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Chapter 1

Let[1] us here deal with Poetry, its essence and its several species, with the characteristic function of each species and the way in which plots must be constructed if the poem is to be a success; and also with the number and character of the constituent parts of a poem, and similarly with all other matters proper to this same inquiry; and let us, as nature directs, begin first with first principles.

Epic poetry, then, and the poetry of tragic drama, and, moreover, comedy and dithyrambic poetry, and most flute-playing and harp-playing, these, speaking generally, may all be said to be "representations of life."[2]

[1]The text here printed is based on Vahlen's third edition(Leipzig, 1885), and the chief deviations from it are noted at the foot of each page. The prime source of all existing texts of the Poetics is the eleventh century Paris manuscript, No. 1741, designated as Ac. To the manuscripts of the Renaissance few, except Dr. Margoliouth, now assign any independent value, but they contain useful suggestions for the correction of obvious errors and defects in Ac. These are here designated "copies."V. stands for Vahlen's third edition, and By. for the late Professor Ingram Bywater, who has earned the gratitude and admiration of all students of the Poetics by his services both to the text and to its interpretation. Then there is the Arabic transcript. Translated in the eleventh century from a Syriac translation made in the eighth century, it appears to make little sense, but sometimes gives dim visions of the readings of a manuscript three centuries older but not necessarily better than Ac, readings which confirm some of the improvements introduced into Renaissance texts.

[2]The explanation of *μίμησις*, as Aristotle uses the word, demands a treatise; all that a footnote can say is this:—Life "presents" to the artist the phenomena of sense, which the artist "re-presents" in his own medium, giving coherence, designing a pattern. That this is true not only of drama and fiction but also of instrumental music ("most flute-playing and harp-playing") was more obvious to a Greek than to us, since Greek instrumental music was more definitely imitative. The technical display of the virtuoso Plato describes as "a beastly noise." Since *μίμησις* in this sense and *μιμητής* and the verb *μιμεῖσθαι* have a wider scope than any one English word, it is necessary

But they differ one from another in three ways: either in using means generically different[3] or in representing different objects or in representing objects not in the same way but in a different manner.
For just as by the use both of color and form people represent many objects, making likenesses of them—some having a knowledge of art and some working empirically—and just as others use the human voice; so is it also in the arts which we have mentioned, they all make their representations in rhythm and language and tune, using these means either separately or in combination.
For tune and rhythm alone are employed in flute-playing and harp-playing and in any other arts which have a similar function, as, for example, pipe-playing.
Rhythm alone without tune is employed by dancers in their representations, for by means of rhythmical gestures they represent both character and experiences and actions.[4]
But the art which employs words either in bare prose or in metres, either in one kind of metre or combining several, happens up to the present day to have no name.
For we can find no common term to apply to the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus[5] and to the Socratic dialogues:
nor again supposing a poet were to make his representation in iambics or elegiacs or any other such metre—
except that people attach the word poet(maker)to the name of the metre and speak of elegiac poets and of others as epic poets. Thus they do not call them poets in virtue of their representation but apply the name indiscriminately in virtue of the metre.
For if people publish medical or scientific treatises in metre the custom is to call them poets. But Homer and Empedocles[6] have nothing in

to use more than one word in translation, e.g. *μιμητής* is what we call an "artist"; and for *μίμησις* where "representation" would be clumsy we may use the word "art"; the adjective must be "imitative," since "representative" has other meanings.

[3] i.e., means that can be divided into separate categories.

[4] *πάθη καὶ πράξεις* cover the whole field of life, what men do (*πράξεις*) and what men experience (*πάθη*). Since *πάθη* means also "emotions" and that sense may be present here, but as a technical term in this treatise *πάθος* is a calamity or tragic incident, something that happens to the hero.

[5] Sophron and Xenarchus, said to he father and son, lived in Syracuse, the elder a contemporary of Euripides. They wrote "mimes," i.e., simple and usually farcical sketches of familiar incidents, similar to the mimes of Herondas and the fifteenth Idyll of Theocritus, but in prose. There was a tradition that their mimes suggested to Plato the use of dialogue.

[6] Empedocles (floruit 445 B.C.) expressed his philosophical and religious teaching in hexameter verse, to which Aristotle elsewhere attributes genuine value as poetry,

common except the metre, so that it would be proper to call the one a poet and the other not a poet but a scientist.
Similarly if a man makes his representation by combining all the metres, as Chaeremon did when he wrote his rhapsody *The Centaur*, a medley of all the metres, he too should be given the name of poet.[7] On this point the distinctions thus made may suffice.
There are certain arts which employ all the means which I have mentioned, such as rhythm and tune and metre—dithyrambic and "nomic" poetry,[8] for example, and tragedy too and comedy. The difference here is that some use all these at once, others use now one now another.
These differences then in the various arts I call the means of representation.

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but it is here excluded from the ranks of poetry because the object is definitely.

[7]Chaeremon was a tragedian and rhapsodist. The *Centaur* was apparently an experiment which might be classed as either drama or epic. Cf. *Aristot. Poet. 24.11.*

[8]The traditional definition is that the Dithyramb was sung to a flute accompaniment by a chorus in honor of Dionysus; and that the Nome was a solo sung to a harp accompaniment in honor of Apollo, but it is not clear that Aristotle regarded the Dithyramb as restricted to the worship of Dionysus. Timotheus's dithyramb mentioned in *Aristot. Poet. 15.8* cannot have been Dionysiac. But there is good evidence to show that the dithyramb was primarily associated with Dionysus.

Chapter 2

Since living persons[9] are the objects of representation, these must necessarily be either good men or inferior—thus only are characters normally distinguished, since ethical differences depend upon vice and virtue—that is to say either better than ourselves or worse or much what we are. It is the same with painters.

Polygnotus depicted men as better than they are and Pauson worse, while Dionysius made likenesses.[10]

Clearly each of the above mentioned arts will admit of these distinctions, and they will differ in representing objects which differ from each other in the way here described.

In painting too, and flute-playing and harp-playing, these diversities may certainly be found, and it is the same in prose and in unaccompanied verse.

For instance Homer's people are "better," Cleophon's are "like," while in Hegemon of Thasos, the first writer of parodies, and in Nicochares, the author of the *Poltrooniad*, they are "worse."[11]

It is the same in dithyrambic and nomic poetry, for instance . . . a writer might draw characters like the Cyclops as drawn by Timotheus and Philoxenus.[12]

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[9]Literally "men doing or experiencing something."

[10]Polygnotus's portraits were in the grand style and yet expressive of character(cf. *Aristot. Poet. 6.15*): Aristophanes aIludes to a Pauson as a "perfectly wicked caricaturist": Dionysius of Colophon earned the name of "the man-painter" because he always painted men and presumably made "good likenesses."

[11]Cleophon wrote "epics" (i.e., hexameter poems), describing scenes of daily life in commonplace diction (cf. *Aristot. Poet. 22.2*): Hegemon wrote mock epics in the style of the surviving *Battle of Frog and Mice*: of Nicochares nothing is known, but his forte was evidently satire.

[12]Both famous dithyramhic poets. There is evidence that Philoxenus treated

It is just in this respect that tragedy differs from comedy. The latter sets out to represent people as worse than they are to-day, the former as better.

Polyphemus in the vein of satire: Timotheus may have drawn a more dignified picture.

