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ARISTOTLE'S

P O E T I C S.

MEMORIAL

FOR THE

ARISTOTLE'S
P O E T I C S,

LITERALLY TRANSLATED,

WITH

EXPLANATORY NOTES,

AND

AN ANALYSIS.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. & W. B. WHITTAKER,

BY N. BLISS, 21, WATER LANE,

FLEET STREET.

1819.

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P R E F A C E.

THE following translation of Aristotle's Poetics is intended solely for the use of Students. The chief object which it has in view, is a strict adherence to the original, for the attainment of which, the English idiom is frequently, nay generally sacrificed. It is very obvious that this circumstance must render it a work of no elegance; but it was never intended to be such. It was written for the express purpose of assisting those; who might be desirous of reading the book, for their instruction, both in the language and matter; and this end is most readily attained by attending to the exact meaning of every word in the original, rather than by giving what is called a free translation, that the sentences may be neatly rounded.

It sometimes happens, from the extreme preciseness of Aristotle's language, that the insertion of some words which are not to be found in the Greek, is absolutely necessary, to render the author's meaning at all perspicuous. Such words will be found printed in Italics, so that the reader,

by leaving them out, may perceive the very expression which Aristotle employs.

In some places, where a close adherence to the original has rendered the meaning obscure, the reader will find it more fully explained in the notes; and in others, where a strict verbal translation would have been nonsense, the sense is expressed in the text, and the literal translation is given in the notes. Utility is the object of this work, and on the whole it is hoped, that it will accomplish that object. If so, as no attempt at elegance was ever made, no apology will be offered for the clumsy, and sometimes inidomatic language in which it is written.

To render its usefulness as complete as possible, a brief Analysis of the whole book is subjoined.

Analysis. The various kinds of poetry, as well as some airs adapted to the flute and harp, are all imitation, expressed by melody, rythm, and harmony. They differ from one another in three particulars, namely, in the nature of the instruments which they employ, and of the objects which they imitate, and in the manner in which that imitation is expressed. Music imitates by melody and rythm, dancing by rythm alone, and epepeia by conversation in verse or prose. To the word epepeia an extended sense is given, as it is applied to poems of any sort, though in Aristotle's days, men had classed poets according to the verse in which they wrote. Dithyrambics, nomes, tragedy and comedy, make use of all the three modes of imitation.

Poetry, as well as painting, must in its imitation represent men, as better or worse, or in the same state with ourselves ; and this constitutes the difference between tragedy and comedy, as the first represents them as better, the last, as worse. There were two causes which gave birth to poetry, both of which were natural, viz. the desire of imitation, and the love of harmony. Poetry therefore, which consisted originally of extemporaneous effusions, was gradually improved upon, and assumed a grave or satirical nature, according to the dispositions of those, who made it their study ; whence some of the ancients became epic, and others iambic poets.

Homer was the first who gave a form to comedy, and this he does in his *Margeites*. Some time after, those who had turned their attention to the composition of iambic poems, became writers of comedy, and those who had preferred epic poems, became writers of tragedy, the latter having previously been the inventors of dithyrambics, and the former of obscene songs. *Æschylus* was the first who introduced a second character, and shortened the songs of the chorus ; and *Sophocles* afterwards made the number of speakers three. The iambic measure likewise, came to be exclusively adopted in such compositions. Comedy is the imitation of what is ludicrous in the vile, that is, of some error, or deformity which occasions no serious pain. Its history has been overlooked, be-

cause it was not from the first a subject of serious study.

Epic poetry resembles tragedy, inasmuch as it is an imitation in verse, of men in high stations, but differs from it because it employs but one kind of metre, and is besides a mere narration. They differ, likewise, in length, tragedy being confined to the occurrences of one day, epic poetry including an indefinite space of time. Tragedy is the imitation of a noble and perfect action, which is of a proper magnitude, expressed in agreeable language, possessing a distinctness of pleasure, produced by action, not by narrative, and purifying the passions by means of fear and pity. Its parts, from which it derives its quality, are six, namely, the story, the manner, the discourse, the sentiment, the scenery, and the melody. Of these, the story, or the connection of the actions, is of the first importance. Next comes manner, because it is always the cause of action; then sentiment, because by it, the actors make an enunciation; then discourse, which is the explanation of our meaning in words; then melody, because it is most productive of pleasure; and lastly scenery.

The story must be the imitation of an entire action, neither too long nor too short. If it be too long, the beginning is forgotten, before the end is learnt; and if too short, it must be rendered weak, and loose its unity, by the insertion of many epi-

sodes. The greater it is, however, as long as it retains its perspicuity, the better. It possesses unity, not if it relate the adventures of some individual, but if it choose for its subject, one single action of that individual, and so arrange it, that by the removal or alteration of any one part, the whole story will be changed. The poet must not confine himself to truth, but only to verisimilitude. And this it is which constitutes the difference between poetry and history—that the one treats of general principles, and the other of particular actions. It is not even necessary that the tragedy be founded on traditionary stories—but it may be—and although the poet may relate what has really happened, he is, nevertheless, the author of that action.

Those simple stories are the worst, which are interspersed with many episodes. Those again are best adapted for tragedy, which relate a consequence of actions which is contrary to expectation, and the occurrence of fortuitous events in such a manner, as that they appear to have in them something of design. Of stories, some are simple and others complex. Simple are those which are carried through, without any peripatie or recognition; and complex, those which possess one or both of these. Peripatie is the probable or necessary change of an action to its opposite; and recognition, the change from ignorance to knowledge, which produces either friendship or animosity between the persons doomed to happiness or misery.

Of this latter, the best kind is when it takes place at the same moment of time with the peripatie, because recognitions may be occasioned by the sight of inanimate objects, or by accidental occurrences. Besides these, passion also has reference to the subject of the story. By passion is meant the performance of any action which will occasion pain or death.

The parts of tragedy according to its quantity are, prologue, episode, exode, and chorus. The prologue is that part of the tragedy, which precedes the parodus of the chorus; the episode, that which is between the entire songs of the chorus; and the exode, that, after which there is no song of the chorus. Of the chorus there are two parts—the parodus, and the stasimon. The parodus is the first speech of the whole chorus, and the stasimon is the song which is without anapæste and trochæus. The commus again, is the weeping on the stage of both players and chorus.

The story of a man who is conspicuous neither for his virtue nor his vice, but who falls from a state of happiness to one of misery, from some great error, and no crime, is the best suited to tragedy. In the opinion of some, the story of a tragedy ought to be complex, of others, simple. These latter say likewise, that the change should be from good to bad fortune. Fear and pity ought to arise out of the connection of events, that is, the story ought to be of such a nature, that the bare repetition of it,

without the aid of scenery or acting, should excite feelings of dread and compassion. These passions are excited by the conduct of a friend towards a friend, an enemy towards an enemy, or of indifferent persons towards each other. The two latter, however, are either matters of perfect indifference, or such as do not rouse those feelings in a sufficient degree. The first therefore is that which tragedians ought to describe. The modes of describing it also are various. The agent is represented as possessed of knowledge at the time he acts, or as acting first, and then making a discovery, which either forms a part of the piece, or is related as having happened; or as intending to do some inexpiable deed, and making a discovery before it is done. The last of these methods is to be preferred.

With respect to the manner which an author gives to his characters, he must take care that it be useful, becoming, like, and equal. The unraveling of the plot, likewise, must proceed from the story, and machinery be used only when relating those circumstances which form no part of the representation; and no action must appear to be without an object. Recognition may be produced in various ways. First, by certain marks which the person is supposed to have upon his body either naturally, or accidentally; secondly, by causes which the poet has himself invented; thirdly, by the excitement of any recollection; and fourthly, by the force of inference. It may also be brought about

by causes which deceive the audience, but the best manner of effecting it, is by the chain of events.

In connecting his story and polishing his language, the poet ought frequently to ask himself the reason for such and such actions, by which means he will be less likely to permit errors of any kind to pass uncorrected. The player also should attend to his gestures and tone of voice, so as to adapt them to the passion which he intends to represent. It would be well, therefore, if the poet were first to draw a general outline of his story, and afterwards fill it up.

Every tragedy is composed of a plot and an unravelling. The plot comprehends all those events which have taken place before the period of the plays commencement, and from that commencement until the change begins to take place. The unravelling, all that follows. There are four kinds of tragedy,—complex, pathetic, moral, and that which has its scene in Hades. In writing, care should be taken that both the plot and unravelling be properly conducted, and that the play do not resemble an epic composition. And this will be the case if a subject be chosen which comprehends under it too many stories. The chorus likewise should be considered as part of the company of performers, and their songs ought always to have reference to the subject of the piece.

Sentiment, as it belongs to the art of reasoning,

is explained in the treatise upon rhetoric, and discourse which relates to the definition of command, entreaty, interrogation, reply, and such like, must be studied rather by the player than the poet. (Here follows a definition of the various parts of speech.) In defining noun, Aristotle tells us, that a proper noun is one which belongs to a particular language; a foreign, one which is introduced into one language from another; metaphor, when a word is used to express that which in its strict meaning it could not express; invented, one which has received no definite signification from any other person besides the author; extended, when the word is lengthened either by the addition of another syllable or by changing a short vowel into a long; diminished, the reverse of this; and changed, when the author retains part of a word already in use, and adds something of his own.

The excellence of discourse is, that it be perspicuous, without being mean, therefore great care is necessary that a too frequent use be not made of any one of these nouns, but that they be properly intermixed, and used in their proper places. The most important of all, however, is the right application of metaphor. Double words agree best with dithyrambics, foreign with heroic, and metaphor with iambic verse.

An epic poem ought to resemble a tragedy, by being the representation of a whole and perfect action, with a beginning, a middle, and an end; and

not, like history, to record the different events which may have happened within any definite period. Homer's Iliad and Odyssey are excellent specimens, for their stories are in truth very short, and adorned with many episodes. It ought likewise to be simple, complex, moral, or pathetic, and, with the exception of music and scenery, its parts ought to resemble those of a tragedy. But they differ in the length of the compositions, and in the measures which they employ. Epic poetry excels tragedy in the facility with which it shifts its scene, and introduces episodes.

Of all kinds of verse the heroic or hexameter is best adapted for an epic poem, and a mixture of those different kinds, is the least. Homer is particularly to be commended, because he appears himself to say little, but always introduces something possessed of manner to speak for him, and because every object which he presents, whether animate or inanimate, possesses this quality.

The chief end of both tragedy and epic poetry is to produce the wonderful, which the latter has much greater facility of doing, because those things may be related, with an appearance of probability, which would not at all bear representation. Homer also has instructed writers in the best method of telling lies, which is done by paralogism, or false reasoning. In choosing incidents, those which are perfectly impossible, and yet possess verisimilitude, are preferable to those which are possible, though

not likely to gain belief. And care should be taken that none be introduced which are without an apparent reason. The language ought to be most highly polished in those passages which exhibit neither manner nor sentiment.

To the objections which are made to poetry, namely, that it does not preserve a strict adherence to nature, and such like, the answer is, that the poet imitates like the painter, by preserving the likeness, although he may flatter the original. There are two faults to which poetry is liable—one, when it attempts to imitate things beyond its stretch, and this is said to flow from itself—another, when the choice is improperly made, although the subject be within its reach, which proceeds from accident. It may offend likewise against other arts, such as anatomy, &c. yet the poet is to be excused, if by the commission of these errors he attain the end he has in view, namely, to make his narrative wonderful, which could not have been otherwise accomplished. But if this be not absolutely necessary, he is decidedly wrong.

When a poet is accused of violating truth, he must excuse himself by saying, that he means to represent men either better or worse than they really are, or that he relates what men currently report; and if it be said that he makes his character speak or act improperly, he must advise the critic to look to the peculiarity of circumstances,

and the end to be attained. He may affirm also that an expression is used in a foreign sense, or metaphorically. He may alter the accent, or the pointing, or he may give a double meaning to the word objected to. When a word will bear two opposite explanations, care must be taken in discovering, how it is intended to be used in the expression before us.

Many critics condemn a work on account of any contradiction there may be in it, to some prejudice of their own; in which case, that which is by them put down as an error, is at most only a quære. When the critic declares that any thing is impossible, we must defend it by saying, that in poetry, the credible impossible is better than the possible incredible; or that an example ought always to be perfect of its kind. When he says that it is unreasonable, the answer is, that it is very reasonable that many improbabilities should happen. This unreasonableness however is bad, unless there be an absolute necessity for it.

In describing the comparative excellence of epic and tragic compositions, some men give a preference to the former. In it, they say, the poet is better able to represent many things, as in the act of going on at the same time, and it requires no gestures nor outward aids to assist it. It is adapted to the better kinds of auditors, and is therefore itself superior. But this is wrong, because the faults of gesture and scenery are not to

be attributed to tragedy or its writers. Besides, all motion is not improper, but only such as is obscene; and even without it, tragedy effects its purpose as completely as epic poetry. It therefore possesses every advantage which belongs to the other, and has the peculiar power of producing pleasure by means of scenery and music. Its imitation likewise, is included within a shorter space, and that which is most condensed is always most agreeable. Its unity also is more complete, of which we must be convinced if we observe, that out of one epic poem, many tragedies may be made.

Since then it excels in all these particulars, and above all in the attainment of its end, it may be pronounced to be altogether superior.

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ARISTOTLE'S

P O E T I C S.

I. **BEGINNING** in a natural order, from first principles, we will treat of poetry itself, and its different kinds, and the particular force which each kind possesses; of the manner in which an author ought to arrange his story, if the poem be intended to be a good one; of how many, and what parts a poem ought to consist; and likewise of other matters ¹ *which relate to that study.*

II. Epic Poetry, and the composition of Tragedy, as well as Comedy and Dithyrambics, ² together with most of those airs which are suited to the flute and harp, are all, generally speaking, imitation. They differ from one another in three par-

¹ It is impossible to translate this literally. The Greek words are ὅσα τῆς αὐτῆς ἐστὶ μεθόδου: as many as belong to this method or arrangement.

² Aristotle includes music under the head of poetry, because it is in fact a species of it. That poetry and music were esteemed species of the same genus, is evident, from the same Greek word being made use of to express both. He says most airs, because there are many tunes which certainly imitate nothing.

ticulars: the imitation is made, either by instruments differing in their natures; or the things which they imitate are in themselves different; or the mode of imitation is different.

III. ³ For as in expressing resemblances, some men imitate with colour and form, (some artificially, and some from habit) and others with the voice; so in the arts already mentioned, all of them imitate by means of ⁴ rythm, discourse, and harmony; and these taken either separately, or joined together. Airs played upon the flute or harp, for example, or upon any other instrument which may have the same effect—such as the pipe, make use only of harmony and rythm: but the motions of dancers imitate by rythm without harmony; for by their figured cadences, (or rythms) they represent manners, passions, and actions. ⁵ Epic Poetry again, employs conversation, expressed in prose or verse; either indiscriminately mixing the various kinds of verse, or, as hath hitherto been the case, making use of one alone. *Were it*

³ Until the publication of Tyrwhitt's edition of the Poetics, this passage was extremely difficult. The alteration which he has made in the pointing, has rendered it much more intelligible, and seems to give to it the sense which we have adopted.

