping factors, the forces are intrinsic and powerful: law as multiplanal limit and goal, knowing and not-knowing as initiative, freedom and mechanism, choice and destiny as ineluctible tensions.

As everybody knows, Aristotle gives much more space to 'plot' than

to 'character.' It is usually assumed that he *neglected* 'character,' either because he was blind to the richness of individual character or because he and his contemporaries were "not interested in character in the way we are." There is, however, another more positive explanation. If indeed he is concerned primarily with a self-declarative moral trajectory of universal rather than general import, his desire for universality would focus his attention upon the particularity of his central character in such a way as to disclose the prototypal situation of man rather than the typical situation of *a* man; the definition of his required particularity is more austere than the sense of the individual 'character' that haunted the Renaissance mind. If the mind is to be tempted into an abstract recognition of an action that is abstract though directly and physically disclosed, it had better not be much distracted by the obvious and easy luxury of 'interesting' character. But that consideration is probably minor. The astonishingly original aspect of Aristotle's view of poetry – and it may well be unique – is his ability to *see* a poetic work simply as *action*, the mathematical expression of internal functions, a spare though complex linear configuration which implies, and even explicates, all the forces that are in play within it; yet the action bodied and coloured by being human. Instead of the figures symbolizing the action, the action symbolizes the fate of the figures. Since there is no sign of anybody before Aristotle being capable of looking at poetry steadily in this way, it would not be surprising if he placed great emphasis upon 'plot'. Perhaps he does not 'do justice' to character as in our tender regard for individuality we might wish; perhaps he is allowing some idiosyncratic concern to draw him away from giving 'equal time' to each of the two top *merē*. What we are *given*, however, is a very strong emphasis on plot; and in developing his view of plot and the way it needs to be put together in order to get the tragic trajectory, he insists that it be dynamic, shapely, and single – dynamically simple in its directness and unity, yet radically complex.

The word he uses for what the single complex plot discloses – or allows to be disclosed – is *praxis*. As we know from many other passages in Aristotle, *praxis* (unlike the word drama) is not a neutral or abstract term; it means an action of specific quality, the action of a *spoudaios* man, of a man-of-(moral)-action-in-action. (I note in passing the desirable concentration of action in the word *protagonist;* the late Italian importation of the word *hero* too easily deflects attention from the actor's action to the quality of the actor. It would be worth knowing whether in the lost section on comedy he allowed himself to use the word *praxis* for the action of the comic protagonist; properly he should not have done so if he were to use this term consistently, but would need to revert to the more general and neutral word *drama* – which is

not even specifically human – or find a corresponding word for the
quality of action of a comic figure.) The 'plot' (*muthos*) is the sequence
of events that allows the actor to trace out his *praxis*, the extended
moral action that both makes and declares his 'character.' But the
'character' also shapes the *praxis*; the acts and decisions must be those
that would be presented to him and would be taken up for purposeful
action by that person-being-what-he-is. Aristotle gives major emphasis
to plot because his preoccupation is with *drama* as the singular and
premonitory trace of what is in fact done – decisions and all. It may
well be that if he had not had as dull an ear for poetry as he seems to
have had he could never have seen tragedy in this bizarre and pene-
trating way. At very least he knew that without plot there would be no
disclosure of action, that a 'character' though interesting or even fas-
cinating could be inert, incapable of initiating action. Aristotle, assum-
ing as he does that 'character' initiates action and is shaped by it,
would see plot and 'character' as two aspects of the prime delineation
of tragic *drama* (action); neither plot nor character could be primary
in an ideal scheme, though the two may be separated conceptually and
in imperfect practice; for they are inseparably linked by likelihood and
necessity. The more strongly the two are linked the more Aristotelian
the view of tragedy; the more weakly they are linked, the more plays
called 'tragedies' move towards disunity in (for example) the Renais-
sance preoccupation with the centrality of 'character.'