Chapter 3

A third difference in these arts is the manner in which one may represent each of these objects.
For in representing the same objects by the same means it is possible to proceed either partly by narrative and partly by assuming a character other than your own—this is Homer's method—or by remaining yourself without any such change, or else to represent the characters as carrying out the whole action themselves.
These, as we said above, are the three differences which form the several species of the art of representation, the means, the objects, and the manner.
It follows that in one respect Sophocles would be the same kind of artist as Homer, for both represent good men, and in another respect he would resemble Aristophanes, for they both represent men in action and doing things. And that according to some is the reason why they are called "dramas," because they present people as doing[13] things.
And for this reason the Dorians claim as their own both tragedy and comedy—comedy is claimed both by the Megarians here in Greece, who say that it originated in the days of their democracy, and by the Megarians in Sicily,[14] for it was from there the poet Epicharmus[15] came, who was much earlier than Chionides and Magnes; and tragedy some of the Peloponnesians claim. Their evidence is the two names.

[13] "Drama" being derived from *δρᾶν* "to do."

[14] The inhabitants of Megara Hyblaea.

[15] Epicharmus of Cos wrote in Sicily burlesques and "mimes" depicting scenes of daily life. He and Phormis were "originators of comedy" in that they sketched types instead of lampooning individuals (cf. *Aristot. Poet. 5.5*): of Chionides and Magnes we only know that they were "early" comedians, i.e., in the first half of the fifth century B.C.

Their name, they say, for suburb villages is *κῶμαι*—the Athenians call them "Demes"—and comedians are so called not from *κωμάζειν*, "to revel," but because they were turned out of the towns and went strolling round the villages(*κῶμαι*). Their word for action, they add, is *δρᾶν*, whereas the Athenian word is *πράττειν*.
TSo much then for the differences, their number, and their nature.

Chapter 4

Speaking generally, poetry seems to owe its origin to two particular causes, both natural.

From childhood men have an instinct for representation, and in this respect, differs from the other animals that he is far more imitative and learns his first lessons by representing things. And then there is the enjoyment people always get from representations.

What happens in actual experience proves this, for we enjoy looking at accurate likenesses of things which are themselves painful to see, obscene beasts, for instance, and corpses.

The reason is this: Learning things gives great pleasure not only to philosophers but also in the same way to all other men, though they share this pleasure only to a small degree.

The reason why we enjoy seeing likenesses is that, as we look, we learn and infer what each is, for instance, "that is so and so."

If we have never happened to see the original, our pleasure is not due to the representation as such but to the technique or the color or some other such cause.

We have, then, a natural instinct for representation and for tune and rhythm[16]—for the metres are obviously sections of rhythms[17]—and starting with these instincts men very gradually developed them until they produced poetry out of their improvisations.

Poetry then split into two kinds according to the poet's nature. For

[16]It is not clear wheter the "two general causes" are (1) the instinct for imitation, (2) the natural enjoyment of mimicry by others; or whether these two are combined into one and the second cause is the instinct for tune and rhythm. Obviously this last is an essential cause of poetry.

[17]e.g., the rhythm of the blacksmith's hammer or of a trotting horse is dactylic, but the hexameter is a "section" or slice of that rhythm; it is cut up into sixes.

the more serious poets represented fine doings and the doings of fine men, while those of a less exalted nature represented the actions of inferior men, at first writing satire just as the others at first wrote hymns and eulogies.
Before Homer we cannot indeed name any such poem, though there were probably many satirical poets,
but starting from Homer, there is, for instance, his *Margites*[18] and other similar poems. For these the iambic metre was fittingly introduced and that is why it is still called iambic, because it was the metre in which they lampooned each other.[19]
Of the ancients some wrote heroic verse and some iambic.
And just as Homer was a supreme poet in the serious style, since he alone made his representations not only good but also dramatic, so, too, he was the first to mark out the main lines of comedy, since he made his drama not out of personal satire but out of the laughable as such. His *Margites* indeed provides an analogy: as are the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* to our tragedies, so is the *Margites* to our comedies.
When tragedy and comedy came to light, poets were drawn by their natural bent towards one or the other. Some became writers of comedies instead of lampoons, the others produced tragedies instead of epics; the reason being that the former is in each case a higher kind of art and has greater value.

To consider whether tragedy is fully developed by now in all its various species or not, and to criticize it both in itself and in relation to the stage, that is another question.
At any rate it originated in improvisation—both tragedy itself and comedy. The one came from the prelude[20] to the dithyramb and the other from the prelude to the phallic songs which still survive as institutions in many cities. Tragedy then gradually evolved as men developed each element that came to light
and after going through many changes, it stopped when it had found its own natural form.
Thus it was Aeschylus who first raised the number of the actors from

[18] A famous burlesque which Aristotle attributes to Homer. "Other similar poems" must mean other early burlesques not necessarily attributed to Homer.

[19] Since the iambic came to be the metre of invective, the verb *ἰαμβίζειν* acquired the meaning "to lampoon." There is probably implied a derivation from *ἰάπτειν*, " to assail."

[20] Before the chorus began (or in pauses between their songs) the leader of the performance would improvise some appropriate tale or state the theme which they were to elaborate. Thus he was called *ὁ ἐξάρχων* or "the starter," and became in time the first "actor."

one to two. He also curtailed the chorus and gave the dialogue the leading part. Three actors and scene-painting Sophocles introduced.
Then as to magnitude.Being a development of the Satyr play,[21] it was quite late before tragedy rose from short plots and comic diction to its full dignity, and that the iambic metre was used instead of the trochaic tetrameter.
At first they used the tetrameter because its poetry suited the Satyrs and was better for dancing, but when dialogue was introduced, Nature herself discovered the proper metre. The iambic is indeed the most conversational of the metres,
and the proof is that in talking to each other we most often use iambic lines but very rarely hexameters and only when we rise above the ordinary pitch of conversation.
Then there is the number of acts. The further embellishments[22] and the story of their introduction one by one we may take as told,
for it would probably be a long task to go through them in detail.

[21] A Satyr play was an interlude performed by a troupe of actors dressed as the goat-like followers of Dionysus. Hence *τραγωδία*, "goat-song." Aristotle seems so clear about this that he does not trouble to give a full explanation. But we can see from this passage that the Satyr plays were short, jocose and in the trochaic metre which suited their dances, and that in Aristotle's view tragedy was evolved from these. No example of a primitive Satyr play survives, but we can make inferences from the later, more sophisticated *Cyclops* of Euripides and the fragments of Sophocles' Ἰχνευταί, *The Trackers*. We cannot be certain that Aristotle's theory is historically correct; the balance of evidence is against it.

[22] Masks, costumes, etc.

Chapter 5

Comedy, as we have said, is a representation of inferior people, not indeed in the full sense of the word bad, but the laughable is a species of the base or ugly.[23]

It consists in some blunder or ugliness that does not cause pain or disaster, an obvious example being the comic mask which is ugly and distorted but not painful.

The various stages of tragedy and the originators of each are well known, but comedy remains obscure because it was not at first treated seriously. Indeed it is only quite late in its history[24] that the archon granted a chorus for a comic poet; before that they were volunteers.[25] Comedy had already taken certain forms before there is any mention of those who are called its poets. Who introduced masks or prologues, the number of actors, and so on, is not known.

Plot making [Epicharmus and Phormis][26] originally came from Sicily, and of the Athenian poets Crates[27] was the first to give up the lampooning form and to generalize his dialogue and plots.

[23] "Ugly" was to a Greek an equivalent of "bad." The persons in Comedy are "inferior" (see chapter 2.), but have only one of the many qualities which make up Ugliness or Badness, viz. the quality of being ludicrous and therefore in some degree contemptible.

[24] Probably about 465 B.C.

[25] In the fifth century dramatists submitted their plays to the archon in charge of the festival at which they wished them to be performed. He selected the number required by the particular festival, and to the poets thus selected "granted a chorus," i.e., provided a choregus who paid the expenses of the chorus. The earlier "volunteers" had themselves paid for and produced their plays.