⁴ Rythm means here, no more than a measured cadence, or regulated movement. Discourse applies either to verse or prose; and harmony signifies music aloud.

⁵ To talk of an epic poem in prose, appears not a little contradictory; yet why should it? There are many romances, which are as much epic poems, as if each line contained only a certain number of feet: besides, the word is derived from *ἔπος*, in the Greek, which signifies a story, either in verse or prose.

not so, we could not possibly class under the same head, the farces of Sophron and Xenarchus, and the dialogues of Socrates; nor the works of him who might express his imitations in iambic, elegiac, or any other kind of verse. ⁶ Men, it is true, arranging poetry by its rythm, call some poets elegiac, and others epic; bestowing this denomination upon them, not from the subjects which they imitate, but from the metre which they make use of: for even upon those who write treatises on medicine, or natural philosophy, provided they be composed in verse, this appellation is bestowed. Between Homer and Empedocles, however, there is nothing in common but the verse. The first, therefore, may be justly called a poet, but the last, a physiologist rather than a poet. In like manner, if one, confusedly mixing together all kinds of poetry, were to produce an imitation, as Chæremon did in the Centaur, a mixed rhapsody, written in all kinds of verse, surely we ought not to call such a man a poet. In this manner have we rendered our meaning clear on these subjects.

There are some arts which employ all the instruments we have mentioned. I mean rythm, melody, and measure. Such is the composition of ⁷ dithyrambics and nomes, tragedy and comedy.

⁶ It would appear from this, that all who wrote in hexameters, were dignified with the title of epic poets; and that those who composed in hexameter and pentameter alternately, were called elegiac.

⁷ Dithyrambics were hymns repeated in honour of Bacchus; nomes, of Apollo: both were accompanied with singing and dancing. There was this difference between them—that the

⁸ They differ, however, in the use of them, because the two first bring them all into play, during the continuance of the whole piece; the two last, only at certain periods. These I call the differences of arts, as far as relates to the means by which they express imitation.

IV. But since those who express imitation, imitate willing agents; and since these must be either virtuous or vicious, (⁹ for habits are generally attendant upon such alone; and all men differ according as their habits incline to virtue or vice), it becomes necessary that those should be imitated, who are either better or worse than ourselves; or ¹⁰ whose habits resemble our own. Thus, among painters, ¹¹ Polygnotus made his likenesses better than the originals—Pauson worse—and Dio-

first were very loud, and in the Phrygian tone; the last soft, and in the Lydian. In tragedy and comedy, the dialogue was carried on in verse alone; whilst in the chorus, the verse was accompanied with singing and dancing.

⁸ This, it will be perceived, is not translated literally, for the obvious reason, that the meaning of the author could not be sufficiently elucidated.

⁹ This is obvious enough; for habit, or manner, (*ἥθος*) can only be predicated of a willing, or rather of a free agent; and it is but from their habits being good or bad, that men's characters are decided. We have rendered *πρᾶκτορας* willing agents, to avoid any misapprehension of the epithet as now understood, when applied to agents.

¹⁰ *Καθ' ἑμας*.

¹¹ Polygnotus was a native of the island of Thasus. He always chose grand subjects for his paintings, and executed them well. Dionysius of Colophon. They both lived in the time of Xerxes and Sophocles. Pauson is supposed to have been an inhabitant of Licyania. He was the first who painted ceilings.

nysius exactly the same. It is evident, indeed, that each of the above mentioned modes of imitation, will have this distinction; and that they will differ one from another, by their employing the same mode of imitating things which are in themselves different. These dissimilarities are *discovered* to exist in dancing, in airs for the flute and for the harp, as likewise in stories told either in prose or verse. Thus Homer *imitates men who were better than ourselves*---Cleophon *men who were like*; but Hegemon the Thasian, who first made parodies, and Nichochares, who *composed* the Deliad, *imitated men who were worse*. In this manner, likewise, may a poet express imitation in the use of dithyrambics and nomes,¹² as Timotheus and Philoxenus did in the Argæ and Cyclopæ. In this particular distinction does tragedy differ from comedy: namely, it is the office of the one, to imitate *men who were worse*---of the other, those *who were better than men* of the present day.

V. ¹³ But among these there is a third difference,

¹² It is very difficult to say what is the meaning of this passage, but it appears to be as we have rendered it. Timotheus was a poet of Miletum, who wrote a great many nomes and dithyrambics. The Greek word, which we have rendered Argæ, is in some editions *πίπτας*; this would make the passage much more plain, because he celebrated the victory of the Athenians over the Persians. Philoxenus was a famous dithyrambic poet who lived in Plato's time, and who satirized Dionysius the tyrant, in his Cyclops, under the name of Polyphemus.

¹³ Aristotle has already taken notice of the subjects of imitation, and of the instruments which are employed; and he now proceeds to point out the different modes of using those instruments.

which consists in *the mode* in which a poet may imitate each: for the same subjects may be imitated by the same *instruments*,¹⁴ as well when the poet tells a story; (either acting some other person, as Hómér does, or remaining without change in his own character) or when *he introduces* all the parties imitated, as active and busy personages.¹⁵ In these three particulars then, does imitation differ, as we said at the beginning: in *the instruments* which it employs, in *the subjects* which it imitates, and in *the mode of expressing that imitation*. In one point of view; therefore, Sophocles, as an imitator, may be *considered to resemble* Hómér; because they both imitate men of high character: in another, *to resemble* Aristophanes; because they both imitate men who act their own parts. It was for this reason, some say, that *such writings as their's* received the appellation of plays, (*δραματα*) because they imitated (*δρωντας*) men who act. Whence also the Dorians claim to themselves the *invention* of tragedy and comedy: the Magarians, again, of Comedy, (both those of this country, because democracy first began among them; and those in Sicily, because there Epichar-

14 This passage has much obscurity in it, but appears to bear this meaning. In an epic poem, the author sometimes relates the adventures of another person; at others, is the hero of his own story. In dithyrambic poems, the poet merely repeats a narrative, and in tragedy and comedy, he never makes his appearance at all: the players are the organs through which he tells his story.

15 Literally: The imitation consists of, or is accompanied with, these three distinctions.

mus the poet was born, who flourished long before the time of Chonnidus and Magnetus) and some of the Dorians in the Peloponnesus, of tragedy; making the words a proof in support of their claim. The first affirm, that they call the villages scattered round their city *κωμαι*; whereas the Athenians call them *δημοι*: and that the name comedian was given to players, not from the circumstance of their being guests, (*κωμάζειν*), but from their wandering through the villages, when they had been driven with disgrace from the city; and that they express "to act" by the word *δρᾶν*; whilst the Athenians call it *πραττειν*. Respecting differences of imitation---of what nature, and how many they are, so much hath been said.

VI. Two causes, in a general point of view, appear to have given birth to poetry; and these natural. In the first place, imitation is natural to man from his childhood: and in this respect does he differ from other animals---that he is the most imitative of all, and that by means of imitation, he acquires the first rudiments of knowledge; and all men delight in imitation. Real occurrences are a proof of this; for those very objects which we actually behold with the greatest disgust, we are pleased with, if we see their resemblances very accurately taken---such as pictures of the most savage beasts, and of dead bodies. The reason is, that to acquire knowledge is the greatest pleasure, not to philosophers alone, but to others also,

¹⁶ though they have but a small participation in it. Men, therefore, are delighted when they behold pictures, because when looking at them, they can enquire and learn what each represents; that such a picture, for example, represents such a man: If, again, the spectator may not chance to have previously seen *the original*, it is not the likeness which will produce the pleasure, *but it will arise* from the execution, the colouring, or some other such cause. *In the second place*, imitation being natural to us, *as well as* harmony and rythm, (for that versification is only a part of rythm is evident,) ¹⁷ those who originally were best fitted by nature for such pursuits, ¹⁸ formed poetry from their extemporaneous effusions, by gradually improving them.

VII. Poetry assumed different characters, according to the peculiar habits of the writers. Those of a graver *turn of mind*, imitated honourable actions, and the adventures of honourable men: those of a looser turn, the *adventures* of bad

¹⁶ There is a difference of opinion respecting the precise meaning of this passage. Some suppose that it alludes to the small stock of knowledge, which circumstances will permit the generality of mankind to acquire; and others, to the degree of capacity they possess for acquiring it.

¹⁷ This is the second of those two Natural causes which, he says, gave rise to poetry. Without a natural inclination to harmony and rythm, men never could have invented poetry, however great their imitative faculty might have been.

¹⁸ Aristotle here informs us that the first beginnings of poetry were rude songs delivered extempore, probably at the rude festivals of a rude society.

men ; at first, writing abusive pieces, as the others did hymns and encomiums. We cannot mention a poem of that nature, *written* by any of those *who lived before the days* of Homer, though it is probable that there were many : but, beginning from Homer, we can ; ¹⁹ as his *Margeites*, for example, and others of that kind, ²⁰ in which the iambic measure *first* came into use, as best adapted for such compositions : and this is the reason why it is now called iambic—because men railed at one another in that measure.

VIII. And thus some of the poets among the ancients became Heroic, and others Iambic. But, as Homer was the chief of those poets whose *subjects were* serious, (not because he alone handled them well, ²¹ but because he gave to his imitations a dramatic effect) so also he was the first who pointed out a form for comedy ; making of it a play, ²² not full of scurrility, but such as would excite laughter ; for the *Margeites* has the same analogy to comedy, which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have to tragedy.

19 A satirical poem composed upon a man of that name, who was so lazy that he could do nothing.

20 It would appear from this, that the Iambic measure was not always used in such poems, but that from this period it was exclusively so employed, and the heroic or hexameter confined entirely to *σπουδαία*, or graver productions.

21 Any man who will examine the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and who can judge of the various excellencies contained in them, —such as the action, the disposition, the management of the subject, &c. will see the justice of this remark.

22 *Ψόγος* was a poem which contained little else than personal abuse.

IX. But tragedy and comedy having once made their appearance, those, who from the natural bent of their minds, bestowed their attention upon either species of poetry, became, one set of them, writers of comedy, instead of iambics, and the other, of tragedy instead of epic poems, because these forms were of greater importance, and more esteemed than the others. To examine minutely whether tragedy has now brought its forms to perfection, or not, judging of it either by itself, *as a poem*, or with reference to the theatre, is subject for another discussion. ²³ Tragedy and comedy, therefore, were at first extemporaneous effusions: the last was introduced by those who gave rise to dithyrambics; the first, by the composers of obscene songs, (which continue even now in some cities, supported by the authority of the law) and gradually increased; men bringing it forward, as it rendered itself conspicuous.

X. ²⁴ Tragedy having undergone many changes, ceased *changing*, after it had attained to its own nature. ²⁵ The first *person who* increased the number

²³ This sentence is so inverted that it is impossible to make English of it except by dividing it, and putting the auxiliary verb in place of the particle.

²⁴ This is by no means a solution of the question, whether tragedy had brought its forms to perfection. He only means that it had acquired all the essentials of its nature, though perhaps those essentials might not been sufficiently polished.

²⁵ Tragedy consisted originally of nothing but song and chorus. Æschylus introduced a second performer, who supported a dialogue with the first, and thus rendered the piece much more interesting. He also so far changed the nature of

of performers from one to two, shortened *the songs* of the Chorus, and supplied *the piece* with a principal character, was Æschylus; and Sophocles made them three, and introduced painted scenery: ²⁶ but it was some time before dignity was given to it, by extending its length from short stories and a ridiculous action *to its present form*, (on account of the change it had to undergo from its satirical nature); and before the measure became iambic, instead of tetrametre. Originally, men made use of the tetrametre, because poetry was satirical, and accompanied with dancing: but when dialogue was introduced, nature herself suggested the measure which was proper; for the iambic is, of all measures, the best adapted for conversation. The proof is, that in conversing with one another, we pronounce many iambs; but hexameters rarely, and only when we exceed the propriety of speech. The number of episodes likewise, and the other things which are esteemed ornamental, *were*

the chorus, that instead of being the principal part of the performance to which the speech of the actor was only a rest, it became a rest to the dialogue. By introducing a second speaker, he necessarily made one the principal, and the other the secondary character; and this is evidently what is meant by the Greek words, which are sometimes translated prologue.

²⁶ The meaning of this will be obvious enough, if the reader will recollect that the first tragedies were merely songs sung in honour of Bacchus. They were not altogether what would now be termed satirical. They were partly grave, and partly jocose, yet almost intirely made up of abusive obscenity, which the singers heaped upon one another in honor of the Gods. They were likewise accompanied with dancing and a variety of gestures, for which reason the tetrametre verse was used, being best adapted for such purposes. It consists of Trochæes, which have two feet, one long and one short.

gradually increased. What we have said on these subjects must suffice ; for it were a work of considerable labour, to enter minutely into each.

XI. Comedy, as we were saying, is the imitation of men worse than ourselves, though not in every species of fault, but of that part of the vile which is ludicrous ; but the ludicrous *consists of* some error and deformity, which does not occasion pain or death : thus a face, hideous and distorted without suffering, is immediately considered ludicrous. The changes in tragedy, and the causes from which *those changes* sprang, have not eluded our search : but comedy, as it was not from the first a subject of serious study, has been overlooked ; ²⁷ it was even long before the magistrate gave the chorus to comedies, but they were voluntary : but after it had received some form, men, called its poets, are mentioned. ²⁸ *Who it was* that added the mask, the prologue, the number of performers, and other matters of this kind, is unknown. Epicharmus and Phormes were the first to compose fables. It therefore came originally from Sicily. Of those *who flourished* at Athens, Crates was the first, who,

²⁷ The person who superintended the performance of a play, and was at all the charge, was called the Archon. He purchased the piece from the poet, and was at the expence of its representation. It would appear, that comedy, for a long time, was of such low esteem that it was acted only by private persons, and consequently that the chorus was composed of volunteers.

²⁸ It is almost needless to remark, that all players among the antients wore masks. When comedy began to be more esteemed it received all the decorations which tragedy had.

dropping the iambic form, began to make arguments and stories on general *subjects*.

XII. Epic poetry resembles tragedy in its measure alone, by being an imitation in verse of men of distinction; but in this they differ—that epic poetry employs but one kind of verse, and is a narrative: and likewise in the length; for ³⁰ tragedy endeavours, as much as possible, to be comprehended within one revolution of the sun, or a very little to exceed it; whereas, epic poetry is unconfined as to time, and in this it differs. Originally, indeed, men did the same in this respect in tragedy, as in epic poetry. Their *component* parts, however, are the same, though there are some peculiar to tragedy. On this account, whoever can distinguish between a good and a bad tragedy, has the same knowledge also in epic *compositions*; for those qualities which epic has, tragedy possesses; but those which tragedy possesses, do not all belong to epic.