In recent years Aristotle's *Poetics* has been treated in some circles
with condescension on the grounds that the criticism is 'formal' or
that it is 'moral.' Both observations are in their way correct enough;
yet if by 'formal' is meant 'formalistic,' and if by 'moral' is meant
'moralistic' or 'moralizing' both are certainly wrong-headed. Aristotle
is a moral critic inasmuch as his *praxis* is nothing if not morally deter-
mined and his values emphatically man-centred (man being neither a
plaything of the gods nor the sort of victim who, in the modern psy-
chopathic way, can get off the hook by arguing that what he did was no
crime because he was just made that way); and the fulcrum of the
action is knowing and not-knowing, the issues man-centred in the ten-
sion between inventiveness and mechanism of action when man is con-
sidered as radically free. Again, he is a 'formal' critic, not in the sense
that he prescribes what form, structure, mould, generic framework, a
work should have, but in the sense that his way of looking at anything
– man, creature, poem – inevitably presents it as becoming or having
become what its internal necessity demanded of it. Aristotle's intent-
ness of regard is extremely rare, and his way of looking avoids the
abstractive inertia of dividing up process into matter and form, form
and content, cause and effect. This is not usually taken into account at

all, on the unexamined assumption that we all see in much the same way and that we are all equally good at looking at things. What Aristotle has done in the *Poetics* is to specify the forces that induce form, that induce *life*. He has not described or specified the static structure that a tragedy will (or must) assume, nor even the dynamic structure; the form is indefinable until the thing has grown into existence. From the way he handles his various instances of tragedy, and makes his comparisons with Homer, it is clear that his sense of form allows for wide variety, that he conceives of each tragedy having a unique form even though the forms will fall into a family because of some similarity in the forces that induce them. The form is simply what the thing becomes and is; what is disclosed is a revelation, the abyss opening; what is 'seen' is indefinable except in direct experience of the action as *drama*.

If we are to make a direct comparison between Coleridge and Aristotle it had better be in the matter of tragedy, disregarding for the moment the possibility that Aristotle's scheme of tragedy may in fact be a scheme for poetry altogether. What Coleridge has to say about tragedy (in the fragmentary records that have survived) is mostly about Shakespeare, very little about Greek tragedy; and conflicting things are said about Coleridge's Shakespearean criticism. On the one hand: "It is Coleridge above all others who is the interpreter of Shakespeare, the inspired critic who revealed for the first time the immense range of Shakespeare's genius, and pointed out the innumerable and previously undiscovered approaches to an appreciation of it"; and T.S. Eliot has said that "It is impossible to understand Shakespeare criticism to this day, without a familiar acquaintance with Coleridge's lectures and notes." On the other hand, it has been said again and again that Coleridge does an injustice to Shakespeare by concentrating on character to the neglect of everything else and in defiance of Aristotle's dictum that plot is the life of tragedy. And we are familiar with another often-repeated proposition that Shakespeare's plays lie completely outside the scope of Aristotle's analysis, and that therefore we must accept the fact of an extra- or ultra-Aristotelian kind of drama; such a proposal is not infrequently ascribed to Coleridge but I am not aware of any documentary evidence, actual or inferred, to support such a claim.

Coleridge developed many lines of intellectual activity, being poet, philosopher, psychologist, theologian, journalist, theorist of education, of science, and of political institutions. He was not a don and was never professionally engaged in any of these spheres; nor was he a "professional critic" in our sense of the term or in the way his younger contemporary William Hazlitt was. He was a thoroughly trained classi-