[26] Epicharmus and Phormis, being both early Sicilian "comedians", are appropriate here. Either part of a sentence is lost or an explanatory note has got into the text.

[27] Fragments of his comedies survive, dating about the middle of the fifth century B.C.

Epic poetry agreed with tragedy only in so far as it was a metrical representation of heroic action, but inasmuch as it has a single metre and is narrative in that respect they are different.
And then as regards length, tragedy tends to fall within a single revolution of the sun or slightly to exceed that, whereas epic is unlimited in point of time;
and that is another difference, although originally the practice was the same in tragedy as in epic poetry.
The constituent parts are some of them the same and some peculiar to tragedy.
Consequently any one who knows about tragedy, good and bad, knows about epics too, since tragedy has all the elements of epic poetry, though the elements of tragedy are not all present in the epic.

Chapter 6

With the representation of life in hexameter verse[28] and with comedy we will deal later. We must now treat of tragedy after first gathering up the definition of its nature which results from what we have said already.

Tragedy is, then, a representation of an action[29] that is heroic and complete and of a certain magnitude—by means of language enriched with all kinds of ornament, each used separately in the different parts of the play: it represents men in action and does not use narrative, and through pity and fear it effects relief to these and similar emotions.[30]

By "language enriched" I mean that which has rhythm and tune, i.e., song,

and by "the kinds separately" I mean that some effects are produced by verse alone and some again by song.

Since the representation is performed by living persons, it follows at once that one essential part of a tragedy is the spectacular effect, and, besides that, song-making and diction. For these are the means of the representation.

By "diction" I mean here the metrical arrangement of the words; and "song making" I use in the full, obvious sense of the word.

And since tragedy represents action and is acted by living persons, who must of necessity have certain qualities of character and thought—for

[28] i.e., epic poetry.

[29] Margoliouth's phrase "a chapter of life," illuminates the meaning, since *πρᾶξις* includes what the hero does and what happens to him. (Cf. *Aristot. Poet. 2.1* and note.)

[30] The sense of "the pity of it" and fear lest such disasters might befall ourselves are not the only emotions which tragedy releases, but Aristotle specifies them as the most characteristic. For *κάθαρσις*, see Introduction.

it is these which determine the quality of an action; indeed thought and character are the natural causes of any action and it is in virtue of these that all men succeed or fail—
it follows then that it is the plot which represents the action. By "plot" I mean here the arrangement of the incidents: "character" is that which determines the quality of the agents, and "thought" appears wherever in the dialogue they put forward an argument or deliver an opinion.
Necessarily then every tragedy has six constituent parts, and on these its quality depends. These are plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and song.
Two of these are the means of representation: one is the manner: three are the objects represented.[31]
This list is exhaustive, and practically all the poets employ these elements, for every drama includes alike spectacle and character and plot and diction and song and thought.
The most important of these is the arrangement of the incidents,[32] for tragedy is not a representation of men but of a piece of action, of life, of happiness and unhappiness, which come under the head of action, and the end aimed at is the representation not of qualities of character but of some action; and while character makes men what they are,it's their actions and experiences that make them happy or the opposite.
They do not therefore act to represent character, but character-study is included for the sake of the action. It follows that the incidents and the plot are the end at which tragedy aims, and in everything the end aimed at is of prime importance.
Moreover, you could not have a tragedy without action, but you can have one with out character-study.
Indeed the tragedies of most modern poets are without this, and, speaking generally, there are many such writers, whose case is like that of Zeuxis compared with Polygnotus.[33] The latter was good at depicting character, but there is nothing of this in Zeuxis's painting.
A further argument is that if a man writes a series of speeches full of character and excellent in point of diction and thought, he will not achieve the proper function of tragedy nearly so well as a tragedy which, while inferior in these qualities, has a plot or arrangement of incidents.
And furthermore, two of the most important elements in the emotional

[31] The "means" are diction and music: the "manner" is "spectacle": the "objects" represented are actions or experiences and the moral or intellectual qualities of the dramatis personae.

[32] i.e., "plot," as defined above.

[33] Zeuxis's portraits were "ideal" (cf. *Aristot. Poet. 25.28*).

effect of tragedy, "reversals" and "discoveries,"[34] are parts of the plot. And here is further proof: those who try to write tragedy are much sooner successful in language and character-study than in arranging the incidents. It is the same with almost all the earliest poets.

The plot then is the first principle and as it were the soul of tragedy: character comes second.

It is much the same also in painting; if a man smeared a canvas with the loveliest colors at random, it would not give as much pleasure as an outline in black and white.[35]

And it is mainly because a play is a representation of action that it also for that reason represents people.

Third comes "thought." This means the ability to say what is possible and appropriate. It comes in the dialogue and is the function of the statesman's or the rhetorician's art.[36]

The old writers made their characters talk like statesmen,[37] the moderns like rhetoricians.

Character is that which reveals choice[38], shows what sort of thing a man chooses or avoids in circumstances where the choice is not obvious, so those speeches convey no character in which there is nothing whatever which the speaker chooses or avoids.

"Thought" you find in speeches which contain an argument that something is or is not, or a general expression of opinion.

The fourth of the literary elements is the language. By this I mean, as we said above, the expression of meaning in words,[39] and this is essentially the same in verse and in prose.

Of the other elements which "enrich"[40] tragedy the most important is song-making.

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[34] See chapter 11.

[35] Selection and design are necessary for any work of "representation."

[36] Cf. chapter 6.

[37] Or "in the style of ordinary people," without obvious rhetorical artifice.

[38] *προαίρεσις* is a technical term in Aristotle's ethics, corresponding to our use of the term "Will," the deliberate adoption of any course of conduct or line of action. It is a man's will or choice in the sense that determines the goodness or badness of his character. If character is to be revealed in drama, a man must be shown in the exercise of his will, choosing between one line of conduct and another, and he must be placed in circumstances in wbich the choice is not obvious, i.e., circumstances in which everybody's choice would not be the same. The choice of death rather than disbonourable wealth reveals character; the choice of a nectarine rather than a turnip does not.

[39] This seems to be a mistaken reference to 6 above where "diction" is defined as "the metrical arrangement of the words." In poetry they come to the same thing.

[40] See *Aristot. Poet. 6.2.*

Spectacle, while highly effective, is yet quite foreign to the art and has nothing to do with poetry. Indeed the effect of tragedy does not depend on its performance by actors, and, moreover,for achieving the spectacular effects the art of the costumier is more authoritative than that of the poet.

Chapter 7

After these definitions we must next discuss the proper arrangement of the incidents since this is the first and most important thing in tragedy. We have laid it down that tragedy is a representation of an action that is whole and complete and of a certain magnitude, since a thing may be a whole and yet have no magnitude.
A whole is what has a beginning and middle and end.
A beginning is that which is not a necessary consequent of anything else but after which something else exists or happens as a natural result.
An end on the contrary is that which is inevitably or, as a rule, the natural result of something else but from which nothing else follows;
a middle follows something else and something follows from it.
Well constructed plots must not therefore begin and end at random, but must embody the formulae we have stated.
Moreover, in everything that is beautiful, whether it be a living creature or any organism composed of parts, these parts must not only be orderly arranged but must also have a certain magnitude of their own; for beauty consists in magnitude and ordered arrangement. From which it follows that neither would a very small creature be beautiful—for our view of it is almost instantaneous and therefore confused[41]—nor a very large one, since being unable to view it all at once, we lose the effect of a single whole; for instance, suppose a creature a thousand miles long.
As then creatures and other organic structures must have a certain magnitude and yet be easily taken in by the eye, so too with plots: they must have length but must be easily taken in by the memory.