XIII. Of imitation in hexameter, and of comedy, we will speak by and by: in the mean time let us treat of tragedy, assuming the definition of its essence from what has gone before. Tragedy

29 Who altered it from being nothing but a string of coarse raillery.

30 By this, Aristotle means, that the story of a tragedy should not include a space of time more extended than ten or twelve hours; that an action begun in the morning should end before night; and one begun at night should end before morning.

then, is the imitation of a noble and perfect action, which is of *proper* magnitude; *expressed* in agreeable language, with the kind of pleasure peculiar to each of its parts kept separate; produced by actors, not by narrative; and effecting a refinement of such of *our* passions, as are represented by means of pity and fear. I call that an agreeable style, which has rhythm, harmony, and melody; and by the distinction of the kinds of pleasure I mean, ³¹ that some should be rendered complete by measure alone—others again, by melody.

XIV. But since actors produce this imitation, the arrangement of the decorations will necessarily, in the first place, ³² form a certain part of the tragedy; and next, melody and discourse: for by these do they produce the imitation. I call discourse, the very arrangement of the measures, but melody, that which makes its effects manifest to all. Since then it is the imitation of an action, and represented by actors, who must necessarily be of a certain description, as to their habits and sentiments, (for by these do we pronounce actions to be of a particular kind), there must be two natural causes of action; *namely*, sentiment and habit, ac-

31 In the dialogue verse alone is used; verse, music, and dancing, in one part of the chorus, and verse and music in another.

32 He calls it a certain part, because it belongs to it only when acted, and not when read. Music and verse he does not explain, because their effects are felt by all. They are not necessarily parts of a tragedy, but among the Greeks were always added.

ording to which, all are perfect or imperfect in acting. But the story is the imitation of an action; for I call that the story, which is the putting together of things done; those the manners, by which we declare the actors to be of such or such a quality; and that the sentiment, in which, by speaking, they point out any thing, or declare an opinion. There must therefore be six parts of a tragedy, from which it derives its quality: these are, the story, the manner, the discourse, the sentiment, the scenery, and the melody.³³ The *instruments* with which they imitate, are two of the parts,—the mode of imitation one, and the things imitated three; and besides these, there is none else.

XV. There are not a few of the poets, so to speak, who make use of these forms; as every drama *equally* possesses scenery, manner, story, discourse, melody, and sentiment: but of these, the putting together of actions is of the greatest importance. For tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of actions,³⁴ of *human* life, and of happiness and misery;³⁵ and as happiness consists in action,

33 The instruments of imitation are discourse and melody; the manners are the mode; and the subjects of imitation, are the story, the scenery, and the sentiments.

34 Aristotle does not by this mean to say, that a tragedy ought to be the history of a man's whole life, but only of his good or bad fortune, that is, of some single action in his life, which occasions his happiness or misery.

35 On this subject Aristotle enters at great length in his *Ethics*: he there proves that happiness (which is the prize for which all men struggle) consists in virtuous energy. Were it

so the end at which we aim is action, and not quality. ³⁶ Men are of such and such a quality, according to their manners; but according to their actions they are happy or the reverse. They do not therefore act, that they may imitate manners, but take manners along with them, by means of their actions. Thus actions and the story form the main object of tragedy; and the main object is that which, in all things, is of the greatest importance. Besides, without action, tragedy could not exist, whilst without manners it might; for the tragedies of most moderns are without manner, and many poets are altogether of this nature. Similarly situated was Zeuxis with respect to Polygnotus, among painters; for Polygnotus was a good painter of manners, whilst the paintings of Zeuxis had no manner at all. Moreover, if one should produce a collection of moral sayings, in language and sentiments well expressed, he would not perform the office of tragedy; but that is much more a tragedy, which uses these more sparingly, and possesses a story and a connection of actions. In addition to this *we have to remark*, that the most ready means by which tragedy attracts the atten-

to be made up of passive qualities, a man might be asleep all his days, and yet be happy.

36 A man's moral feelings and his actions may very well be at variance. His disposition may be good, and yet he may commit such actions, urged on too by that very disposition, as will most certainly render him miserable. On the stage in particular, to which Aristotle here alludes, the happiness or misery of the character represented, must result from his actions alone.

tion, are parts of the story; *namely*,³⁷ peripaties and recognition. The proof is, that those who endeavour to write tragedies, are much sooner able to be correct in their diction and manner, than in the connection of actions, *as was the case with* almost all the ancient poets. The story, therefore, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of tragedy;³⁸ and next, manners. (And here *the art* much resembles painting; for if one were to paint with the most beautiful colours, promiscuously blended together, he would not give so much pleasure, as he who took likenesses in chalk. But tragedy is the imitation of action, and therefore particularly so of agents). Thirdly, sentiment: and this is, the being able to express those things which belong to, and are in harmony with, the subject; but what relates to speeches, it is the office of politics and rhetoric *to set forth*; for the ancient poets made their characters speak politically, the moderns, rhetorically. Manner again, is that which declares the previous intention of the speaker, what it may be. Some speeches, therefore, have

37 The peripaties are the revolutions and changes of fortune, which the hero of the piece undergoes. Recognition is the knowledge which the persons represented in the drama, acquire of one another, and which they are supposed either not to have previously had, or to have forgotten. It generally takes place at the conclusion, and brings about the catastrophe.

38 The respective merits of the different parts of tragedy are admirably well arranged. The proper connection of the actions or incidents deservedly holds the first place. Next comes manner, because manners or habits are always the cause of actions; the proper disposition and maintaining of which, do for the poet, what a proper distribution of colours does for a painter.

no manner ; *I mean those* by which it does not appear what the speaker *intends* either to choose or to avoid. ³⁹ But sentiment is that by which men point out how a thing is, or how it is not ; or, in general terms, by which they make an enunciation. Fourth : *in order*, is the pronunciation of speeches. But I say, as has been said before, that discourse is an explanation *of our meaning* by the help of words, and which has the same force, when delivered either in verse or prose. ⁴⁰ Of the remaining five parts, melody is the most productive of pleasure. ⁴¹ Scenery, to be sure, is very attractive to the attention, but it depends little on the art, and is the part least peculiarly belonging to poetry ; for the force of tragedy exists without the performance or performers. Besides, in the arrangement of the shew, the art of the scene-painter has more effect than that of the poets.

XVI. These matters being defined, we will next state of what nature the connection of actions ought to be, since this is the first and chief point of tragedy. It has already been demonstrated to

³⁹ By sentiments he does not mean all the thoughts which pass within the actor's mind, but only such as are expressed in words. The term "sentence" would not convey the idea at all, and sentiment in its general acceptation is too comprehensive ; but for want of a better word, it must be used in this limited sense.

⁴⁰ Regarding melody or music we have before observed, that though not absolutely an essential part of the drama, it was always used as such.

⁴¹ The word here translated scenery has a much more comprehensive meaning. It includes dresses, machinery, in short every thing which may be styled stage effect.

us, that tragedy is the imitation of a whole and perfect action, ⁴² having a proper magnitude; for there is a whole, which has not a proper magnitude. ⁴³ But a whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. ⁴⁴ The beginning is that which itself, of necessity, is not after any other; but after which another naturally is, or follows. The end, on the contrary, is that which necessarily, or for the most part, follows another in a natural order; but after which, *follows* nothing else. The middle is that which follows one thing, and after which, another follows. It is therefore necessary, that well connected stories should not begin and end where chance may direct, but that they employ the above-mentioned forms. But since the beautiful, both animal, and every other thing which is composed of parts, ought to have those parts, not only properly arranged, but also to possess

42 There are many actions which, though entire, have not a continuance sufficiently long, nor a preparation sufficiently great to form the subjects of tragedies. Such are they which happen in a moment, without any previous warning, and which can only be introduced as episodes.

43 The cause of undertaking an action and the preparations for setting about it, are the beginning. The difficulties which are to be surmounted in the performance of that action, constitute the middle; and the catastrophe or consequences of the action when performed, compose the end.

44 This passage requires only to be translated a little more freely to render it quite perspicuous. The beginning is that which does not necessarily require the preexistence of any thing else. The middle is that which follows the beginning and precedes the end. And the end is that which follows both, and is followed by nothing else. Therefore, says Aristotle, great attention is required in making a story begin and end where it ought.

a size, not *merely* accidental : for the beautiful consists in a *propriety* of size and arrangement ; whence neither is that animal beautiful, which is too small, because the vision is confounded when it takes place in an almost imperceptible *period* of time ; nor *that which* is too large, because the perception does not take place at once, but the individuality and perfection in the view, is lost to the spectators ; as if, *for instance*, there could be an animal ten thousand stadia long. ⁴⁵ Thus, as in bodies and animals, it is necessary for them to have a proper magnitude, and that readily taken in by the eye ; so also in stories, they ought to have a proper length, and that easily remembered. The determining of that length, as far as regards the disputations, and the senses of *the audience*, belongs not to the art. For if it were necessary to act one hundred tragedies, men would act them by the hour-glass, ⁴⁶ as they say was sometimes *done* elsewhere. ⁴⁷ But the mark *to govern us* with re-

⁴⁵ This is a very excellent illustration, and points out that the memory has the same power in the intellectual world, which the eye has in the natural. The story of a tragedy ought not to be too short, because it is then *not worth* remembering, and is besides obscured by the many episodes which must be introduced to fill up the piece. Neither ought it to be too long, because the best memory *could* not then retain it.

⁴⁶ This is a reproof to the Athenians, who were so fond of shews that they used to have twelve, and even sixteen plays acted in a day. These were pieces repeated by four poets for a prize, and that last was always satirical.

⁴⁷ The meaning of this is, that the longer the story may be, the better it is fitted for being the subject of a tragedy, provided it be not of such a length that the beginning will be forgotten, before we get to the end. This makes more clear what was before said of the *παρμίσρον* and *παμμυγᾶσις*.

ference to the nature of the action is, that the greater is always more appropriate in proportion to its size, as long as it is perspicuous. To give a definition of the matter as simply as possible:—when events follow each other in order, in whatever extent it happens, either according to probability or necessity, that the transition is made to good from bad fortune, or from good to bad, that ⁴⁸ term of magnitude is sufficient.

XVII. ⁴⁹ A story is one, (*possesses unity*) not as some think, if it be told of *one* person: for many things, infinite in their nature, happen, from none of which any single action comes; and there are also many actions of one person, from which no single action springs. Wherefore all appear to be in an error, as many of the poets as have composed the *Heracleides*, the *Theseides*, and such like poems. For they suppose, that because *Hercules*

⁴⁸ This is in support of the antient theory, that a tragedy ought to take up as much time in acting, as the circumstances which are represented did in real life. Not that this was always attended to, as many occurrences, which, if real, would have filled up ten or twelve hours, were by the Greek tragedians compressed into four. It was considered however as the perfection of tragedy.

⁴⁹ Aristotle here shews, that the circumstance of there being but one hero will not give unity to a piece. Were the life and adventures of any eminent man, for example, to be thrown into verse, unity could not possibly be looked for in such a confused jumble. But if the poet take one particular action, and make it the chief subject of his work, he may add as many more as he pleases, by way of episodes, provided he do it with proper care, and the poem will still preserve its unity. The reason of this is, he adds, that actions performed in the most opposite quarters of the globe, cannot be more different than the actions of the same person frequently are.

was one, the story must necessarily be single. But Homer, as he excels them in other respects, appears also to have had a proper view in this, either by art, or by nature. For in composing the *Odyssey*, he has not recorded every *circumstance* which befel his hero; ⁵⁰ that he was wounded in Parnassus, for instance, and that in the assembling *of the army* he pretended to be mad; ⁵¹ of which, although one happened, there was no necessity or probability that the other would; but those which relate to one action, such as we call the *Odyssey*; and so also the *Iliad*. As then in other imitative arts, a single imitation is the imitation of one object, so also ought the story of a poem, since it is the imitation of an action, to be the imitation of a single action, and that an entire one; and the parts of the action *ought to be* so arranged, that any one part being changed or taken away, the whole shall be destroyed or changed. For ⁵² that which

50 Ulysses when a boy was wounded below the knee by a wild-bear on Parnassus. This Homer very naturally mentions in the *Odyssey*, not as an episode which might either have been omitted or not, but as a part of the piece, because the scar left by that wound was a means by which his hero could be recognized. The pretended madness, having no relation to the story, is omitted.

51 Aristotle here teaches, that the incidents related in a poem, should all have some connection with one another; and that those which may have happened to the hero, but which had no relation at all to the subject of the poem, ought to be left out. They ought also so to hang together, that the smallest deviation from the original plan, would change the whole nature of the poem.

52 This clearly alludes to those insertions which have no relation to the principal story. Thus in the *midsummer-night's dream*, were we to strike out Quince's play of *Piramus and*

when added or not added does nothing remarkable, is not a part of the poem.

XVIII. ⁵³ From what has been said it is manifest, that it is not the office of the poet; to relate things which have really happened, but *rather* such as might, or could have happened, according to probable or necessary consequence. For the historian and poet do not *merely* differ in that they speak in verse and prose; as the history of Herodotus might be put into verse, and would be not less a history in verse than in prose: but in this they differ—that the one relates things which *actually* did happen, and the other, what might have happened. On this account, poetry is a more philosophic and honourable pursuit than history. ⁵⁴ For

This, we might deprive the piece of one of its greatest beauties, but we should not destroy the unity of the story. The reverse is the case with the mock play in Hamlet, for it is by the feelings excited by its representation, that the king betrays his guilt, and thus confirms Hamlet in his resolution of vengeance.

⁵³ This is self-evident; for were a poet to confine himself to facts, he could not give to his poem the parts which it requires. As he must necessarily be ignorant of a man's real motives for the performance of any action, he could not give to his play that beginning which Aristotle recommends. And so also with the middle and the end. The same sentence teaches us, that a poet ought to confine himself within the bounds of at least possibility. Supernatural agency, though not probable, is still possible, and therefore not to be objected to; but were a poet to tell us, that a thing was, and was not at the same time, we should at once see his absurdity.

⁵⁴ Aristotle here gives a decided superiority to poetry over history, which no man will hesitate to assent to, who gives himself a moment's time for reflection. The historian, it is true, relates the occurrence of certain events, which it is very proper to be acquainted with, but then he cannot in the nature of things

poetry treats more of general principles; history, of particular actions. A general principle is that which ⁵⁵ a man of a certain character would say or do, according either to probability or necessity; which poetry endeavours to make clear, by adding names. A particular action again, is something *which* Alcibiades did or suffered. In comedy, indeed, this has been made plain enough; for connecting their story by a chain of probable events, they have added names to their pieces, and not like the iambic poets, written poems on the actions of individuals. In tragedy, however, they make use of real names; and the reason is, that what is possible is credible. Things, therefore, which never happened, we do not believe *to be* possible; but it is evident that those which did happen, are possible, otherwise, had they been impossible, they would not have happened. It happens, nevertheless, in some tragedies, that one or two of the names are known, and the rest fictitious; in others, that none *are known*—as in the *Flower of Agathon*. In this *play* he invents equal-

pretend to explain the causes of those events. If he attempt it at all, what he says must be mere conjecture, whereas the poet has the intire management of his performance in his own hands, from first to last. He gives to his hero certain passions and qualities, and makes him perform certain actions which are consequent upon such passions. He thus impresses upon our minds the consequence of allowing passion to gain the ascendancy over reason, whilst the historian who records nothing but bare facts, leaves us to conjecture from what source those facts have arisen. The poet therefore, in a moral point of view, is a better instructor than the historian.