cal scholar, outstanding in his generation at Christ's Hospital, and as an undergraduate at Jesus College, Cambridge, until his personal affairs fell into disorder. He brought to his engagement in most of the dominant intellectual concerns of his time a fluency in Latin, a love of Greek, and a mastery of Italian and German that nourished his pervasive sense of the continuity of thought. His notebooks and marginalia show that as a reader he had a remarkable flair for identifying himself with the writer behind the writing, so that certain writers that to others seemed strange and unorthodox fell comfortably (for him) within recognizable traditions of human thought. The sense of language which not only made him a poet of the first order also made him an observant and original philosopher of language, fascinated by the shades and resources of language and scrupulously alert to the ways language stimulates, shapes, and nourishes both thinking and awareness. His sense of language was heightened and refined by his excitement at the supple clarity of the Greek language. His own practice in verse – at its best scrupulous and painstaking, and always referred to an exceptionally fine ear – was deeply informed by his careful study of Greek prosody, particularly in Pindar and the tragedies. But beyond that I doubt whether he could have carried forward his thinking as he did in the fields of psychology, perception, and imagination without the use of a number of carefully clarified Greek terms and an awareness of Greek syntactical functions that scarcely existed in English at the end of the eighteenth century. A fertile coiner of words – many of which have quietly entered our day-to-day use – he also made discoveries about the nature and functions of language that remained to be rediscovered with (on the whole) less clarity in this century; but this aspect of Coleridge's work has so far received little detailed exposition. He was not, of course, a classical scholar to rank with Bentley or Porson; but he was accurately learned and deeply read in five languages, and there were few books of substance that did not arouse him to the full exploratory vigour of a powerful and courageous mind and a fertile imagination.

   Coleridge's critical effort falls into two blocks or streams. The earliest in conception, but not in print, was several series of lectures on Shakespeare and other writers (both dramatic and non-dramatic) delivered between 1808 and 1819. After his death these were patched together from lecture notes, marginalia, and miscellaneous manuscripts, fattened out with a few shorthand transcripts and some reports from newspapers, diaries, and reminiscences, and published in *Literary Remains*, 1836. They were reissued separately in 2 volumes in 1843 by his daughter Sara as *Notes and Lectures on Shakespeare and Other Dramatists*. This scrappy unassuming little book, first put together with great

difficulty from perplexing fragments and steadily reprinted ever since, has had a momentous effect upon the progress of Shakespeare criticism in England. The most recent editor of that material – T.M. Raysor – opens his introduction by declaring that "In the history of English criticism there is not work which surpasses in interest Coleridge's lectures upon Shakespeare" – perhaps a little exaggerated, but not far wide of the mark. The other book, *Biographia Literaria*, written in 1815 after some ten years' gestation and published in 1817, contains his nearest approach to a coherent theory of poetics; it contains some general reflections that had been worked out in the Shakespeare lectures, but the book, arising from his reflection upon the peculiarities of Wordsworth's poetry and poetic genius, analyzes and celebrates Wordsworth's poetry in what is still one of the most eloquent and penetrating critiques of a major poet by a contemporary critic. The *Biographia* has suffered much neglect. Until the last ten or fifteen years it has had only a scattered and intermittent effect on general critical thinking. The *Biographia* has been paid lip-service as the seed of modern critical theory and practice; the Shakespeare lectures seem to have been praised less for what they say than for their anticipation of later critical developments (which Coleridge had in fact initiated). I find the deepest interest of both to be in the clear evidence they give of the Aristotelian quality of Coleridge's critical perception.

We know that Coleridge owned at least one collective edition of Aristotle and that he used it regularly for his work in logic, psychology, and the theory of knowledge. He was not a man to be pulled by the nose by his neoclassical predecessors in England or France any more than he could accept on trust Dr Samuel Johnson's critical *pronunciamenti* and "coarse brutalities of wit": and we do not find him saying, with Wordsworth's luxurious innocence, "Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing." Yet Coleridge seldom refers directly to the *Poetics* except, in passing, to take a sly nip at those who treat Aristotle as "the infallible dictator." I presume that the *Poetics* from familiarity had dropped far below the threshold of conscious recognition; whatever is Aristotelean in Coleridge's poetics is not consciously derived. Coleridge's starting-point and preoccupation in any case is "facts of mind," "ways of mind," "inner goings-on." As a critic (he said) he "laboured at a solid foundation on which permanently to ground my opinions in the component faculties of the human mind itself and their comparative dignity and importance." He knew – and said he had been taught at school – that poetry has "a logic of its own as severe as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more and more fugitive cases." He was consequently alert to the peculiar quality of Aristotle's

way of thinking and outlines it brilliantly in the fifth of his Philosoph-
ical Lectures (1818–19). He notices Aristotle's immense and untiring
knowledge; he notices how "the dialectic habits and the inductive logic
to which during twenty years he had been familiarized in the Platonic
school, and which had prepared in a mind so capacious and so pre-
disposed, the spirit, first of observation, secondly of discrimination,
and thirdly of abstraction and generalization." (Coleridge describes
his own mind and memory as "capacious and systematizing"). He
notices how Aristotle, "grateful for the number of facts, conceptions,
possibilities, which Plato's ever-flowing invention presented," yet "like
an original genius, still bringing them within his own plan of inter-
pretation, brought them into his own construction." He noticed also
Aristotle's capacity to encompass a complex view with the clarity and
precision of a geometrical figure.