[41] With a very small object the duration of our vision is, as it were, so rapid that the parts are invisible; we, therefore, cannot appreciate their proportion and arrangement, in which beauty consists.

The limit of length considered in relation to competitions and production[42] before an audience does not concern this treatise. Had it been the rule to produce a hundred tragedies, the performance would have been regulated by the water clock, as it is said they did once in other days.

But as for the natural limit of the action, the longer the better as far as magnitude goes, provided it can all be grasped at once. To give a simple definition: the magnitude which admits of a change from bad fortune to good or from good fortune to bad, in a sequence of events which follow one another either inevitably or according to probability, that is the proper limit.

[42] *αἴσθησις* is the play's "perception" by an audience—how much an audience will stand.

Chapter 8

A plot does not have unity, as some people think, simply because it deals with a single hero. Many and indeed innumerable things happen to an individual, some of which do not go to make up any unity, and similarly an individual is concerned in many actions which do not combine into a single piece of action.

It seems therefore that all those poets are wrong who have written a *Heracleid* or *Theseid* or other such poems.[43] They think that because Heracles was a single individual the plot must for that reason have unity.

But Homer, supreme also in all other respects, was apparently well aware of this truth either by instinct or from knowledge of his art. For in writing an *Odyssey* he did not put in all that ever happened to Odysseus, his being wounded on Parnassus, for instance, or his feigned madness when the host was gathered(these being events neither of which necessarily or probably led to the other), but he constructed his *Odyssey* round a single action in our sense of the phrase. And the *Iliad* the same.

As then in the other arts of representation a single representation means a representation of a single object, so too the plot being a representation of a piece of action must represent a single piece of action and the whole of it; and the component incidents must be so arranged that if one of them be transposed or removed, the unity of the whole is dislocated and destroyed. For if the presence or absence of a thing makes no visible difference, then it is not an integral part of the whole.

[43] Aristotle condemns them all, assuming—or perhaps assured by experience—that their sole claim to unity lay in the fact that all the stories in the poem had a common hero.

Chapter 9

What we have said already makes it further clear that a poet's object is not to tell what actually happened but what could and would happen either probably or inevitably.

The difference between a historian and a poet is not that one writes in prose and the other in verse— indeed the writings of Herodotus could be put into verse and yet would still be a kind of history, whether written in metre or not. The real difference is this, that one tells what happened and the other what might happen.

For this reason poetry is something more scientific and serious than history, because poetry tends to give general truths while history gives particular facts.

By a "general truth" I mean the sort of thing that a certain type of man will do or say either probably or necessarily. That is what poetry aims at in giving names to the characters.[44] A "particular fact" is what Alcibiades did or what was done to him.

In the case of comedy this has now become obvious, for comedians construct their plots out of probable incidents and then put in any names that occur to them. They do not, like the iambic satirists, write about individuals.[45]

In tragedy, on the other hand, they keep to real names. The reason is that what is possible carries conviction. If a thing has not happened, we

[44]The names indicate types. This is obvious, as he says, in Comedy and is also true of Greek Tragedy, which, although it deals with traditional heroes regarded as "real people," yet keeps to a few stories in which each character has become a type. In Chapter 17. the dramatist is recommended to sketch first his outline plot, making it clear and coherent, before he puts in the names.

[45]Aristophanes of course did write about individuals. But Aristotle is thinking of the New Comedy, where the names of the characters were invented by the author and there was no reference to real people.

do not yet believe in its possibility, but what has happened is obviously possible. Had it been impossible, it would not have happened.

It is true that in some tragedies one or two of the names are familiar and the rest invented; indeed in some they are all invented, as for instance in Agathon's *Antheus*,[46] where both the incidents and the names are invented and yet it is none the less a favourite.

One need not therefore endeavor invariably to keep to the traditional stories with which our tragedies deal. Indeed it would be absurd to do that, seeing that the familiar themes are familiar only to a few and yet please all.[47]

It is clear, then, from what we have said that the poet must be a "maker" not of verses but of stories, since he is a poet in virtue of his "representation," and what he represents is action.

Even supposing he represents what has actually happened, he is none the less a poet, for there is nothing to prevent some actual occurrences being the sort of thing that would probably or inevitably happen, and it is in virtue of that that he is their "maker."

Of "simple"[48] plots and actions the worst are those which are "episodic." By this I mean a plot in which the episodes do not follow each other probably or inevitably.

Bad poets write such plays because they cannot help it, and good poets write them to please the actors. Writing as they do for competition, they often strain a plot beyond its capacity and are thus obliged to sacrifice continuity.[49]

But this is bad work, since tragedy represents not only a complete action but also incidents that cause fear and pity, and this happens most of all when the incidents are unexpected and yet one is a consequence of the other.[50]

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[46]The name, apparently, of an imaginary hero. The word might be *Ἄνθος*, but "The Flower" is an unlikely title for a Greek tragedy.

[47]The reason why Greek tragedy dealt only with a few familiar themes is to be found of course in its religious origin. It was the function of tragedy to interpret and embroider myths. Aristotle never gives this reason, but offers instead the unconvincing explanation that tragedians adhered to certain "real" stories to gain verisimilitude—and yet he has to admit that, since to many of the auditors these stories were unfamiliar and none the less attractive, dramatists might just as well invent new themes.

[48]This term is defined in the next chapter. It seems odd to use it before its meaning is explained. Perhaps we should read *ἄλλων*(Tyrwhitt) and translate "of all plots."

[49]Or "logic." He means the chain of cause and effect, wherein each incident is the result of what has gone before. See the end of the next chapter.

[50]The logic suffers from ellipse. Plays which fail to exhibit the sequence of cause and effect are condemned (1) because they lack the unity which befits tragedy, (2) because they miss that supreme effect of fear or pity produced by incidents which,

For in that way the incidents will cause more amazement than if they happened mechanically and accidentally, since the most amazing accidental occurrences are those which seem to have been providential, for instance when the statue of Mitys at Argos killed the man who caused Mitys's death by falling on him at a festival. Such events do not seem to be mere accidents.
So such plots as these must necessarily be the best.

though unexpected, are seen to be no mere accident but the inevitable result of what has gone before.

Chapter 10

Some plots are “simple” and some “complex,” as indeed the actions represented by the plots are obviously such.
By a simple action I mean one that is single and continuous in the sense of our definition above,[51] wherein the change of fortune occurs without “reversal” or “discovery”;
by a complex action I mean one wherein the change coincides with a “discovery” or “reversal” or both.
These should result from the actual structure of the plot in such a way that what has already happened makes the result inevitable or probable;for there is indeed a vast difference between what happens propter hoc and post hoc.

[51] In chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 11

A "reversal" is a change of the situation into the opposite, as described above,[52] this change being, moreover, as we are saying, probable or inevitable—
like the man in the *Oedipus* who came to cheer Oedipus and rid him of his anxiety about his mother by revealing his parentage and changed the whole situation.[53]
In the *Lynceus*, too, there is the man led off to execution and Danaus following to kill him, and the result of what had already happened was that the latter was killed and the former escaped.[54]
A "discovery," as the term itself implies, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing either friendship or hatred in those who are destined for good fortune or ill.

[52] At the end of chapter 7. Vahlen and many other exponents of the *Politics* confine the meaning of "reversal" to the situation in which the hero's action has consequences directly opposite to his intention and expectation. There is much to be said for this interpretation, which stresses the irony at the heart of all tragedy. But it is too narrow for Aristotle's theory. All tragedy involves a change of fortune (*μετάβασις*). In a "simple" plot this is gradual; in a "complex" plot it is catastrophic, a sudden revolution of fortune's wheel. In some of the greatest tragedies, but not in all, this is the result of action designed to produce the opposite effect.