⁵⁵ Which it occurs to a man of a certain character to say or do.

ly the actions and the names, and pleases not the less. It ought not therefore to be our chief study to tie ourselves down to traditionary stories, upon which tragedies are *founded*.⁵⁶ Indeed it would be ridiculous to aim at this; as those which are known, are known but to a few, and yet give pleasure to all. It is evident then from this, that a poet ought to be esteemed such rather from his story than from his versification, inasmuch as he is a poet by imitation, and he imitates actions. And should it happen that he celebrates real occurrences, he is not the less a poet; for of real occurrences, there is nothing to prevent some being of such a nature, as probably might, and possibly could have happened, in which *point of view* he is the author of them.⁵⁷ But of simple stories and actions, the episodic are the worst. I call that an episodic story, in which it is neither probable nor necessary, that the episodes *introduced* should follow another. Such are composed by bad poets, on their own account, and by good ones, on account of the players.⁵⁸ Because acting for prizes, and spinning out the story beyond what it will

56 How small a proportion of a British audience, for example, know the story upon which the Merchant of Venice is founded.

57 Episodic stories are such as either from their own barrenness or the poverty of the author's genius, are interspersed with little anecdotes and adventures which have no reference to the main plot, and such he justly reprobates.

58 Poems were often repeated for prizes, and if the subject of one should be barren of incidents, the poet was obliged to introduce episodes for the purpose of giving it a proper length.

bear, they are frequently obliged to interrupt the connection.

XIX. ⁵⁹ But since *tragedy* is the imitation, not only of a perfect action, but of such as excites pity and fear, of which description actions particularly are, when they are produced by one another rather contrary to expectation, for an occurrence of this kind has more of the wonderful in it, than if it were to happen accidentally, or fortuitously: and since of accidental circumstances, those seem most wonderful, which appear to have happened by design; as for example, the statue of Mity's at Argos killed the person who was the cause of Mity's death, *by falling upon him when he was looking at it*; for such things seem as if they had not taken place by mere chance. Therefore it necessarily *follows*, that stories which possess these qualities are best *adapted for tragedy*.

XX. But of stories, some are simple, others complex. For the actions also of which they are

⁵⁹ What is meant by an entire and perfect action, has already been explained. It is a maxim of Aristotle's, that the feelings to be excited by tragedy, are principally fear and pity, and these, he very justly observes, are most powerfully operated upon, when the spectator is taken, as it were, by surprise. But it is not enough that the circumstance which excites those feelings be unexpected. It ought also to have reference to something done before. Thus had Mity's murderer been killed by a fall from his horse, or an accidental blow from a stone, his death would have been attributed to blind chance alone, but as the statue of the very man whom he had murdered fell upon him, and crushed him to death, something like an appearance of retributive justice gives interest to the accident.

the imitation chance originally to have been of these kinds. ⁶⁰ I call that a simple story, in which, being connected and single, as has been defined, the change takes place without peripatie or recognition; and complex, in which the change takes place, with recognition, or peripatie, or both. But these should be produced by the very connection of the story, in such a manner as that they must arise, either necessarily, or according to probability, from actions previously performed. ⁶¹ For there is a great difference between a thing happening in consequence of something else, and after something else.

XXI. The peripatie, as has been said, is the change of actions to their very opposites; and this, as we have stated, either according to probable, or necessary *consequence*. Thus in *the story of Œdipus*, the person who came to make Œdipus happy, and to relieve his *mind* from all fears respecting his mother, having disclosed who he was, did the very reverse: and in the *Lynceus*, when he is led out as about to die, and Danaus follows, as

60 A simple story or action is that which is accompanied with no change of place or circumstances, or remembrance of forgotten objects. A complex is accompanied with all.

61 Fifty things may happen one after another, and yet have no more connection than so many arithmetical figures. But when one thing is produced in consequence of another, it proves, that the cause must have existed, or else the effect never could have come into being. Of this nature ought all the peripaties and recognitions in a tragedy to be, that is, there ought not to be any which is not the consequence of something gone before.

about to kill him, it happens, from what has gone before, that the last dies, and the first is saved.

XXII. Recognition, again, as the name denotes, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, ⁶² *tending to establish* either friendship or animosity, between *the persons* destined to happiness or misery. ⁶³ The best kind of recognition is, when the peripatie takes place at the same time, as is the case in the *Œdipus*. ⁶⁴ But *besides this*, there are other kinds of recognition; for it happens that it is sometimes directed towards inanimate, and accidental objects; and one may discover whether a person did or did not perform *some particular action*; but that which peculiarly belongs to the story, and *constitutes* the chief part of the action, is what was *first* mentioned: for such recognition and peripatie will excite either pity or fear; of

62 For two persons to remember each other, and still to continue in the same situation is not sufficient. The remembrance must excite feelings of either love or hatred, or else the recognition will not have fulfilled its office.

63 That recognition is best which produces an instant change in the circumstances of the person who remembers, which hurries him at once from happiness to misery, or from misery to happiness, and thus brings on the catastrophe. No recognition, properly speaking, can be made without effecting some change; but Aristotle speaks here only of the grand circumstance upon which the whole story hangs.

64 We may find a ring or a necklace for example, or see a horse, and remember that it belongs to some particular person. We may see that something has been done, and remembering the manner in which that person does such things, we conclude that it was he who did it. Or again, we may have seen a tree planted, or a pillar erected by this person, and returning to the same place, we remember that it was done by him.

which actions, tragedy is shewn to be the imitation. Besides, good or bad fortune will be the consequence of such recognitions. But since recognition is the excitement of remembrance between certain persons, ⁶⁵ some recognitions will only be, of one *party* towards the other, when *only* one is made known; at other times both must recognise; as Iphigenia is recognised by Orestes, from *the circumstance* of dispatching a letter, but it requires other *means to awaken* a recognition of him *in the mind of* Iphigenia.

XXIII. Two parts of the story therefore relate to this; (*the subject*) *namely*, peripatie and recognition: there is also a third, *viz.* passion. Of these, peripatie and recognition have been explained; but passion ⁶⁶ is an action productive of death or pain; ⁶⁷ such as murders openly perpetrated, tortures, wounds, and such like.

⁶⁵ It sometimes happens that a story will require, that only one of two persons should recognise the other. At other times both must be recognised. When this is the case, more means must be employed than one. A bodily mark may be the cause of one being remembered, and some other contingent circumstance of the other. Thus Iphigenia made herself known to Orestes, by repeating the very words of a letter which she had previously sent him, and he proved himself to be the right person by a mark on his body.

⁶⁶ To call passion an action seems perfectly incongruous; but the fact is, we have not a single word in the language which will convey the meaning of *πάθος* in the present case. Its signification must be, the colouring which passion gives to an action.

⁶⁷ Aristotle does not here mean to recommend the commission of murder upon the stage—a thing very rarely done among the ancients. He only means that the audience must be certainly informed that the person is dead,

XXIV. We have mentioned above those parts of a tragedy which must be used as forms; ⁶⁸ but with respect to quantity, and the distinct parts into which it is divided, these are they—prologue, episode, exode, and chorus; and of this *last there are two parts*—one parodus, and the other stasimon. These are the same in all *tragedies*; but *their peculiarities* arise from the scenery and the commi. The prologue is that whole part of the tragedy, which precedes the parodus of the chorus. The episode, that whole part of the tragedy which is between the entire songs of the chorus. And the exode, that whole part of the tragedy, after which there is no song of the chorus. *Of the divisions* of the chorus again, the parodus is the first speech of the whole chorus, and the stasimon is the song of the chorus, *which is without anapæste or trochæus*. The commus again, is the combined lamentation

⁶⁸ Most of these parts are so well explained in the text, that it is almost needless to notice them here. We will endeavour however to make some of them even more plain. The prologue, it must be remembered, was not as it is now, a short address spoken to the audience before the commencement of the play, but an actual part of the piece. When the chorus spoke, one person did it for the whole, but when they sang, all joined. The parodus was the first of these songs. The stasimon we must explain at greater length. The chorus did not begin to take a share in the action till after the parodus was sung. In it they had made use of anapæste and trochæus, being a quick measure, indicative of a careless mind, and suited to rapid motion. When, however, they began to take an interest in the piece, and to form, in fact, part of the performance, they dropped this lively measure, and sung the rest of their songs in one more grave and melancholy. These were called the stasimon. The commi are the united lamentations of the chorus and other actors at the performance of any terrible action, and were accompanied with beating the breast, whence the name is derived.

of the chorus and the players. The parts of a tragedy therefore, which *the poet* must use, have been formerly stated; but with respect to quantity and the distinct parts into which it is divided, they are these.

XXV. Next in order, after what we have just said, we will mention what things, those who compose tragedies ought to aim at, and what they ought to avoid, and how the object of tragedy will be attained. ⁶⁹ Since then the composition of the best tragedy must be, not simple, but complex, and that imitative of things which are terrible and pitiable, (for this is the peculiarity of that kind of imitation) it is evident, in the first place, that neither very just men should be represented as falling from good fortune into bad, (as this is neither terrible nor pitiable, but detestable) nor the wicked from bad fortune into good, (for this is by no means tragical; as it possesses none of all *the requisites* which it ought, it excites not a love of mankind, neither is it pitiable nor terrible): nor in the second place should a very bad man *be represented* as falling from good fortune into bad, (for although this kind of composition may have

⁶⁹ These maxims are in support of Aristotle's theory, that tragedy ought to purify our passions, by means of pity and fear. The misfortunes of a conspicuously good man, however, would excite in us neither the one nor the other. They would rather rouse our indignation. And the successes of a bad man, would have quite the contrary effect from purifying our passions. The fall of a very bad man again, would give us pleasure, without exciting either pity or fear.

something philanthropic in it, it excites neither pity nor fear; because the one is felt when an undeserving person suffers, the other, when a person in our own situation; pity for the undeserving, and fear for the equal; so that such an event would produce neither pity nor fear). That man therefore remains, who is between the two. He will be a man from among those in high estimation and happiness, who is conspicuous neither for his virtue and justice, nor falls into misfortune from any wickedness or crime, but only from some mistake; such as Œdipus and Orestes, and the illustrious men of such families.

XXVI. It is necessary, however, as some say, that a well arranged story should be simple rather than complex, and that the change should be, not from bad fortune to good, but on the contrary, from good to bad—by no crime, but by a great mistake of such a man as has been mentioned, or of a better rather than a worse. What *daily* happens is a proof of *this*; for formerly, indeed, poets recited any stories they might meet with, but now the best tragedies are composed upon a few families; as *upon the story of* Alcmæon, Orestes, Œdipus, Meliogarus, Thyestes, Telephon, and some others, whose fate it was to do and suffer terrible *things*.⁷⁰ The finest tragedy, therefore, according to the

⁷⁰ That is, of all tragedies composed according to rule, that which is founded upon a story of this kind is the best. He does not say of all tragedies, because there were some which were meant to appear as if no attention whatever had been paid to

rules of art, ⁷¹ is a composition of this nature. Those men accordingly err, who find fault with Euripides because he does this in his tragedies, and because many of them, and unhappily. For this, as has been said, is correct. And a very great proof is, that such pieces, if they be properly arranged, appear, with the assistance of scenery and acting, most tragical; and that Euripides, though he but indifferently disposes the other parts, seems notwithstanding the most tragic of the poets. Second *in excellence*, by some called first, is that composition which has a double connection, and which ends, like the *Odyssey*, in opposite *ways with respect* to the good and to the bad: ⁷² it appears to be first *only* on account of the weakness of the spectators. For such poets, in their works, attend to the pleasure of the spectators. But this is not the pleasure *to be derived* from tragedy, but rather the peculiar one of comedy; because there, men, who in the story may have been the greatest enemies, like Orestes and Ægistheus, becoming friends at the end, go out, and neither dies *by the hand* of the other.

XXVII. The terrible and pitiable may arise on the one hand from what is seen; and on the other,

rule in their composition, but which from the interest of their story, their beauty of expression, or the excellence of their scenery were extremely pleasing.

71 ΕΚ ΤΑΥΤΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΟΥΡΑΝΙΩΣ ΙΣΤΗ, is of this composition.

72 An ending altogether unhappy is too much for the feelings of some audiences, and this he calls their weakness.

from the connection of the things recorded, which *latter* is preferable, and is the mode pursued by the better poet. The story therefore ought to be so arranged, that the person who listens to a relation of the circumstances, even without the assistance of shew, should shudder and tremble at the events; just as one would do, who should hear the story of Œdipus. But to effect this by means of what is seen, belongs less to the art, and requires external aid. ⁷³ Those again, who produce by the assistance of stage effect, not the terrible, but the monstrous only, have nothing in common with tragedy; for we must not expect from tragedy every *species* of pleasure, but only what is peculiar to it. Since then the poet ought to produce pleasure from pity and fear by imitating, it is evident that it should be done in the actions *represented*. We will now consider, which of those events that really happen, appear terrible, and which pitiable. But it is requisite that such be the actions of friends towards one another, or of enemies, or of indifferent persons. If, however, an enemy kill an enemy, he represents nothing pitiable, either when perpetrating or meditating the action, ⁷⁴ except what *arises from our own* feelings; so also with indifferent persons.

⁷³ This alludes to the introduction of such characters as Force and Violence in Prometheus chained, of Oceanus mounted on a griffin's back, and of Io in the shape of a cow, all of which are reprobated as being monstrous without being terrible.

⁷⁴ In either of these cases we feel little else than that aversion to murder which is natural to man. But if a friend kill a friend, or a relation kill a relation, without knowing the person whom he murders, then our pity is excited.

But when actions which excite passion, are committed among friends; if, for example, a son kill, or meditate upon killing, a father—a brother, a brother—a mother, her son—or a son, his mother—⁷⁵ or do any other deed of this nature—these are the incidents to be sought for. ⁷⁶ It is not right to alter traditionary stories; I mean such as Clytemnestra dying by the hand of Orestes, and Eriphyle by that of Alcæon; but the poet ought himself to invent, as well as use with propriety, those which are handed down. What we call *using* with propriety, we will more fully explain. One way is, as the ancients did, to represent the agents as performing some action, knowing and being aware of what they are about; in which manner Euripides made Medea destroy her children. Another, that they do some terrible deed, but do it in ignorance, and afterwards discover the friendship which subsists between them; like the *Œdipus* of Sophocles. ⁷⁷ This, to be sure, is out of the drama; but it may be in the tragedy; like the Alcæon of Astydamas,

⁷⁵ There are other things besides death, which under those circumstances would excite pity, such as cruel treatment, insults, confinement, &c.