   Himself a poet, with his greatest poems behind him, Coleridge knew
perfectly well that nobody can write a good play or poem by rule – not
even by Aristotelian rule – though it is difficult to guess by what aids,
fetishes, and haruspications any individual poet will get his work done.

It was Lessing who first proved to all thinking men, even to Shakespeare's own
countrymen, the true nature of his apparent irregularities. These, he demon-
strated, were deviations only from the *Accidents* of the Greek Tragedy; and
from such accidents as hung a heavy weight on the wings of the Greek poets,
and narrowed their flight within the limits of what we may call the *Heroic Opera.*
He proved that in all essentials of art, no less than in the truth of nature, the
plays of Shakespeare were incomparably more coincident with the principles
of Aristotle, than the productions of Corneille and Racine, notwithstanding
the boasted regularity of the latter. Under these convictions were Lessing's
own dramatic works composed. Their deficiency is in depth and imagination;
their excellence is in the construction of the plot; the good sense of the senti-
ments; the sobriety of the morals; and the high polish of the diction and dia-
logue.

His central assertion about Shakespeare follows much the same line,
but is drawn from different premises: that Shakespeare was pre-emi-
nently a poet, as evidenced by his non-dramatic writing; that the "shap-
ing spirit of imagination" exhibited in the poems can be expected also
to be seen in the plays; and that Shakespeare is a man of firm artistic
judgment, not an automatic writer who gets things right by lucky acci-
dent. He wished to prove that

Shakespeare appears, from his poems alone, apart from his great works, to
have possessed all the conditions of a true poet, and by this proof to do away,

as far as may [be] in my power, the popular notion that he was a great drama-
tist by a sort of instinct, immortal in his own despite, and sinking below men
of second or third-rate character when he attempted aught beside the drama
– even as bees construct their cells and manufacture their honey to admirable
perfection, but would in vain attempt to build a nest. Now this mode of rec-
onciling a compelled sense of inferiority with a feeling of pride, began in a few
pedants, who having read that Sophocles was the great model of tragedy, and
Aristotle the infallible dictator, and finding that the *Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and
the rest, were neither in imitation of Sophocles, nor in obedience to Aristotle
– and not having (with one or two exceptions) the courage to affirm that the
delight which their country received from generation to generation, in defi-
ance of the alterations of circumstances and habits, was wholly groundless – it
was a happy medium and refuge, to talk of Shakespeare as a sort of beautiful
lusus naturae, a beautiful monster – wild, indeed, without taste or judgement,
but like the inspired idiots so much venerated in the East, uttering, amid the
strangest follies, the sublimest truths.

Here I must refrain from detailed exposition of Coleridge's position
and will notice a few salient points.
(a) "The spirit of poetry, like all other living powers, must of necessity
circumscribe itself by rules, were it only to unite power with beauty. It
must embody in order to reveal itself; but a living body is of necessity
an organized one; and what is organization but the connection
of parts in and for a whole, so that each part is at once end and
means? This is no discovery of criticism; – it is a necessity of the human
mind; ..."
(b) Coleridge objects to the sense of 'form' that "confounds mechan-
ical regularity with organic form. The form is mechanic, when on any
given material we impress a pre-determined form, not necessarily aris-
ing out of the properties of the material; – as when to a mass of wet
clay we give whatever shape we wish it to retain when hardened. The
organic form, on the other hand, is innate; it shapes, as it develops,
itself from within, and the fullness of its development is one and the
same with the perfection of its outward form. Such as the life is, such
is the form."
(c) He insists upon the *im*personality of Shakespeare's art, and upon
the absence of self-expression in great poetry. He insists also upon the
importance of distancing poetry from actual experience, as Words-
worth does; and his own finest poetry is characterized by the complex
interaction of several modes of distancing.
(d) Coleridge's sustained critique of Wordsworth's poetry in the twen-
ty-second chapter of *Biographia Literaria* – a masterly example of the
way critical observation can be dramatically presented in order to