[53] The messenger for Corinth announces the death of Polybus and Oedipus's succession to the throne. Oedipus, feeling now safe from the prophecy that he would murder his father, still fears to return to Corinth, lest he should fulfil the other prophecy and marry his mother. The messenger seeks to reassure him by announcing that Polybus and Merope are not his parents. But the effect of this was to "change the whole situation" for Oedipus by revealing the truth that he a murdered his father, Laius, and married his mother, Jocasta. This "reversal" is the more effective because it is immediately coincident with the discovery of the truth.

[54] Lynceus married Hypermnestra who disobeyed Danaus in not murdering him. Danaus trying by process of law to compass the death of their son Abas was killed himself. "The dog it was that died."

A discovery is most effective when it coincides with reversals, such as that involved by the discovery in the *Oedipus*.
There are also other forms of discovery, for what we have described may in a sense occur in relation to inanimate and trivial objects, or one may discover whether some one has done something or not.
But the discovery which is most essentially part of the plot and part of the action is of the kind described above, for such a discovery and reversal of fortune will involve either pity or fear, and it is actions such as these which, according to our hypothesis, tragedy represents; and, moreover, misfortune and good fortune are likely to turn upon such incidents.
Now since the discovery is somebody's discovery, in some scenes one character only is discovered to another, the identity of the other being obvious; but sometimes each must discover the other. Thus Iphigeneia was discovered to Orestes through the sending of the letter, but a separate discovery was needed to make him known to Iphigeneia.[55]
We see then that two elements of the plot, reversal and discovery, turn upon these incidents. A third element is a calamity. Of these three elements we have already described reversal and discovery.
A calamity is a destructive or painful occurrence, such as a death on the stage, acute suffering and wounding and so on.

[55]Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris*—Orestes and Pylades arriving among the Tauri are by the custom of the country to be sacrificed to Artemis by her priestess, Iphigeneia. It is agreed that Pylades shall be spared to carry a letter from Iphigeneia to Orestes, whom she supposes to be in Argos. In order that Pylades may deliver the message, even if he should lose the letter, she reads it aloud. Orestes thus discovers who she is. He then reveals himself to her by declaring who he is and proving his identity by his memories of their home.

Chapter 12

We have already[56] spoken of the constituent parts to be used as ingredients of tragedy. The separable members into which it is quantitatively divided are these: Prologue, Episode, Exode, Choral Song,
the last being divided into Parode and Stasimon.
These are common to all tragedies; songs sung by actors on the stage and "commoi" are peculiar to certain plays.
A prologue is the whole of that part of a tragedy which precedes the entrance of the chorus.
An episode is the whole of that part of a tragedy which falls between whole choral songs.
An exode is the whole of that part of a tragedy which is not followed by a song of the chorus.
A parode is the whole of the first utterance of the chorus.
A stasimon is a choral song without anapaests or trochaics.[57]
A commos is a song of lament shared by the chorus and the actors on the stage.
The constituent parts to be used as ingredients of tragedy have been described above; these are the separable members into which it is quantitatively divided.[58]

[56] In chapter 6.

[57] This does not apply to surviving Greek tragedies, but may be true of those of Aristotle's time. The word Stasimon is applied to all choruses in a tragedy other than those sung during entry or exit. It is usually explained as meaning a "stationary song," because it was sung after the chorus had taken up its "station" in the orchestra.

[58] The whole of chapter 12. bears marks of belonging to the Poetics but seems out of place, since it interrupts the discussion of "plot."

Chapter 13

Following upon what has been said above we should next state what ought to be aimed at and what avoided in the construction of a plot, and the means by which the object of tragedy may be achieved.
Since then the structure of the best tragedy should be not simple but complex[59] and one that represents incidents arousing fear and pity—for that is peculiar to this form of art—it is obvious to begin with that one should not show worthy men passing from good fortune to bad. That does not arouse fear or pity but shocks our feelings.
Nor again wicked people passing from bad fortune to good. That is the most untragic of all, having none of the requisite qualities, since it does not satisfy our feelings[60] or arouse pity or fear.
Nor again the passing of a thoroughly bad man from good fortune to bad fortune. Such a structure might satisfy our feelings but it arouses neither pity nor fear, the one being for the man who does not deserve his misfortune and the other for the man who is like ourselves—pity for the undeserved misfortune, fear for the man like ourselves—so that the result will arouse neither pity nor fear.
There remains then the mean between these. This is the sort of man who is not pre-eminently virtous and just, and yet it is through no badness or villainy of his own that he falls into the fortune, but rather through some flaw in him,[61] he being one of those who are in high

[59] See chapter 10.

[60] i.e., our preference for "poetic justice."

[61] Whether Aristotle regards the "flaw" as intellectual or moral has been hotly discussed. It may cover both senses. The hero must not deserve his misfortune, but he must cause it by making a fatal mistake, an error of judgement, which may well involve some imperfection of character but not such as to make us regard him as "morally responsible" for the disasters although they are nevertheless the consequences

station and good fortune, like Oedipus and Thyestes and the famous men of such families as those.

The successful plot must then have a single[62] and not, as some say, a double issue; and the change must be not to good fortune from bad but, on the contrary, from good to bad fortune, and it must not be due to villainy but to some great flaw in such a man as we have described, or of one who is better rather than worse.

This can be seen also in actual practice. For at first poets accepted any plots, but to-day the best tragedies are written about a few families—Alcmaeon for instance and Oedipus and Orestes and Meleager and Thyestes and Telephus and all the others whom it befell to suffer or inflict terrible disasters.

Judged then by the theory of the art, the best[63] tragedy is of this construction.

Those critics are therefore wrong who charge Euripides with doing this in his tragedies, and say that many of his end in misfortune.

That is, as we have shown, correct. And there is very good evidence of this, for on the stage and in competitions such plays appear the most tragic of all, if they are successful, and even if Euripides is in other respects a bad manager,[64] yet he is certainly the most tragic of the poets.

Next in order comes the structure which some put first, that which has a double issue, like the *Odyssey*, and ends in opposite ways for the good characters and the bad.

It is the sentimentality of the audience which makes this seem the best form; for the poets follow the wish of the spectators.

But this is not the true tragic pleasure but rather characteristic of comedy, where those who are bitter enemies in the story, Orestes and Aegisthus, for instance, go off at the end, having made friends, and nobody kills anybody.

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of the flaw in him, and his wrong decision at a crisis is the inevitable outcome of his character(cf. *Aristot. Poet. 6.24.*).

[62] *ἁπλοῦς* elsewhere in the *Poetics* means "simple" as opposed to *πεπλεγμένος*, "complex"; here it is opposed to *διπλοῦς*, which describes a double denouement, involving happiness for some and disaster for others.

[63] This is modified by 19 in the following chapter, where he finds an even better formula for the tragic effect.

[64] Against Euripides Aristotle makes the following criticisms: (1)his choruses are often irrelevant; (2)the character of the heroine in his *Iphigeneia in Tauris* is inconsistent; (3)in the *Medea* the deliberate killing of the children is ineffective and the play is inartistically ended by the machina; (4)the character of Menelaus in the *Orestes* is needlessly depraved; (5)Melanippe is too philosophical for a woman.