⁷⁶ This is not meant to contradict what has been said before, namely, that there is no necessity for a poet's confining himself to mere matter of fact. On the contrary we are expressly told that he ought to exert his own invention; in other words, he may assign what motives he pleases for the performance of the grand catastrophe, and relate whatever previous adventures he thinks fit, provided he does not alter the great occurrence upon which the whole story turns.

⁷⁷ *Œdipus* has killed his father and married his mother before the play begins, and this is what is meant by *εξω του δραματος*, out of the drama.

or the Telegon in Ulysses wounded. A third way is, that the person who is about to do some inexpiable deed through ignorance, makes a discovery before he has perpetrated it. And besides these, there is no other; for an action must or must not be done, and the agents must or must not know *what they are about*.⁷⁸ Of these, that *which represents a person who knows what he is doing, as meditating and not performing an action, is the worst; for it has something detestable in it, though not tragical, because it is without passion. Wherefore no one does it, except rarely; as the conduct of Hæmon in the Antigone towards Creon. Next worst is that he complete the action.*⁷⁹ But it is better, that the person should perform an action in ignorance, and make the discovery after he has done it, for it raises no feeling of detestation, and the recognition is matter of astonishment. The last method however is the best; I mean as in the Cresphontes,⁸⁰ when Merope is about to kill her

⁷⁸ The hero of a tragedy ought not to meditate the death of somebody else, and be prevented from fulfilling his intention, unless by his own death. Were the play to leave both parties, at its conclusion, in the same situation they were in, when it began, neither pity nor fear could possibly be excited; but if the death of the hero be the means of saving the other, the story will of course change its character, and instead of simple, become complex. The beginning of this sentence relates to what is said in the one immediately before, namely, that an action must or must not be done, and that the agents must or must not know what they are about.

⁷⁹ That one man, for instance, should kill another, and afterwards discover that the person whom he slew was his own father.

⁸⁰ By this it will be seen, that a tragedy among the ancients did not absolutely require that any blood should be spilt. When

son, she does not kill him, but recognises him : and in the Iphigenia a sister does the same with her brother : and in the Helle, a son being about to deliver up his mother, remembers her. On this account, tragedies, as has been said, are composed upon but few families. ⁸¹ Because poets, when seeking for subjects, discovered, not *by adherence* to artificial *rules*, but by chance, *the propriety* of suiting such incidents to the stories. They are accordingly obliged to have recourse to those families, among whom such misfortunes have occurred. Enough has been said on the composition of actions, and of the qualities which the stories ought to possess.

XXVIII. Respecting manners, again, there are four things which the poet ought to attend to.

⁸² One and the first is, that they be useful. A *person* will possess manner, if, as has been said, his speech or action make manifest some predetermi-

one near relation or friend brought another to the point of death, the passions of fear and pity were sufficiently excited, and the spectators were rather pleased to see the actual perpetration of the deed prevented.

⁸¹ The meaning of these two sentences seems to be, that as the antient poets had accidentally fixed upon a few families from which to take subjects for their tragedies, and the moderns had chosen to confine themselves to the same names, for what reason does not appear, they must not attribute to their heroes actions quite different from what those great masters had made them perform.

⁸² Whether the character introduced be naturally good or bad, his manner must be such as will shew his nature. If a good man be represented, his manner must make his goodness apparent, and so also with a bad.

nation ; *it will be good if it shew a good predetermination, and bad if it shew a bad one.* And it is so in every situation ; for a woman is useful and so is a slave ; though the first of them is perhaps more frequently bad *than good*, the second always bad. Secondly, that they be becoming ; thus there is a manner which suits a man, but is not becoming for a woman, *namely*, to be bold and terrible. ⁸³ Thirdly, that they be like ; for this is different from making manner useful or becoming, as has been stated. ⁸⁴ And fourthly, that they be equal ; for if the person who supplies the imitation, and is supposed to possess a manner of a certain kind, be unequal, *the manner given him in representation* ought to be equally incongruous. Menelaus in the Orestes, for instance, is an example of unnecessary badness of manner ; the lamentation of Ulysses in the Scylla, and the speech of Melanippes, of the indecorous and unbecoming ; and Iphigenia in the Aulis, of the unequal ; for when supplicating, she does not resemble what she afterwards *becomes*.

⁸³ The difference between *likeness* and *usefulness* in manner is made most apparent by an example. If the character to be represented, be a man falsely considered by the world as a miser, and if his manner be meant to be *like*, he must be made to speak and act according to the notion generally entertained of him. If on the other hand the author wish it to be useful or becoming, he must speak and act as his own disposition would dictate.

⁸⁴ If the manner of the person represented, be in reality variable and uncertain, we must take care to make it equally so in the representation, but as we begun so must we end. Thus if a man be represented as very brave at the commencement of a piece, it will not do to make a coward of him towards the conclusion.

But in manners, as well as in the connection of events, it is requisite to aim at either the necessary or the probable,⁸⁵ so that it be necessary or probable, that such and such a man say or do such and such things, and necessary or probable, that this action be performed after that.⁸⁶ It is evident, therefore, that the unravelling of the plot, ought to proceed from the story itself; and not as in the *Medea*, and *Ilias*, where the sailing *from Troy is represented*, by machinery; but machinery may be employed in matters out of the drama, either such as happened before it, which a man cannot know, or such as are to follow, which require relation and description; for we attribute to the Gods, the *power* of seeing all things.⁸⁷ Neither in the actions *represented*, ought any to be without a reason; if *this cannot be*, let it be out of the tragedy; as in the *Ædipus* of Sophocles. But since

85 The meaning of this very confused sentence is, that it is as necessary for a young man to speak and act like a young man, and an old man like an old man, as for the effect to follow the cause.

86 This alludes to the practice of bringing upon the stage ships, enchanted cars, &c. in which the characters were carried off, and so the piece concluded. It also has reference to supernatural agency, which he says should not be employed, unless the poet wish to inform the audience of events which have taken place before the commencement of his tragedy, and have some relation to it, or of those which are to follow, for the Gods are allowed to have the power of seeing all things. The *Ilias* here spoken of, is not the epic poem, but a tragedy founded on the same story.

87 Nothing done upon the stage should appear to be without a cause. If it be absolutely necessary that something must have been done, for which there is no apparent cause, let it have been done before the period of the play's commencement.

tragedy is an imitation of better men, we ought to copy good portrait painters ; for they, preserving the peculiarity of shape, and making *the portraits* like, paint them handsomer *than the originals*. Thus ought a poet, when imitating irascible and slothful men, or *those* who have such peculiarities in their manners, to produce an example ⁸⁸ of moderation, rather than of extreme roughness, as Agathon and Homer do Achilles. These then he ought to attend to, and besides them, ⁸⁹ to the gratification of those senses, which do not necessarily attend the poetic art, for in what relates to them, it is often possible to err. But sufficient notice has been taken of these in the published tracts.

XXIX. What recognition is, has already been stated. But there are *several* sorts of recognition : ⁹⁰ the first is that which belongs least to the art, and which most *men* from poverty of *genius* make use of, viz. recognition by marks. Of these, some are natural ; as the spear which the earth-born Thebans bear, or stars, such as Carcinus uses in his Thyestes ; others, acquired ; some of which are

88 That is, the finest parts of his character ought to be brought forward, and the bad parts kept out of sight.

89 It is quite impossible to translate this literally and to make common English of it. The meaning is, that some attention ought to be paid to the scenery and music as well as to the incidents, related in the play.

90 The several ways of being recognised by signs are, first, by natural mark, such as we may have been born with ; secondly, by the scar of old hurts ; and thirdly, by wearing a ring or any other thing which may have been given as a token.

upon the body, as scars, and others unconnected with it, as necklaces, and as the cradle in the Tyrone, by which a discovery is made. And we may employ them to greater and less advantage: thus Ulysses was recognised on account of his scar, in one way by his nurse, and in another by the swineherds. But these, and all of this nature, which are used to gain belief, have less to do with art; ⁹¹ those again, which *proceed from peripatie*, like that in the Niptri, are better. ⁹² The second *kind of recognition* is that invented by the poet, and therefore without art: it is thus in the Iphigenia, that Orestes makes himself known to his sister, she having *first* made herself known to him, (she by means of a letter, he by marks; these *latter* therefore the poet, and not the story, calls what he pleases; wherefore it approaches the error we have mentioned, because *the poet* might have produced any *others*); *and of this kind* is the voice of

91 When Ulysses made himself known to the swineherds, he himself shewed them the scar, that they might be convinced he was not deceiving them. This is what Aristotle calls "using a mark for the purpose of gaining belief." The same scar made him be recognised by his nurse, but in quite a different manner. She saw it accidentally when he was washing his feet (in the Niptri). This recognition therefore proceeded from peripatie, or change of situation, and is in Aristotle's opinion preferable to the other.

92 The meaning of this apparent paradox is, that according to the rules for the composition of tragedy, recognition should arise from the incidents in the piece, and not be produced by the will or fancy of the poet. The manner in which Iphigenia makes herself known to Orestes is an instance of the first, and the manner in which he convinces her of his being her brother, of the second, because the poet might have just as well employed any other mark, as make him tell her of the spear which lay in her apartment.

the shuttle, in the Tereus of Sophocles. The third kind, is that *brought about* by memory, when a remembrance is awakened by seeing some object; as in the Cyprians of Dicaëgenes, where a person looked at a picture and wept; and in the story of Alcinous; for Ulysses heard *the sound* of a harp, and remembering *past events*, wept; and was thus discovered. The fourth kind, is that *effected* by reasoning; ⁹³ as in the Choëphori, (that somebody like had come; that nobody was like but Orestes; he therefore had come); and in the Iphigenia of Polydes the sophist, (⁹⁴ for it is probable that Orestes would argue, that as his sister was sacrificed, it followed that he too should be sacrificed); and in the Tydeus of Theodectes, (that coming as if to find his son, he himself dies); and also in the Phinides, for when they saw the place, they perceived their fate, that it was destined they should die there, because there they had been exposed: There is besides a species of *recognition* produced by the false calculation of the audience; as in the *case of* the false messenger in the Ulysses. For he said he should know a bow which he had not seen, and the audience *expecting* that he would make himself known by means of that *bow*, make a false calculation. But the best recognition of all, is that produced by the events, as astonishment *in*

93 In the Choëphori of Æschylus, Electra having gone to the tomb of Agamemnon to pour out a libation, discovers footsteps round it very much resembling her own, and thence concludes that Orestes is come.

94 This is afterwards explained, but the other plays are lost.

this case is excited by probabilities, like that in the *Œdipus* of Sophocles, and in the *Iphigenia*, because it is probable that she should wish to give the letter in charge. For this is the only kind of *recognition* without adventitious signs and necklaces; and next to *this is the recognition which is effected* by reasoning.

XXX. The poet ought to connect his story, and polish his language, by ⁹⁵ placing *things* as much as possible before his eyes; for thus by examining them with great minuteness, and being present, as it were, at their representation, he will discover *what* is proper, and the reverse will least readily elude *his observation*. The blame bestowed upon Corcinus is a proof of *this*; for Amphiaraus had ascended from the temple, a *circumstance* which he forgot the audience does not see. *The piece* therefore was damned at the representation, because the audience was offended at this. He ought also, as much as possible, to make the *player assist his speech* with gestures. ⁹⁶ For those *men* are naturally most persuasive, who are *affected* by any passions; thus he who is himself agitated, most truly agitates

95 The poet ought to fancy himself a witness of the performance of his own tragedy. At the occurrence of every adventure, therefore, he ought to ask himself why it was introduced, and if he cannot give a satisfactory answer to that question, he may rest assured it has no business there.

96 It is a thing self evident, that the man who wishes to inflame an audience to anger, will do it more readily by appearing to be angry himself, than if he were to tell an irritating story in a calm and indifferent tone of voice.

others, and he who is angry himself, excites anger in others; for which reason, poetry belongs rather to a man of quick genius than to a madman; because the one has a ready invention, and the other is distracted. ⁹⁷ He should likewise give a general arrangement, both to traditionary stories, and any he may himself have invented; and then compose and introduce episodes. For thus, I say, he will have a general view: *let us take for example the story of Iphigenia.* A certain maid being devoted *for sacrifice*, and having disappeared *in a manner* unknown to those who were about to sacrifice her, arrived in another country, where it was the custom to sacrifice strangers to the Goddess, and obtained that priesthood. Some time after it happens that the brother of the priestess comes *there*: *why did he?* because a God ordered him to go there, for some reason out of the general *outline*; but the purpose for which he came is out of the story, and being come, he is seized, and when about to be sacrificed, a recognition takes place; either as Euripides *would do it*; or as Polyidus has done, he (*the brother*) naturally saying that not only his sister, but he also must be offered up; hence his preservation. After this, having given names *to his persons*, he may insert episodes. But he must see that those episodes be suitable; ⁹⁸ like the madness, in the case of Ores-

⁹⁷ Before he thinks of inserting episodes he ought properly to arrange the heads of his story.

⁹⁸ The madness of Orestes is the cause of his capture, and the person who brings him before Iphigenia very naturally re-

tes, by which he was taken, and his preservation by the purification. In plays the episodes are short; but an epic poem is lengthened by them. For the *real* story of the *Odyssey* is trifling. A certain man having been absent from home for many years, is watched by Neptune, and is alone; in the mean time his family is so situated, that his wealth is seized by suitors, and his son's life conspired against; this man is wrecked, and arrives *at home*, where having discovered himself to some of his people, he makes an attack upon the *suitors*, is saved himself, and destroys his enemies. This is the particular *story*; the others are *only* episodes.

XXXI. *The component parts of every tragedy, are the plot and the unravelling; ⁹⁹ those incidents which occur out of the play, and often some of those in it, form the plot; the rest is the unravelling.* The plot, I say, continues from the beginning till that part where the change to good fortune commences, and which is last; the unravel-

lates what he had said and done, to account for his having seized him: This is the first episode. The second is equally proper. Iphigenia having discovered who Orestes is, pretends to King Thoas, that the stranger being polluted with blood, will not be a proper sacrifice till both he and the statue are washed in the sea. Permission is given for the performance of this ceremony, by which means both she and her brother escape, carrying with them the statue of the goddess.

99 The circumstances which are supposed to have taken place before the time of the play's commencement, and to have been the causes of the catastrophe on which it hinges, as well as the obstacles in the play which retard that catastrophe, make up the plot. The unravelling is the consequence of its accomplishment.

ling, from the commencement of the change till the end of the piece. Thus in the Lynceus of Theodectus, the incidents and the capture of the boy form the plot; the unravelling is from the complaining of death to the end.