achieve a single apprehension of complex evidence – shows that
Coleridge's critical way of mind in the presence of a poem is indeed
thoroughly Aristotelian in the sense that he is seized and fascinated by
what is before him, by the fact that it *is*, that it is what it is and not oth-
erwise, and that the nature of the thing is disclosed by intensifying pas-
sive attention. This way of looking, radical to Aristotle, is radical to
Coleridge as reader and critic. It happens to be thrown into sharp
relief in the critique of Wordsworth because it is the same sense in
Wordsworth which, when directed towards both objects in the natural
world and states of mind within himself, provides the mysterious sub-
stance of his major poetry; only when we can see Wordsworth's major
poems as dramatic tracings of the movement of his mind in psychic
space do we begin to understand why Coleridge saw Wordsworth as a
poet of stature comparable to Milton. This is the more remarkable
when we consider the great difference between the poetic intelligence
and sensibility of Wordsworth and Coleridge. When Coleridge writes
his critique of Wordsworth he is *not* writing a critique of his own poet-
ry or a disclosure of his own way of working. Indeed both *The Ancient
Mariner* and *Kubla Khan* are right outside the compass of Wordsworth's
relentless exploration of his own mind. Wordsworth is a naturalist of
certain activities of the mind; Coleridge finds in his own poetry a sym-
bolic embodiment of the life of the mind.

(e) Like Aristotle, Coleridge thinks of poetry as *making*; he uses the
word "creative" very seldom and then in a way that bespeaks a fastidi-
ous theological sensibility.

(f) Coleridge himself is haunted in his own life by the ambivalence of
action and by the enormous hazard that is involved if initiative is
found only in the deliberate will.

(g) Coleridge's theory of imagination is a dynamic view, involving a
complete break both with the faculty-psychology and with the causal-
mechanistic descriptions of his day. Imagination is a state of the per-
son – a state in which the whole soul of man is brought into activity
with the correct relation of all its functions. Though imagination
needs to be highly specialized to produce poetry, imagination is the
birthright of all of us. It is rooted in sensory experience, and draws the
feeling-tone of perceptual experience into every kind of mental activ-
ity. With the possible exception of A.N. Whitehead, Coleridge is the
only man who has produced a theory of poetic imagination that
springs in a single arc from the physique of perceptual experience to
the engagement of critical and reflective intelligence and the con-
trolled construction of works of art. What he calls the "primary imagi-
nation" is simply sense perception; and his theory of perception antic-
ipates the gestalt theory of this century: perceiving is intrinsically

meaningful. The part played by association he observed, studied, and recorded with a delicacy and acuteness that is still unsurpassed. Unlike Aristotle he noticed that the visual sense is dominantly abstractive, and warned against the "despotism of the eye"; the sense of hearing he considered paramount in poetry, and the sense of touch he regarded as the first and most radical of the senses, observing how in the synaes-thetic activity of imagination words, sounds, colours, and even abstractions can become tactile. If Coleridge had been able to establish – as he himself knew well – the inseparable presence of feeling in perceptual and cognitive activity, the study of aesthetics might long ago have lived up to its name by dealing with perception and 'feeling' rather than indulging fruitless inquiries into an abstraction called "Beauty." He recognized the extreme vulnerability of the poetic process, and how – although it is sustained by volition – it is easily subverted and coarsened by wilful intention; yet for him there was no place in poetry for luck or accident, though much for the grace of transfiguration. In his passion for desynonymizing words he drew distinctions between imagination and fancy, idea and law, copy and imitation: these show how readily in his mind *mimesis* stood for a relation between the work of art and whatever stands over against it in reality – a relation every time unique and never in general to be specified, predicted, or predicated. His theory of symbolism finds that the only way to avoid inert generalization is to concentrate upon sharply perceived particulars and so to evoke the universal; he finds metaphor to be the fundamental principle of dynamic relation in poetic and symbolic contexts, and asserted that a poetic symbol "partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible" – a special instance of *mimesis*.