Chapter 14

Fear and pity sometimes result from the spectacle and are sometimes aroused by the actual arrangement of the incidents, which is preferable and the mark of a better poet.
The plot should be so constructed that even without seeing the play anyone hearing of the incidents happening thrills with fear and pity as a result of what occurs. So would anyone feel who heard the story of Oedipus.
To produce this effect by means of an appeal to the eye is inartistic and needs adventitious aid,
while those who by such means produce an effect which is not fearful but merely monstrous have nothing in common with tragedy.[65] For one should not seek from tragedy all kinds of pleasure but that which is peculiar to tragedy,
and since the poet must by "representation" produce the pleasure which comes from feeling pity and fear, obviously this quality must be embodied in the incidents.
We must now decide what incidents seem dreadful or rather pitiable. Such must necessarily be the actions of friends to each other or of enemies or of people that are neither.
Now if an enemy does it to an enemy, there is nothing pitiable either in the deed or the intention,

[65]that here were plays which relied for their effect on the scenery and "make up" is clear from chapter 17:—"The Phorcides and Prometheus and Scenes laid in Hades." It was even possible to produce the *Eumenides* so badly as to bring it into this category. But Aristotle's criticism here includes the more important point that the poignancy of a Greek tragedy is due to what happens and not to our seeing it happen. That Medea murders her children is tragic: to display the murder *coram populo* would add either nothing or something merely "monstrous." And although Sophocles shows Oedipus with his eyes out, it is the fact and not the sight which is properly "tragic."

except so far as the actual calamity goes.
Nor would there be if they were neither friends nor enemies. But when these calamities happen among friends,when for instance brother kills brother, or son father, or mother son, or son mother—either kills or intends to kill, or does something of the kind, that is what we must look for.
Now it is not right to break up the traditional stories, I mean, for instance, Clytaemnestra being killed by Orestes and Eriphyle by Alcmaeon,
but the poet must show invention and make a skilful use of the tradition.

But we must state more clearly what is meant by "skilful."
The action may happen in the way in which the old dramatists made their characters act—consciously and knowing the facts, as Euripides[66] also made his Medea kill her children.
Or they may do the deed but without realizing the horror of it and then discover the relationship afterwards, like Oedipus in Sophocles. That indeed lies outside the play,[67] but an example of this in the tragedy itself is the *Alcmaeon* of Astydamas[68] or Telegonus in the *Wounded Odysseus*.
A third alternative is to intend to do some irremediable action in ignorance and to discover the truth before doing it.
Besides these there is no other way, for they must either do the deed or not, either knowing or unknowing.
The worst of these is to intend the action with full knowledge and not to perform it. That outrages the feelings and is not tragic, for there is no calamity. So nobody does that, except occasionally, as, for instance, Haemon and Creon[69] in the *Antigone*.
Next comes the doing of the deed.
It is better to act in ignorance and discover afterwards. Our feelings are not outraged and the discovery is startling.
Best of all is the last; in the *Cresphontes*,[70] for instance, Merope in-

[66]This does not necessarily imply that Aristotle reckons Euripides "a modern," since the Greek can equally mean "Euripides as well as other old dramatists."

[67]i.e., Oedipus kills his father Laius before the play opens.

[68]A prolific tragedian of the fourth century.

[69]Haemon, discovered by his father Creon embracing the dead body of Antigone, drew his sword on him but missed his aim and Creon fled.

[70]By Euripides. Polyphontes killed Cresphontes, king of Messenia, and gained possession of his kingdom and his wife, Merope. She had concealed her son, Aepytus, in Arcadia, and when he returned, seeking vengeance, she nearly killed him in ignorance but discovered who he was. He then killed Polyphontes and reigned in his stead.

tends to kill her son and does not kill him but discovers; and in the *Iphigeneia*[71] the case of the sister and brother; and in the *Helle*[72] the son discovers just as he is on the point of giving up his mother.

So this is the reason, as was said above,[73] why tragedies are about a few families. For in their experiments it was from no technical knowledge but purely by chance that they found out how to produce such an effect in their stories. So they are obliged to have recourse to those families in which such calamities befell.[74]

Now concerning the structure of the incidents and the proper character of the plots enough has been said.

[71] *In Tauris*. See *Aristot. Poet. 11.8*, note.

[72] Author and play unknown.

[73] See *Aristot. Poet. 13.7*.

[74] See *Aristot. Poet. 9.8*, note.

Chapter 15

Concerning "character" there are four points to aim at. The first and most important is that the character should be good.
The play will show character if, as we said above,[75] either the dialogue or the actions reveal some choice; and the character will be good, if the choice is good.
But this is relative to each class of people. Even a woman is "good" and so is a slave, although it may be said that a woman is an inferior thing and a slave beneath consideration.
The second point is that the characters should be appropriate. A character may be manly, but it is not appropriate for a woman to be manly or clever.
Thirdly, it should be "like."[76] This is different from making the character good and from making it appropriate in the sense of the word as used above.
Fourthly, it should be consistent. Even if the original be inconsistent and offers such a character to the poet for representation, still he must be consistently inconsistent.
An example of unnecessary badness of character is Menelaos in the *Orestes*[77];
of character that is unfitting and inappropriate the lament of Odysseus in the *Scylla*[78] and Melanippe's speech[79];

[75] See *Aristot. Poet. 6.24.*

[76] The meaning probably is "like the traditional person," e.g. Achilles must not be soft nor Odysseus stupid. Cf. *Horace Ars Poet. 120* "famam sequere."

[77] Aristotle has a personal distaste for this character on the ground that Euripides made him a creature meaner than the plot demands.

[78] A dithyramb by Timotheus. Cf. *Aristot. Poet. 26.3.*

[79] A fragment survives (*Eur. Fr. 484 (Nauck)*). Euripides seems to have given her

of inconsistent character Iphigeneia in Aulis, for the suppliant Iphigeneia is not at all like her later character.
In character-drawing just as much as in the arrangement of the incidents one should always seek what is inevitable or probable, so as to make it inevitable or probable that such and such a person should say or do such and such; and inevitable or probable that one thing should follow another.
Clearly therefore the "denouement"[80] of each play should also be the result of the plot itself and not produced mechanically as in the *Medea* and the incident of the embarkation in the Iliad. [81]
The "god in the car"[82] should only be used to explain what lies outside the play, either what happened earlier and is therefore beyond human knowledge, or what happens later and needs to be foretold in a proclamation. For we ascribe to the gods the power of seeing everything.
There must, however, be nothing inexplicable in the incidents, or, if there is, it must lie outside the tragedy. There is an example in Sophocles' *Oedipus*.[83]
Since tragedy is a representation of men better than ourselves we must copy the good portrait-painters who, while rendering the distinctive form and making a likeness, yet paint people better than they are. It is the same with the poet. When representing people who are hot-tempered or lazy, or have other such traits of character, he should make them such, yet men of worth [an example of hardness][84]; take the way in which Agathon and Homer portray Achilles.

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a knowledge of science and philosophy inappropriate to a woman.

[80]Or "unravelling."

[81]*Hom. Il. 2.155-181*, where it is only the arbitrary (i.e., uncaused) intervention of Athene which stays the flight of the Greeks. In the *Medea* the heroine, having killed her rival and her children, is spirited away in the chariot ot the Sun, a result not "caused" by what has gone before.

[82]The *μηχανή* or "car" was a sort of crane with a pulley attached, which was fixed at the top of the back-scene in the left corner of the stage. By it a god or hero could be lowered or raised or exhibited motionless in mid-air. Weak dramatists thus introduced a car to "cut the knot" by declaring the denouement instead of unravelling the plot by the logic of cause and effect. It was presumably on such a "car" that Medea was borne away.