XXXII. ¹ There are four kinds of tragedy; and just so many parts have been mentioned: first complex, the whole of which is *made up* of peripatie and recognition; second, pathetic, such as the Ajaxes and the Ixions; third, moral, like the Phthiotides and the Peleus; and fourth, such as the Phorcides, the Prometheus, and those whose scene is in Hades. The chief endeavour ought to be, to be master of all, but if not, of the principal, and the greatest number of them, particularly now that men speak ill of poets. For poets having *already* excelled in each of the kinds, they *now* expect that one should surpass all in their peculiar

¹ Aristotle has said that the four parts of tragedy which relate to its quality are, the subject, the manner, the sentiment, and the discourse. To these he afterwards adds the recognition, the peripatie, and the passion. Of these the subject, the sentiment, and the discourse, are common to all; but peripatie, recognition, passion, and manner, are those which distinguish the four kinds mentioned. Peripatie and recognition compose the complex, neither of them having any thing to do with the simple, which is made up of a simple plot, and a simple unravelling without any change in knowledge, place, or circumstances. Where murders, wounds, and such like circumstances are introduced, the tragedy, whether simple or complex, is pathetic, because it is with these that passion is concerned. And where there is nothing of the kind—where the play ends without violence, by making a good man happy, or where the scene is laid in Hades, where no such things can happen, then is the tragedy purely moral.

excellencies. ² But it is perhaps unjust to call one tragedy the same or different *from another*, according to the story; this *ought rather to be said* of those whose plot and unravelling are the same; because many men who invent the plot well, unravel it badly; whereas both should always *be such* as will be received with applause. The poet must bear in mind what has been often said, not to make tragedy an epic composition; I call that epic, which includes many stories, as if one were to make the whole Iliad the subject of a tragedy; there indeed, (*in the Iliad, as an epic poem*) on account of its length, all the parts receive a proper extension; ³ but in dramas the *event* is quite contrary to expectation. A proof of this is, that as many as have made the whole destruction of Troy their subject, and not particular parts of it, as Euripides did the Niobe, ⁴ and as Æschylus did, either fail *entirely*,

² Though the same story may be the subject of two poems, it may be dressed up with incidents so different, and handled in so different a manner, that the two poems cannot be called the same. On the other hand, the subject may be quite different, and yet the incidents, the imagery, the versification, &c. so exactly similar, that the one poem may with much more propriety be called a copy of the other.

³ If a person were to suppose, that he could, in a tragedy, give the proper length to a number of episodes, he would find himself deceived. No episodes should be introduced, except such as are in strict connection with the principal story, and even too many of them are bad, because they destroy the unity.

⁴ The Greek is *και μη ὡςτις Αἰσχυλος*, which does not mean that Æschylus committed that fault which he is just blaming, but is merely a repetition of the commencement of the sentence, as if he would say that "they erred who did not take a part of it as Euripides did, and who did not take a part as Æschylus did."

or carry it through badly ; since by this alone Agathon was unsuccessful ; ⁵ whilst in peripaties and simple actions, they aim at what they desire with wonderful *success*. For it is *something* tragical and philanthropic. And this is the case, when a wise man, *who is wicked*, is over-reached, like Sisyphus, and a brave but unjust one, defeated. It is also agreeable to probability, as Agathon says ; for *it is* probable that many things will happen contrary to probability. It is necessary likewise to consider ⁶ the chorus as one of the actors, as being a part of the whole, and as carrying on the performance along with *the others*, not after the manner of Euripides, but after that of Sophocles. Among the other *tragic writers*, indeed, the *parts* assigned to it belong no more to the *particular* story than to *any* other tragedy ; wherefore it sings any kind of songs, of which practice Agathon was the author ; and where is the difference between singing songs which will suit any play, and inserting a speech or a whole episode, *taken* from one *piece* into another.

5 Although Agathon and the others fail in the subject, their peripaties and recognitions are wonderfully successful, because what they aim at there, is something pleasing, simple, and tragical.

6 The chorus were introduced as mere spectators of what the principal characters were doing, but then says Aristotle, they ought to be interested spectators. Their songs should not be of an indifferent nature, but should relate solely to what is going on, and in such a manner as will help to elucidate the piece. In this respect Sophocles was superior to Euripides, because the songs which the choruses of the latter sung, had often no reference to the story of the play.

XXXIII. Of the other parts we have now spoken ; and it remains to treat of discourse and sentiment. What relates to sentiment, however, will be found in the *treatise* upon rhetoric, as it more peculiarly belongs to that art. For those matters which have reference to sentiment, ought to be produced by reasoning ; and their parts are, demonstration, refutation, and the excitement of the passions ; as fear, pity, anger, and such like ; *and making a thing great or small*. It is evident then, that when in the performance, it is necessary to represent *things as pitiable, terrible, great, or probable*, the poet must employ the same forms *as the orator* ; ⁷ but so far they differ, ⁸ that in the one case the occurrences must appear *of this kind*, without his proving *them to be such, and in the other*, that they be rendered such by the speaker in his harangue, and become so from *the colouring which the speech has given them*. For what would be the use of an orator, if things were to appear in a proper light, without his speech ?

XXXIV. With respect to those *matters which have reference to discourse*, one species of enquiry

⁷ This sentence will not bear a more literal translation ; but as all the words which are not in the original are in Italics, the reader will find no difficulty in reconciling the English with the Greek.

⁸ The subject of a poem ought to be of such a nature, that the bare relation of facts will excite those passions. The orator, on the other hand, is often obliged to make those things appear terrible which are in reality pitiable, and those pitiable which are in reality terrible.

is into the forms of pronunciation,⁹ with which, the player, and the person who considers this art of primary importance, ought to be acquainted; as what is command, entreaty, narration, threat, interrogation, reply, and such like. No blame worthy of serious attention is attached to the poet for his knowledge or ignorance of these. For who would suppose there was an error, where Protagoras finds fault? that *the person* who is supposed to be entreating, speaks as if he were commanding, "Sing Goddess the wrath." Because, to order one to do a thing, he says, is command. *This examination, therefore, must be reserved for another treatise, and not for the poetics.* The following are the parts of all discourse; element, (*i. e.* letter) syllable, conjunction, noun, verb, article, case, and sentence. A letter is an indivisible sound; not every sort, but that from which an intelligible sound can be produced; for the cries of beasts are indivisible, none of which I call a letter. Its kinds are vowel, semivowel, and mute. A vowel is that which has an audible sound, without *any* allision, as O or A; a semivowel, that which has an audible sound, with an allision, as L and R; and a mute is that which with the addition of one of its own kind has no sound, but is audible along with those which have a sound, as G or D. These again differ, *according* to the shape of the mouth,

⁹ These matters evidently belong more to the player than the poet, because by merely changing the tone of voice in which he speaks, a man may make that command which was before entreaty.

and the organs *with which they are pronounced*, by their hardness and softness, their length and shortness; as well as by the acuteness, the gravity or mediocrity of *pronunciation*; of which one must treat separately, in a work on versification. Syllable is a nonsignificant sound, composed of a mute, and a letter which has sound, for GR make a syllable both without the A, and with it, as GRA. To examine their differences, belongs also to a work on versification. Conjunction is a nonsignificant sound, which neither prevents nor produces a significant sound, which is made up of more sounds than one, and may be placed either at the extremities, or in the middle, although it is not elegant to place one by itself at the beginning of a speech; such as *ητοι δη*; or it is a nonsignificant sound, which is employed to make one significant sound out of more than one which have meaning. ¹⁰ Article is a nonsignificant sound which marks the beginning, the end, or the distinction of a sentence, such as I call the *ὀ*, the *ἦ*, and others; or it is a nonsignificant sound, which neither hinders nor produces a significant sound, which is made up of more sounds than one, either at the extremities or the middle. Noun is a compound word, significant without reference to time, no part of which has by itself a meaning; for we do not use even double words, as if each part had a meaning by itself; thus in

¹⁰ It would be needless to waste time in explaining things which will be found much better done in any Greek Grammar. We shall only remark that under the head of article, Aristotle seems to include pronoun.

the word Theodorus, the dorus has no signification. Verb is a compound word, significant with reference to time, no part of which, as in the nouns, has any signification by itself; thus, *the word* man, or white, does not distinguish time, but walks, or did walk, does—the one the present, and the other the past. ¹¹ Case is either that of a verb or a noun; one *kind* signifying in this manner—of him, to him, and so on; another *referring* to the singular or plural *numbers*, as man, or men; and a third, ¹² *to tone and gesture*, as in *asking* a question, or *giving* a command; thus, Did he walk? or walk—is the case of a verb, according to these distinctions. Sentence is a compound significant word, some parts of which have meaning when taken separately; for every sentence is not composed of nouns and verbs, ¹³ like the definition of man, ¹⁴ but may exist without verbs, and yet have a part *as significant*, as Cleon, in the sentence Cleon walks. ¹⁵ A sentence is called single in two ways, because it is significant of only a single *thing*, or of that

11 Case has here a much more extended signification than we usually give it, for it comprehends number and mood as well as case.

12 ὑπερβασία, "the use the player would make of it."

13 Man is an animal made up of a rational soul and an organized body.

14 "O how wonderful" is a sentence of this kind, in which there is no verb, but one part of which, "wonderful," is just as significant as the word Cleon in the sentence Cleon walks.

15 The term sentence it must be remembered, has here a much more extended signification than that which we generally give to it. It means a whole oration or poem, in short a subject, as well as what we usually call a sentence.

which from more, *becomes so* by connection ; thus the Iliad is one *sentence* by connection ; and the *definition* of man is *one*, because it signifies a single object.

XXXV. There are two species of noun, one simple, and the other double. I call that simple which is composed of parts which have no signification, as $\gamma\eta$. One *kind* of double is composed of a significant and a nonsignificant *part* ; another, of two significant *parts*. There may be also a triple, quadruple, and multiplex noun, like many of the Megaloti, as Hermocairoxanthus. But every noun is, proper, or foreign, metaphor, or ornament, invented, or extended, diminished, or changed. ¹⁶ I call that proper which each *particular set of people* use—and foreign, that which others *employ* ; it is therefore evident that a proper and a foreign word have the same meaning, though not to the same people ; for the word Sigunon is proper to the Cyprians, but foreign to us. Metaphor again, is the introduction of a word, ¹⁷ *whose real signification is different from that in which we use it*, from genus to species, from species to genus, from species to species, or by analogy. ¹⁸ I call it a *meta-*

¹⁶ This does not allude to the difference of languages only, but to those words which have been borrowed from one, and incorporated into another. The English supplies us with many examples of this kind.

¹⁷ All this is required to give the proper sense of the word ἀλλοτριον.

¹⁸ We use the word “stands” metaphorically from genus to species, because “to stand” is a generic term, including uni-

phor from genus to species, when *we say* "The ship stood for me," because to be at anchor is a species of standing. From species to genus, "Ulysses did ten thousand gallant *actions*," for ten thousand is a great number, and is now used for the generic term many. ¹⁹ From species to species, when we use metaphorically the terms "drag away" and "cut," for both are species of the genus "to deprive." ²⁰ I call that analogy, when of four terms, the second has the same relation to the first, which the fourth has to the third; for *we may use* the fourth for the second, and the second for the fourth. And sometimes they add to that which expresses the resemblance, the thing for which it stands. I mean as in this manner; a cup has the same relation to Bacchus, that a shield has to Mars; ²¹ the poet therefore will call a shield, the cup of Mars, and a cup, the shield of Bacchus. Evening in like manner is the same to the day, that old age is to life; he will therefore call evening, the old age of the day, and old age, the even-

der it as species, all the modes of being free from motion. "Ten thousand" again, from species to genus, because it is only a species of "many."

¹⁹ It is quite impossible to translate the passage into English. We have however given exactly the meaning.

²⁰ All this is tolerably perspicuous, but we will endeavour, by analyzing the best of the two examples, to make it more so. Life, old age, day, and evening, are four terms which bear an exact analogy to one another. We may therefore apply the fourth to the first, and the second to the third, and use the third for the first, and the fourth for the second; and the metaphor will have perfect analogy.

²¹ That is, if a person speak metaphorically of a shield, he does not call it simply a cup, but the cup of Mars.

ing of life; or as Empedocles has it, the sun-set of life. In some cases there is no analogical term invented, ²² but *the expression* is nevertheless used as if there were; thus to scatter seed, means to sow, but the light from the sun is without a name; it has, however, the same reference to the sun, which sowing has to the seed, whence is the expression, "Sowing the god-formed flame." Besides this mode, a poet may use the metaphor differently, when by adding a word of a different meaning, he destroys something of its peculiarity; as if we were to call a shield, not the bottle of Mars, but a bottle without wine. A made word, is one which has received no signification from others, but which the poet himself employs, for there appear to be some such as *Ερνυτας* for *Κερατα*, and *Αρητηρα* for *Ιερεα*. A word again, is lengthened or shortened; the first, if it be used with a longer vowel than usual, or a syllable added; the second, if any thing be taken from it; lengthened as in *πολεως* for *πολεος*, and *Πηλιαδεω* for *Πηλειδου*; and shortened as in *χρι* and *δω*, for *κριθη* and *δωμα*. A changed word, when out of one already made, he retains one part and invents another, as *δεξιτερον* for *δεξιον* *.

²² We apply the term sowing, which we have borrowed from the agricultural operation of putting seed into the earth, to the sun, but there is nothing about the sun which we can in return apply to farming, therefore the analogy is incomplete.

* Ornament, it will be seen, is the only one of the six left undefined, for which two causes are assigned. One is, that Aristotle supposed it to consist intirely of metaphor, and did not therefore take the trouble to notice it separately; the other,

XXXVI. Again, some nouns are masculine, some feminine, and some neuter. *Those* are masculine which end in ν , ρ , and σ , or any of the letters composed of it and the mutes; and these are two, ψ and ξ ; feminines, which *end* in any of the vowels *which are* always long, as in η or ω , or of those lengthened into α . It therefore happens, that the *letters* in which masculines and feminines *end* are equal in number; for ψ and ξ are the same. No noun ends in a mute, or in a short vowel; ²³ in ι only three, and in ν five; neuters in the vowels *we have mentioned*, and in ν and σ .

XXXVII. But the excellence of discourse is, that it be perspicuous, and not mean. That is most perspicuous which consists *entirely* of proper words, *but it is poor*; of which the poetry of Cleophon and Sthenelus is an example; but that is noble, and surpasses the proper *kind*, which makes use of uncommon expressions. I call a foreign word, a metaphor, an extended word, and every thing beyond a proper word, uncommon. If, at the same time, one were to employ them *entirely*, his poem would be either a riddle, or a barbarism; if *composed entirely* of metaphors, *it would be* a riddle, if of foreign words, a barbarism. For it is the peculiarity of a riddle, that the person who relates

and perhaps the most probable is, that this part of the manuscript has been lost.