Out of the many matters that crowd forward for attention one more must be considered; this goes back to the beginning and the question of Coleridge's alleged inordinate concentration upon 'character' in his dramatic criticism. Long before Coleridge attempted any formal Shakespearean criticism his inquiry into the psychic sources of action had been profound and sensitive; if there is any one single concern that colours and guides his thinking in all its varied ranges it is his conviction that the nature of the mind shapes our knowing and that the nature of the individual psyche affects every shade of individual action and experience. When he came to reflect sustainedly upon Shakespeare's writing he recognized at once a man who had a profound understanding of the ways of the human spirit. His sense of wonder at Shakespeare's intricate disclosures of human character reinforced his own central concern, and as he studied the work of the greatest poet England has ever seen he was strengthened in his belief that he could indeed lay "a solid foundation" for critical judgment in his under-

standing of "the component faculties of the human mind itself." It was perhaps inevitable then that his main critical reflection would come to rest upon Shakespeare and Wordsworth. Since his own psychological preoccupation – dealing in matters rather more subtle and powerful than 'motives' – came into focus with Shakespeare's fascination with the "dark adyta" of 'character,' it allowed him to explore areas of human initiative, sources of human action, that Aristotle may never have recognized or been able to recognize. What this conjunction does in Coleridge is not (so to speak) to snatch the primacy of 'plot' out of Aristotle's hands and reassign it to 'character'; it is rather to complement and reinforce Aristotle's position. For Aristotle had seen that tragedy is action of a certain kind and figure; it is induced through a person ('character') acting out a certain configuration of events ('plot'). As long as the action is significant *human* action, plot can no more be separated from character than initiative can be separated from the tissue of knowing and not-knowing. What Coleridge has done is greatly to enrich the possibilities of tragic action by allowing for a greater intricacy of initiative, thereby allowing for a finer, more exquisite definition of moral trajectory; he has done nothing to detract from the integrity of the *drama*, the self-defining of the action as *tragic*. Although Coleridge could not accept the proposition that Shakespeare was a *lusus naturae*, he did not argue that Shakespeare's tragedies were perfect instances of the tragic mode. Did he perhaps glimpse, through the unevennesses and imperfections of Shakespeare's actual achievement, the possibility of a greatly enriched tragedy in the Aristotelian mode? He was quite incapable of writing such a tragedy himself, but he was quite capable – renewing as he did in himself the Aristotelian mode of perception – of foreseeing such a possibility, of seeing it even as sooner or later inevitable.

If indeed Coleridge is in these matters harmonious with Aristotle, as I think he is, he provides an unexpected extension of Aristotle's unaccountably just and penetrating insight into the nature of poetry. Imagination, which Aristotle had scarcely considered except as our ability to present to the mind 'pictures' of things not physically present, assumed in Coleridge's mind a role that Aristotle would probably have approved – as the supreme realizing function, a dynamic state of wholeness accessible to all men, and overflowing into things-made so that they may have a life of their own, not being the image of the person who made them. In his reading of Shakespeare, Coleridge saw how Aristotle's scheme of tragedy could be extended and enriched, not defied, by concentrating on character. His understanding of the pure drama of language allows Aristotle's view of tragedy to be extended without violence into areas (lyrical, for example) which were closed

to Aristotle. Coleridge's exceptional experience of making poetry gave him an understanding of the symbolism of words and the functions of metaphor that can easily be found in Greek poetry though not in Aristotle's *Poetics* or *Rhetoric*; it also allowed him to give an account of perception and of association which supports Aristotle's more intuitive account and allows us to extricate it in considerable detail. The heart and substance of Coleridge's poetic theory and practice is strongly Aristotelian – even though he himself may have thought otherwise. Over a long period of time Aristotle's *Poetics* has been "lost and found and lost again and again"; so, in a much shorter span of time, has Coleridge's. This may be a propitious time faithfully to discover each of them singly and to find both of them together.

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