[83]i.e., Oedipus had killed Laius in a wayside quarrel, not knowing who he was. When his subjects at Thebes crave his help to remove the curse which is blighting their crops, he pledges himself to discover the murderer of Laius. It may seem odd that he should not know enough about the details of the murder to connect it in his mind with his own murderous quarrel. But that was long ago, and neither an audience nor a novel-reader is critical about incidents which occur long before the point at which the story begins. See chapter *Aristot. Poet. 24.20*.

[84]Apparently a note on Achilles which has been copied by mistake into the text.

Keep, then, a careful eye on these rules and also on the appeal to the eye[85] which is necessarily bound up with the poet's business; for that offers many opportunities of going wrong. But this subject has been adequately discussed in the published treatises.[86]

[85] i.e., stage-craft rather than staging.

[86] As distinct from the body of "esoteric" doctrine circulated by oral teaching among Aristotle's pupils.

Chapter 16

What a "Discovery" is has been already stated.[87]As for kinds of Discovery, first comes the least artistic kind, which is largely used owing to incompetence—discovery by tokens.
These may be congenital, like "the spear the Earth-born bear" or stars, like those which Carcinus[88] uses in his *Thyestes*[89];
or they may be acquired and these may be on the body, for instance, wounds, or external things like necklaces, and in the *Tyro*[90] the discovery by means of the boat.
There is a better and a worse way of using these tokens; for instance Odysseus, by means of his wound, was discovered in one way by the nurse and in another way by the swine-herds.[91]
Discovery scenes constructed to prove the point are inartistic and so are all such scenes, but those are better which arise out of a reversal

[87]In chapter 11.

[88]A prolific tragedian of the early fourth century. The family are agreeably ridiculed in Aristophanes' *Wasps.*

[89]These were "birth-marks." The "spear-head" distinguished the descendants of the Spartoi at Thebes; the star or bright spot on the descendants of Pelops commemorated his ivory shoulder, and in Carcinus's play it seems to have survived cooking.

[90]A play by Sophocles. Tyro's twins by Poseidon, who appeared to her in the guise of the river Enipeus, were exposed in a little boat or ark, like Moses in the bulrushes, and this led to their identification.

[91]*Hom. Od. 19.386ff., 205ff.* The first came about automatically, the second was a deliberate demonstration "to prove the point." Aristotle here distinguishes between a discovery inevitably produced by the logic of events (e.g. it was inevitable or at least probable that Odysseus, arriving as a strange traveller, should be washed by Eurycleia, and that she should thus see the old scar on his thigh and discover his identity) and a discovery produced by a deliberate declaration (e.g. Odysseus's declaration of his identity to Eumaeus). The latter kind is "manufactured by the poet," not logically caused by what has gone before.

scene, as, for instance, in "The Washing."[92]
In the second place come those which are manufactured by the poet and are therefore inartistic. For instance, in the *Iphigeneia*[93] Orestes revealed himself. She was revealed to him through the letter,
but Orestes says himself what the poet wants and not what the plot requires. So this comes near to the fault already mentioned, for he might just as well have actually brought some tokens.[94] And there is "the voice of the shuttle"[95] In Sophocles' *Tereus.*
The third kind is due to memory, to showing distress on seeing something. An example of this is the scene in the *Cyprians* by Dicaeogenes; on seeing the picture he burst into tears[96]: and again in the "Tale of Alcinous,"[97] hearing the minstrel he remembered and burst into tears; and thus they were recognized.
The fourth kind results from an inference; for instance, in the *Choephoroe* "Someone like me has come; but nobody is like me except Orestes; therefore he has come." And there is Polyidus's[98] idea about Iphigeneia, for it is likely enough that Orestes should make an inference that, whereas his sister was sacrificed, here is the same thing happening to him. And in Theodectes' *Tydeus* that "having come to find a son, he is perishing himself." And the scene in the *Phineidae*, where on seeing the spot the women inferred their fate, that they were meant to die there for it was there that they had been exposed.[99]
There is also a kind of fictitious discovery which depends on a false

[92] *Hom. Od. 19.392.* See preceding note.

[93] Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris.* See *Aristot. Poet. 11.8*, note.

[94] To prove his identity Orestes mentions Pelops' lance and other "things from home," which is much the same as producing visible tokens.

[95] When Philomela's tongue was cut out, she wove in embroidery the story of her rape by Tereus. Thus the facts were discovered to her sister, Procne, by deliberate demonstration.

[96] Teucer, returning to Salamis in disguise and seeing a portrait of his dead father Telamon, burst into tears and was thus discovered. So, too, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* Julia is discovered because she swoons on hearing Valentine offer Sylvia to his rival.

[97] *Hom. Od. 8.521ff.*

[98] A Sophist who either wrote an *Iphigeneia* with this denouement or more probably suggested in a work of criticism (cf. *Aristot. Poet. 17.6*) that Orestes on being led to his fate should speculate aloud upon the odd coincidence that both he and his sister should be sacrificed, thus revealing his identity to Iphigeneia. Like most critics, Polyidos would have been a poor dramatist. There is an example of this form of discovery in the French opera *Coeur de Lion*, where the old knight says "goddam" and is thus discovered to be an Englishman.

[99] In these cases the inference was presumably uttered aloud and hence the identity of the speakers discovered. Nothing else is known of these plays.

inference on the part of the audience, for instance in *Odysseus the False Messenger*, he said he would recognize the bow, which as a matter of fact he had not seen, but to assume that he really would reveal himself by this means is a false inference.[100]

Best of all is the discovery which is brought about directly by the incidents, the surprise being produced by means of what is likely—take the scene in Sophocles' *Oedipus* or in the *Iphigeneia*—for it is likely enough that she should want to send a letter. These are the only discovery scenes which dispense with artificial tokens, like necklaces.[101]

In the second place come those that are the result of inference.

[100]The text is obscure, and our ignorance of the play or rhapsody adds to the darkness, but the reference may be to the ruse, common in detective stories, of misleading the audience by false clues in order to make the final revelation more effective.

[101]The classical example of these tokens in English drama is "the strawberry mark on the left arm" in *Box and Cox*. But Aristotle seems here to use "tokens" in a wider sense than at the beginning of the chapter and to include not only birthmarks, necklaces, etc., but any statement or action which may be used as a sign in the scene of Discovery.

Chapter 17

In constructing plots and completing the effect by the help of dialogue the poet should, as far as possible, keep the scene before his eyes. Only thus by getting the picture as clear as if he were present at the actual event, will he find what is fitting and detect contradictions.

The censure upon Carcinos is evidence of this. Amphiaraos was was made to rise from a temple. The poet did not visualize the scene and therefore this escaped his notice, but on the stage it was a failure since the audience objected.[102]

The poet should also, as far as possible, complete the effect by using the gestures. For, if their natural powers are equal, those who are actually in the emotions are the most convincing; he who is agitated blusters and the angry man rages with the maximum of conviction.[103] And that is why poetry needs either a sympathetic nature or a madman,[104] the former being impressionable and the latter inspired.

The stories, whether they are traditional or whether you make them up yourself, should first be sketched in outline and then expanded by putting in episodes.

[102] The example is obscure. Clearly Carcinus introduced an absurdity which escaped notice until the play was staged. Margoliouth suggests that if Amphiaraus were a god he should come down, and if a mere hero, he sould not have a temple. In *The Master of Ballantrae* Mrs. Henry cleans a sword by thrusting it up to the hilt in the ground—which is iron-bound by frost. The would be noticed on the stage: a reader may miss the incongruity.

[103] Sir Joshua Reynolds used thus to simulate emotion before a mirror. In his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth says that the Poet will wish "to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes . . . and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs." See also Burke, *On the Sublime and Beautiful*,4. 4.