²³ He must here allude only to contracted nouns, for the neuters of many adjectives end in ι and ν .

possible events, should mix impossibilities *with them*. In a work composed of common expressions, however, it is not possible to do so; but in a metaphorical one, it is—as ²⁴ “I saw a man soldering brass to a man with fire,” and such like. From *the use of foreign words again, comes* barbarism; for which reason they must be intermixed in moderation. Foreign words, therefore, metaphor, ornament, and the other forms which have been mentioned, will render *a poem* neither vulgar nor poor; common expression, on the other hand, *will give* perspicuity. But extensions, contractions, and alterations of words, will in a great degree tend to the perspicuity of diction, and to its freedom from vulgarity; it will render it free from vulgarity, because *a diction of this kind* has something *in it* different from the common, as it is beyond what is usual; and it will be perspicuous, because it has something in common with the usual *mode of expression*. Those, therefore, who blame this method of speaking, and who laugh at the poet *for employing it*, find fault improperly; thus old Euclid *said*, that it would be easy to make *poems*, if one were to allow *the writer* to extend *words* to what length he chose²⁵. To appear to employ it in this manner is indeed ridicu-

²⁴ Which means “I saw one man cupping another,” the instrument employed in that operation being in those days made of brass.

²⁵ Aristotle here gives two lines which he says Euclid composed, “for the purpose of abusing this way of speaking.” The passage will not bear translation.

lous ; but a medium is to be preserved equally in all the parts, for the person who uses foreign expressions, metaphors, and the other forms improperly, will produce the same effect, as the man who does it on purpose to excite laughter. Of what importance the proper use of them in poems is, may be seen by introducing common expressions into the measure ; for if any one will put common expressions in the room of foreign, or of metaphor, or of any of the other forms, he will perceive that we say truth. Thus Æschylus and Euripides having written the same iambic, and the latter having altered only one word, by inserting a foreign for a common expression, his appears noble, and the other vile. For Æschylus in the Philoctetes has made it, "A cancerous sore which eats the flesh of my foot," but Euripides uses "devours," instead of "eats." * Aripgrades also laughs at tragedies, because they make use of *expressions*, which no one would employ in common conversation, such as *δωματων ἀπο*, and not *ἀπο δωματων*, with others of this kind. But all these, because they are not in common use, produce freedom from vulgarity in the diction, of which he was ignorant. It is a great thing to make a proper use of each of the *forms* we have mentioned, namely, double words, and foreign expressions, but the greatest of all, to have the command of metaphor ; for this alone is a sign of ready genius ; nor *indeed* can we get it

* Several examples have been omitted, because detached as they are they will not bear translation.

from any other source ; ²⁶ because to be happy in the metaphors we employ, is the same as to have a *correct discernment of things*. Double words are best adapted for dithyrambics, foreign for heroic, and metaphor for iambic poems. In heroic, however, all *the kinds we have* mentioned may be employed ; but in iambic, as it principally imitates conversation, those words are suitable which one would make use of in speaking, and these are, common, metaphor, and ²⁷ ornament.

XXXVIII. Let us be satisfied with what has been said of tragedy and imitation by acting. ²⁸ But respecting narrative, and imitation in verse, it is evident, that it ought to put together dramatic stories, just as in tragedy, which relate to one whole and perfect action, having a beginning, a middle, and an end, if like an entire animal, it would produce the pleasure which is peculiar to it ; and that the compositions ought not to resemble histories, in which it is necessary to give a relation, not of a single action, but of one *period* of time, and of whatever accidents befall one or more persons, during that period, each of which has or

²⁶ By a correct selection of metaphors, the poet proves himself well acquainted with the abstract nature of things.

²⁷ By ornament he means those epithets which are used in common conversation.

²⁸ An epic poem then, as well as a tragedy, ought to consist of one principal story, interspersed with no episodes except such as would probably or necessarily have happened in the ordinary course of events.

has not a reference to the others just as it happens. For as the sea-fight at Salamis, and the battle of the Carthagenians in Sicily took place at the same time, and yet had no relation to the same end, so also in succeeding periods, one thing frequently happens after another, from which no end arises. Yet very many of the poets do this. Wherefore in this also, as we have have said, Homer appears divine among the others, because he did not attempt to celebrate the whole war, although it had both a beginning and an end; for *either* it would have been too long, and so difficult to be taken in at one view; or if rendered moderate in extent, *it would have been* confused from its variety. On the contrary, he has selected one part for his subject, and made use of many episodes collected from the others, such as the catalogue of the ships, and the other episodes with which he diversifies the poem. ²⁹ The others again, make poems on one man, one period of time, and one action with many parts; such as the person who has composed the Cyprians, and the little Iliad. This is the reason why only one or two tragedies can be made out of each, from the Iliad and Odyssey; but from the Cyprians many; and from the little Iliad more than eight; as the Adjudging of the arms, Philoctetes, Neoptolemus, Eurypylus, Lacænæ, the Return of the fleet, Sinon, and Troades.

²⁹ These men fancy they preserve the unity, if they relate the adventures of one particular man. But they are quite mistaken; for those actions may be as widely different as if they had been performed by fifty different persons.

XXXIX. An epic poem ought also to have the same forms as a tragedy; that is, it ought to be simple, complex, moral, or pathetic; its parts too, except melody and scenery, ought to be the same, for it should possess, peripatetic, recognition, and passion, and it ought to be noble in its sentiment and diction; all which Homer first made use of, and with sufficient *correctness*. For each of his poems is composed *in this manner*; the Iliad, as a simple and pathetic, and the Odyssey, as a complex (for recognition *runs* through the whole of it) and moral. Moreover he excels all in *the nobleness of his sentiment and diction*.

XL. But epic differs from tragedy, both in the length of the composition, and in the measure. The definition already given of its length, is sufficient. For the beginning and the end ought to be seen at one view. ³⁰ And this will be the case, if the compositions be shorter than those of the ancients, and just equal to the number of tragedies recited at one hearing. Epic poetry has a great peculiarity *in the power* of extending its length; because it is not possible that many parts going on at once can be imitated in a tragedy, but only that which *has connection* with the scene and the performers. In an epic poem, on the other hand,

³⁰ The *story* of an epic poem may include any period of time the writer chooses, but the repetition or perusal of it ought to take up just as much as was spent in listening to the prize tragedies which were recited at one hearing. How long this is we cannot exactly say, because we are not acquainted with the number which was usual on those occasions.

because it is a narrative, it is easy to represent many parts as proceeding at one and the same time, by *means* of which, provided they be agreeable to the tragedy, the mass of the poem is increased. This advantage therefore it possesses *for rendering it magnificent*, and also that it can change the listener from one thing to another, and can introduce episodes *altogether* different. ³¹ But the similarity *which must exist among them*, as it soon satiates, causes tragedies to fail.

XLI. We have found by experience that the heroic verse, is the best adapted for *epic poetry*; for if one were to make an imitation by narrative in any other measure, or in more measures than one, it would appear unsuitable. For the heroic is the most nervous and lofty of the measures, (whence it most readily admits of foreign words and metaphors; for imitation by narrative is more abundant in these, than the others), whereas the iambic and tetrametre are adapted to motion; the one to that of dancing, and the other to *that of acting*. But it would be more foolish still if one were to mix the measures, as Chæremon *has done*. No one therefore has written a long poem in any other measure than the heroic; but the very nature of *the poem*, as we have said, instructs us in assigning the measure which is agreeable to itself.

³¹ The episodes introduced in an epic poem may be numerous and quite different in their nature. In tragedy they must resemble each other so closely, that a too frequent repetition of them would infallibly damage the piece.

XLII. Homer, indeed, is deserving of praise in many other respects, and particularly because he alone of the poets is not ignorant of what he ought to do. For the poet should himself say as little as possible, as it is not by this means that he imitates. The others, however, carry on the action in person throughout, and *therefore* imitate few things, and that rarely; whereas he, having said a few *words* by way of preface, immediately introduces a man or woman, or something else possessed of manner,³² and nothing without, but something which has; *and makes it speak for him.*

XLIII.³³ In tragedy, it is true, *the poet* ought to produce the wonderful; but that which is contrary to reason, from which the most wonderful comes, is more suitable to an epic poem, because *in it* we do not see the actor. The story of the pursuit of Hector, for example, would appear ridiculous upon the stage, that they (*the Greeks*) should stand still and not follow, and that he (*Achilles*) should make signs *to them*; but in the epic poem this is not observed. The wonderful is *at all times* pleasing; a proof of which is, that all add a little when they tell a story, for the purpose of giving pleasure.

³² His Gods and Goddesses are all personifications of different passions. His horses speak, his arrows are impatient, his darts thirst, in short every thing in his poem has manner.

³³ Greater scope is given to an epic poem than to a tragedy, because that which is too far beyond the bounds of reason to be represented, may still bear to be told.

XLIV. Homer likewise has best instructed others how they ought to tell a lie. ³⁴ But this is a paralogism; for men suppose, that since one thing is because another was, or one thing happens because another did happen; if the last be, the first must necessarily have been, or have happened. But this is false reasoning. Wherefore, although the first may be untrue, if another of the same kind take place, there is a necessity for our believing that it did *actually* exist or happen; for because we know the last to be true, our mind draws a false conclusion with respect to the first, and affirms that it also is true. ³⁵ But the poet ought to make

³⁴ The whole of this passage, owing to the evident corruption in the original, is excessively obscure. We have given the meaning as far as a strict adherence to literal translation will allow, but we shall here endeavour to do it more completely. The best way to tell a lie, is by paralogism, that is, by reasoning from consequence. Thus the consequence of a fever is to be thirsty, and we should reason by consequence, or employ paralogism, if we were to affirm, that because a man was thirsty, he had a fever. When Homer makes a horse speak, it is a lie by paralogism. For although he represents Minerva as giving it that power, and though we allow the Gods to be able to do any thing, it does not follow because she could, that she did exert that power. This appears to express the meaning of the latter part of the passage, which according to the reading in Tyrwhitt's edition cannot be literally translated. In some others *πιστευσαι*, is written where he has used *προσσαι*, and an *ι* is subscribed under *ααγχην*, which certainly render it more intelligible.

³⁵ This will be evident if we bring forward examples, with which Homer himself supplies us. When that poet represents a horse as speaking, we know that he affirms what is physically impossible, but we believe it, because he introduces Minerva as endowing it with that power. Again, when he tells us that Hector ran away from Achilles, we have much more difficulty in believing it, because although the thing is not, like the other, in direct opposition to an established law of nature,

choice of *incidents* which are impossible, and yet resemble truth, rather than of such as are possible, and not likely to be believed : ³⁶ his stories, likewise, ought not to be composed of unreasonable parts, but his chief care should be to represent nothing as without a reason ; and *if this cannot be*, it must be out of the story ; as the ignorance of Œdipus respecting the manner in which Laius died : but by no means in the drama, ³⁷ as is the case in the *Electra*, where persons tell of the Pythian games, or in the *Mysians*, where a man comes from Sigia to Mysia without speaking. To say that the story would otherwise have been destroyed, is ridiculous, because the poet ought not at first to have composed such ; but if he have composed it, and it appear more reasonable *than not*, something foolish may be admitted : thus it is evident, that the unreasonable parts in the *Odyssey*, I mean those which refer to the exposure of *Ulysses*, would not have been tolerated, had a bad poet composed them ; but now, the poet by pleasing us with his

yet it is so very different from what we would expect, that we give credit to it with extreme reluctance.

36 This advice he has already given in his treatise upon tragedy. Were the whole story of Œdipus, for example, to be included in one poem, that part which relates to his ignorance of the manner of Laius's death would be quite without reason, because it is impossible to imagine why he should have been married to Jocasta for so long a period, before he began to make enquiry respecting the death of her former husband.

37 In the first of these examples the fault lies in making Orestes be reported to have been killed at games, which were not instituted till five years after the time of his death, and in the second, in the absurdity of the notion, that a man would travel several days on end, without speaking a word.

other excellencies; keeps the foolish part out of sight.

XLV. He ought also to labour his diction in the inactive parts, *such as* exhibit neither manner nor sentiment; because very brilliant expressions rather obscure manner and sentiment.

XLVI. Of objections and their answers—of how many and what kinds they are, a sufficiently clear view will be *taken* by those who thus examine the subject. Since a poet is an imitator, as well as a painter or any other taker of likenesses, it is necessary that he should imitate, always some one of these three things: he *will represent* things either such as they are or were, such as people call them, or they appear, or such as they ought to be. And these are related, in common expressions, in foreign terms, or in metaphor. ³⁸ For there are many passions of diction; and these we allow poets to make use of. ³⁹ Besides this, the excellence of poetry and politics is not the same, nor of poetry and any other art. The error *attendant* upon poetry is twofold; one, *which arises* from itself, the other, *which proceeds* from accident. ⁴⁰ For if it

38. There is a kind of expression suitable to every passion. The poet is therefore at liberty to employ whatever may be best adapted to represent that which he wishes to imitate.

39. We must not pass sentence upon a poem according to its good or bad political tendency, neither must we find fault with the writer as a poet, though he may shew himself but badly skilled in anatomy or any other art.

40. Aristotle here refers to the abilities of the poet. If he

choose to imitate that which is beyond its power, the fault is in itself; but if the choice be improperly made, it arises from accident, as *to represent a horse moving forward both his right legs*; it may also err against each of the arts, as against medicine or any other, if it invent impossibilities; but these, whatever they may be, proceed not from itself. It is therefore necessary to refute the charges contained in criticisms, by a consideration of these.

41 First then, the poet errs, if he invent things which according to the rules of the art are impossible: but if by this means he gain his end, he does right. But the end has been stated, namely, if he can by this means, make that or any other part more astonishing. The pursuit of Hector is an example. If, however, he can attain his end, either in a greater or less degree, and at the same time adhere to rule, he improperly errs; because throughout, he ought never to err, if he can help it. Be-

make choice of a subject far above his capacity, he cannot possibly succeed in his imitation, and therefore errs against the rules of art. But if he choose one which is within his capacity, and handle it badly, the fault proceeds, not from a transgression of the rules of poetry, but from his own ignorance. Thus, to sing the praises of a horse seems a subject within the stretch of any man's abilities, but were the poet to relate as a natural beauty; that the horse moved both the legs of one side together, he would err from ignorance that this is not natural to a horse.

41 The pursuit of Hector he gives as an example of this. It is an established rule in poetry, that no incident should be related, which is possible, and at the same time not likely to be believed. Of this nature is the flight of Hector. But then the error against rule is made up for, by the high idea which the reader in consequence forms of the might of Achilles, to raise which as much as possible, was certainly the end which Homer had in view.

sides, of which kind is the error, of those against rule, or from accident? because *the fault* is less if a person did not know that female deer have no horns, than if *he did know it*, and improperly described them. Again, if the charge be, that real occurrences are not represented, but rather such as ought to be; let the poet follow the example of Sophocles, who said, that he represented men as they should be, Euripides as they were. In this manner may the charge be refuted. ⁴² But if *he imitate* neither way, let him allege that men say so, as in the stories of the Gods; for perhaps it is neither better thus to relate them, nor are they true, but as Xenophon has said, mere matters of chance; nevertheless men relate them. It may happen likewise, that the poet represents a thing, not better, but as it is, ⁴³ as in the account of the arms: "Their spears stood upright by the cross iron." For thus they had the same custom, which the Illyrians now have. ⁴⁴ With respect to the question whether a

⁴² This seems to be the meaning of a passage, which is evidently corrupt, and which will not bear a literal translation.

⁴³ Homer represents Diomede as sleeping on an ox's hide, and his men round him with their spears stuck in the ground. Had his object been to draw a picture of men who were always ready to fight, he would have done it more effectually had he represented each man as sleeping with his spear by his side. But this is not the case, for he only imitates what was a real practice.

⁴⁴ We must not censure any single passage in a poem, without taking in the context, and perceiving for what purpose the incident may be related; and whether, had it been different, a greater evil might not have arisen, than what springs from the apparent faultiness of that one passage.

thing be said or done to any one, becomingly or unbecomingly, it ought to be considered, by regarding, not only the thing done or said, whether it be good or bad; but also the person who does or says it, to whom, at what time, in what manner, and for what end he thus acts; whether that a greater good may arise, or that a greater evil may be avoided. Other objections he may refute, by looking to the expression; as by shewing that a word is used in a foreign sense; thus Ουγας μιν πρωτον has a foreign sense, for perhaps the poet means guards, and not mules. Also the description of Dolon, ὅς δὴ τοι εἶδος μιν ἔην κακός, where he does not mean that his body was badly formed, but that his face was hideous; because the Cretans call a handsome man, pretty faced. And the expression Ζωροτερον δε κεραιρε, does not mean unmixed wine, as for drunkards, but that it should be brought in haste. "The other Gods and men slept all night" he says metaphorically, as also ⁴⁵ "But when he looked to the Trojan plain," and "The tumult of pipes and horns." In the first of these examples, "all" is used metaphorically for "a great number," for all is a great number. ⁴⁶ So also Οἷν δ' ἀμμογός is metaphorical; for what is alone, is best known. ⁴⁷ Some objections are re-

⁴⁵ This is said of Agamemnon sitting in his tent, at night; and means "when he thought upon the Trojan plain." It is therefore a metaphor.

⁴⁶ Homer calls the Bear, "the only constellation which does not bathe itself in the ocean," metaphorically, because it was the best known of those which do not set.

⁴⁷ Almost all the examples which follow are such as in their

futed by alteration of accent, others by the pointing, others by ambiguity, as *παρωχηκεν δε πλεων νυξ*, where the *πλεων* has a double meaning, and others by the habit of expression, as, men call *wine mixed with water*, wine, and workers in iron, braziers; for the same reason Ganymede is said to pour out wine to the Gods, although they do not drink wine: but this may also be used as a metaphor. When a word appears to signify any thing contradictory, it is necessary to examine in what sense it is significant in the expression *before us*, such an one as, ⁴⁸ "But there the brazen spear stuck," which means that there it was stopped. ⁴⁹ And in whatever senses it is received, it will bear this also; particularly, as Glauco says, if one take it up in quite an opposite sense. Besides some men form unreasonable prejudices, and having *first* past sentence of condemnation, argue the point, and, as if they were disputing, find fault

detached state will not bear translation. The meaning of the author however is plain enough.

48. Which does not mean that it remained sticking, but only that it got no farther.

49 This passage is evidently corrupt, and certainly nearly unintelligible. It seems to imply, that if a word in its usual acceptation, render the circumstance related, vile, we must examine it closely, and see whether it will not bear one, as much the reverse as possible. There is an example in Homer, in that passage where he relates the exchange which Glaucus made of a suit of gold armour, for the steel armour of Diomedes. The poet then adds *Ενθ' αυτι Γλαυκω κρηιδης φρινας ιξιλιτο Ζιυς*. The usual meaning of *ιξιλιτο* is "took away," but it also signifies "elevated." Now as the poet certainly intends to praise Glaucus for his magnanimity, and not to blame him for making a bad bargain, the latter is the sense in which it must here be used.

with whatever seems good to them, if it chance to oppose their opinion. This was the case in the criticisms about Icarius, for the critics supposed him to be a Lacedæmonian. It was foolish then, say they, that Telemachus when he came to Lacedæmon; should not have fallen in with him. But the case may be as the Cephallanians say; that Ulysses married among them, and that Icadius, not Icarius, was his father-in-law. The error then it is likely, is but a quære after all. But the general objection of impossible, we must refer to the poetry, to what is better, or to common opinion. With reference to poetry, we must say that the credible impossible, is preferable to the possible and incredible; they are the same, as the paintings which Zeuxis drew: ⁵⁰ with reference to the better, that the example ought always to be excellent: and with reference to what men call unreasonable.*** And thus that it is not unreasonable: for it is probable that many things may have happened contrary to probability. But things said apparently in contradiction to one another, we ought to examine, ⁵¹ like elenchi in logic, whether it be

⁵⁰ We have already explained what Aristotle means, by credible impossible and possible incredible. We shall at present therefore only notice this second reference. A poet, says Aristotle, is not to tie himself down to any particular person or object, which he is to make his model in all things. Nature at large supplies him with materials, and there is no impropriety in his embodying in one object, all those perfections which she has scattered through many. The objection therefore, that there is nothing in real life so excellent as the poet represents it, is futile.

⁵¹ That is, we must examine whether the person who speaks be the same that spoke before, whether the person to whom he

really the same, tend to the same end, or be said in the same manner; as well as whether the person speaks as from himself, or a prudent man have advised him. But the charge of unreasonableness and impropriety is correct, if the poet make use of something unreasonable, when there is no necessity for it, as Euripides *does* in *Egæus*; or something improper, like the conduct of Menelaus in the *Orestes*. These criticisms they bring under five heads; *for the things said are* either impossible, or unreasonable, or bad, or contradictory, or contrary to the correctness *required* by the art: ⁵² the answers also may be discovered from the numbers we have stated; and they are twelve.

XLVII. One may *easily* doubt, whether the epic or tragic imitation be preferable. For if that which is ⁵³ least encumbered, be better; and this is the kind which suits the better sort of spectators; it is evident, that that which imitates every thing is

addresses himself be the same, and whether the time, the place, the manner, and the object be not one or all of them different.

⁵² There are four relating to the subject. What it is, what it ought to be, what it is said to be, and what it may be. Five to the way in which the poet expresses himself, namely, whether by metaphor, or foreign words, whether the accent, and the pointing be correct, and in what sense he employs a word of doubtful meaning. And three which refer to the manner, namely, whether the fault be proper or foreign, whether the thing be the same or different, and whether it preserve the same character.

⁵³ *Φορητή*, disagreeable, because loaded with scenery, decorations, foreign words, &c. Tragedy, he says, is of this nature, and imitates the most minute actions, consequently is so far inferior to epic poetry.

encumbered. On this account the player makes use of many motions, because the audience cannot see any thing except what he brings forward ;⁵⁴ just as bad flute-players turn round, if it be required to imitate a quoit, and drag the end of the instrument, when they play Scylla. Of this nature is tragedy ; and thus did the old performers think of those who succeeded them ; for Myniscus called Callipides an ape, because he had too much *motion* ; and the same opinion was held of Pindarus :⁵⁵ but as these stand with reference to one another, so does the whole *tragic* art, when compared to epic poetry. This, men say, is intended for the better sort of spectators, and therefore has no need of gestures ; whereas tragedy is intended for the worse. But it is evident, that that which is encumbered, is the worst.⁵⁶ In the first place however, we must observe that this is a fault, not in the poetry, but in the representation ; since it is possible to exceed in gestures, both when reciting,⁵⁷ as Sosistratus

54 A musician was esteemed excellent in proportion as he could express imitation by the sound of his instrument. When a bad player, therefore, attempted to imitate the motion of a quoit in the air, he turned himself round, and if he wished to represent Scylla swallowing up a ship, he dragged, and sometimes put into his month the end of his instrument. These expedients he was obliged to adopt because the sounds which he produced by no means expressed what he wished.

55 As an actor who does not throw himself into unnecessary attitudes is to be preferred to one who does, so is epic to tragic poetry.

56 Here follow the arguments in favor of tragedy and against epic imitations.

57 The reader must remember that epic poems were in those days recited and sung, and that epic poets had a theatre and dresses of their own.

did, and when singing, as did Mnasiheus the Opuntian. In the next place, *that* all motion is not to be found fault with, any more than dancing, but *only* that of bad people, for which reason blame is attached to Callippides, and now to others, because they imitate prostitutes. Besides this, tragedy, even without motion, produces its own effect, as well as epic poetry; for its quality is evident from a bare perusal: wherefore, if in other respects it be superior, this *fault* does not necessarily belong to it. And besides, that it has every *advantage* which epic *possesses*; for it may even employ the same measure; it has, moreover, music and scenery, a part of no small *consideration*, by which pleasure is most powerfully excited. ⁵⁸ It has evidence also, both in the reading and in the performance. ⁵⁹ The end of its imitation, too, is included within a shorter period; and that which is more condensed, is pleasanter than what is extended over a greater space of time: I mean, for instance, if one were to throw the *Œdipus* of Sophocles into as many lines as the *Iliad*. Besides, the imitation of epic poems has, in some respects, less unity *in it*. The proof is, that out of any *such*

⁵⁸ It has the evidence of action, for whether we read a play, or see it performed, we have always the idea of actors before us, and we all know how much more apt we are to believe what we see than what we hear.

⁵⁹ Tragedy includes the space of only twelve hours at most, because its object is to purify the passions, which are things of the moment. Epic poetry, on the other hand, is in this respect unlimited, because its object is to correct our manners and habits, which are long in forming.

imitation, more than one tragedy can be made. Thus if men relate but one story, ⁶⁰ if it be *too* short it must appear mutilated; if spun out to the extent proper for the measure, *it must appear weak*: *should they tell* more, I mean, should it be composed of more than one action, it loses its unity; in this way the Iliad and Odyssey comprehend many such parts, each of which has separately a *certain* extent: although these poems are composed in the best manner possible, and are, as much as can be, the imitation of *but* one action. If then it excel in all these particulars, and above all, in the *accomplishment* of the object *which* the art *has in view*; for they ought not to produce any kind of pleasure, but *only* what has been assigned *to each*; it is evident, that as it attains its end better than epic poetry, it will be *altogether* superior. So much hath been said upon tragedy and epic poetry in general, upon their species and parts; how many they are, and in what respect they differ, upon certain causes for their being good or bad, and upon the faults which may be found with them, and the methods of refuting those objections.

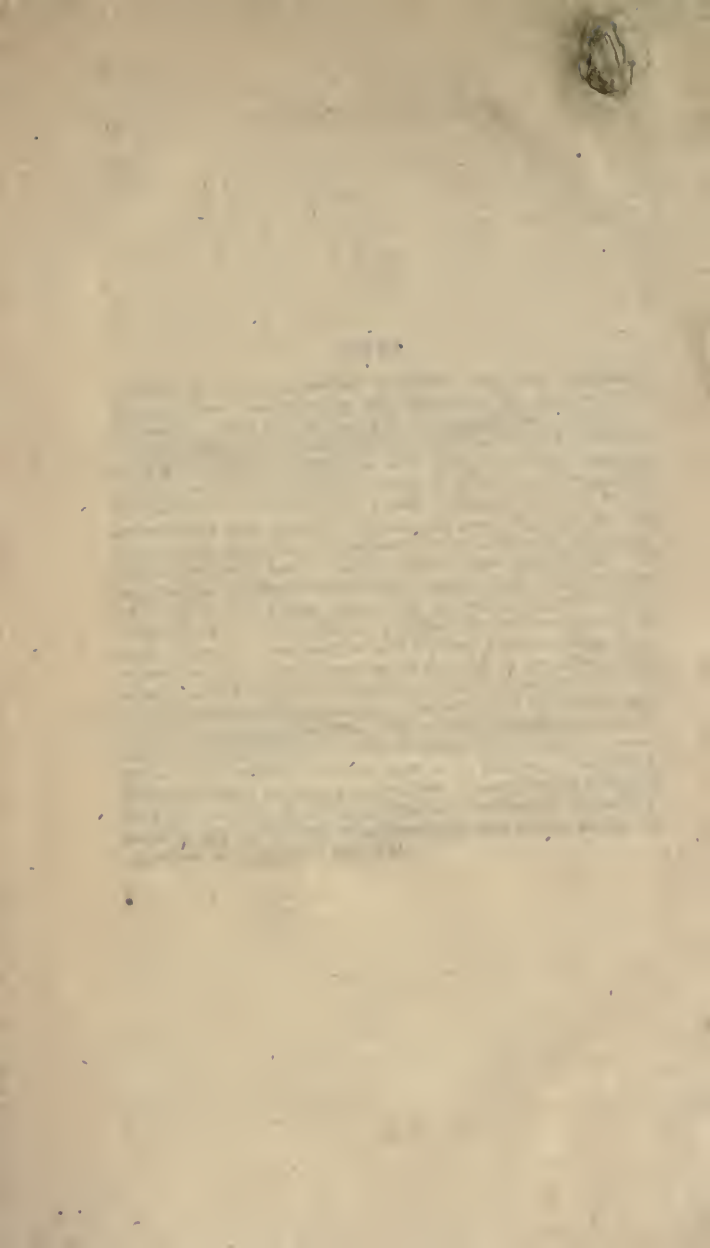
60 If it present short *things*.

THE END.

NOTE.

PAGE 51.—To conjunction Aristotle gives two definitions apparently so contradictory that they may be apt to confuse the reader. The first is, that it is a nonsignificant sound, neither preventing nor producing one significant sound, which is composed of more sounds than one: and the second, that it is a nonsignificant sound, whose office it is to form one significant sound out of many. The only difficulty, however, is in the meaning to be attached to the term *sound* or *word*. In the first of these definitions it evidently refers to what is generally understood by a word, namely, *man* or *horse*, *good* or *bad*. A conjunction coming between these, neither forms them into one word, nor would hinder them from becoming *one*, could their nature allow it. Let us take for example the two words *man* and *horse*. Here the conjunction *and* coming between them does not and cannot convey to our minds the idea of one object, because *man* and *horse* are by nature too much separated ever to be artificially considered as *one*. The reverse is the case in the two words, *righteous* and *pious*. These two are naturally so similar, that when they are coupled with a conjunction, we readily and immediately conceive them to be but *one*. The latter definition relates entirely to a sentence or story, which is called *one word*, from the idea of unity which it produces in the mind; and it is only by the help of conjunctions, that a story can be so connected as to produce that idea.





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