[104] "Genius to madness near allied" is the meaning of *μανικός* as used here. Plato held that the only excuse for a poet was that he couldn't help it.

I mean that one might look at the general outline, say of the *Iphigeneia*, like this: A certain maiden has been sacrificed, and has disappeared beyond the ken of those who sacrificed her and has been established in another country, where it is a custom to sacrifice strangers to the goddess; and this priesthood she holds. Some time afterwards it happens that the brother of the priestess arrives there—the fact that the god told him to go there, and why, and the object of his journey, lie outside the outline-plot. He arrives, is seized, and is on the point of being sacrificed, when he reveals his identity either by Euripides' method or according to Polyidos, by making the very natural remark that after all it is not only his sister who was born to be sacrificed but himself too; and thus he is saved.

Not until this has been done should you put in names and insert the episodes;

and you must mind that the episodes are appropriate, as, for instance, in the case of Orestes the madness that led to his capture and his escape by means of the purification.[105]

Now in drama the episodes are short, but it is by them that the epic gains its length.

The story of the Odyssey is quite short. A man is for many years away from home and his footsteps are dogged by Poseidon and he is all alone. Moreover,affairs at home are in such a state that his estate is being wasted by suitors and a plot laid against his son, but after being storm-tossed he arrives himself, reveals who he is, and attacks them, with the result that he is saved and destroys his enemies.

That is the essence, the rest is episodes.

[105]In the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* Orestes is captured because he is suffering from a fit of mania; and at the end Iphigeneia pretends that the image of Artemis has been infected by the blood-guiltiness of the Greek strangers, and that, before they can be sacrificed, she must cleanse both image and strangers secretly in the sea. Thus they all escape together by boat.

Chapter 18

In every tragedy there is a complication and a denouement.[106] The incidents outside the plot and some of those in it usually form the complication, the rest is the denouement.
I mean this, that the complication is the part from the beginning up to the point which immediately precedes the occurrence of a change from bad to good fortune or from good fortune to bad; the denouement is from the beginning of the change down to the end.
For instance, in the *Lynceus* of Theodectes the complication is the preceding events, and the seizure of the boy, and then their own seizure; and the denouement is from the capital charge to the end.[107]
Tragedies should properly be classed as the same or different mainly in virtue of the plot, that is to say those that have the same entanglement and denouement. Many who entangle well are bad at the denouement. Both should always be mastered.

There are four varieties of tragedy—the same as the number given for the "elements"[108]—
first the complex kind, which all turns on reversal and discovery;

[106] The Greek says simply "tying" and "loosing." Complication and denouement seem clumsy equivalents, yet they are the words we use in dramatic criticism.

[107] The boy must be Abas, and "they" are presumably Danaus and perhaps his other daughters. Aristotle seems to regard the arrest of Danaus not as part of the λύσις, but as the end of the δέσις.

[108] Apparently the reference here is to the four elements into which in the course of chapters 10-15. Plot has been analysed, "Reversal," "Discovery," "Calamity," and "Character." But the symmetry is spoilt by the fact that his first species, "the complex play," corresponds to the first two of these four elements, viz. to "Reversal" and "Discovery." Thus his fourth species is left in the air and he hurriedly introduces "Spectacle" as the fourth corresponding element. Other explanations seem even sillier than this.

the "calamity play" like the stories of Ajax and Ixion;
the "character play" like the *Phthian Women*[109] and the *Peleus*[110].
The fourth element is spectacle, like the *Phorcides*[111] and *Prometheus*, and all scenes laid in Hades.
One should ideally try to include all these elements or, failing that, the most important and as many as possible, especially since it is the modern fashion to carp at poets, and, because there have been good poets in each style, to demand that a single author should surpass the peculiar merits of each.
[...]
[...]
One must remember, as we have often said, not to make a tragedy an epic structure:
by epic I mean made up of many stories—suppose, for instance, one were to dramatize the *Iliad* as a whole.
The length of the *Iliad* allows to the parts their proper size, but in plays the result is full of disappointment.
And the proof is that all who have dramatized the Sack of Troy as a whole, and not, like Euripides, piecemeal, or the Niobe story as a whole and not like Aeschylus, either fail or fare badly in competition. Indeed even Agathon failed in this point alone.
In "reversals," however, and in "simple" stories[112] too,they admirably achieve their end, which is a tragic effect that also satisfies your feelings.
This is achieved when the wise man, who is, however, unscrupulous, is deceived—like Sisyphus—and the man who is brave but wicked is worsted.
And this, as Agathon says, is a likely result, since it is likely that many quite unlikely things should happen.
The chorus too must be regarded as one of the actors. It must be part of the whole and share in the action, not as in Euripides but as in Sophocles.
In the others the choral odes have no more to do with the plot than with any other tragedy. And so they sing interludes, a practice begun by Agathon. And yet to sing interludes is quite as bad as transferring

[109] By Sophocles.

[110] Both Sophocles and Euripides wrote a *Peleus*.

[111] The text is obscure, and our ignorance of the play or rhapsody adds to the darkness, but the reference may be to the ruse, common in detective stories, of misleading the audience by false clues in order to make the final revelation more effective.

[112] i.e., those that have no "Discovery" or "Reversal." See chapter 10.

a whole speech or scene from one play to another.

Chapter 19

The other factors have been already discussed. It remains to speak of "Diction" and "Thought."

All that concerns Thought may be left to the treatise on Rhetoric, for the subject is more proper to that inquiry.[113]

Under the head of Thought come all the effects to be produced by the language.

Some of these are proof and refutation, the arousing of feelings like pity, fear, anger, and so on, and then again exaggeration and depreciation.[114]

It is clear that in the case of the incidents, too, one should work on the same principles, when effects of pity or terror or exaggeration or probability have to be produced.

There is just this difference, that some effects must be clear without explanation,[115] whereas others are produced in the speeches by the speaker and are due to the speeches. For what would be the use of a speaker, if the required effect were likely to be felt without the aid of the speeches?

Under the head of Diction one subject of inquiry is the various modes of speech, the knowledge of which is proper to elocution or to the man who knows the master art[116]—I mean for instance, what is a command,

[113] "Thought"—no English word exactly corresponds with *διάνοια*—is all that which is expressed or effected by the words (cf. *Aristot. Poet. 6.22, 23, and 25*). Thus the student is rightly referred to the *Art of Rhetoric*, where he learns "what to say in every case." Aristotle adds that the rules there given for the use of ideas will guide him also in the use of incidents, since the same effect may be produced either by talk or by "situation."

[114] It is an important part of the orator's skill to depreciate what is important and to exaggerate trivial points.

[115] Those produced by "situation."

a prayer, a statement, a threat, question, answer, and so on.
The knowledge or ignorance of such matters brings upon the poet no censure worth serious consideration. For who could suppose that there is any fault in the passage which Protagoras censures, because Homer, intending to utter a prayer, gives a command when he says, "Sing, goddess, the wrath"? To order something to be done or not is, he points out, a command.
So we may leave this topic as one that belongs not to poetry but to another art.

[116]Rhetoric is a "master art" in relation to elocution, since it decides the effects to be produced, and elocution decides how to produce them. So the doctor's art is "master" to that of the dispenser, and the art of riding to that of the maker of bridles.

Chapter 20

Diction as a whole[117] is made up of these parts: letter, syllable, conjunction, joint,[118] noun, verb, case, phrase.

A letter is an indivisible sound, not every such sound but one of which an intelligible sound can be formed. Animals utter indivisible sounds but none that I should call a letter.

Such sounds may be subdivided into vowel, semi-vowel, and mute. A vowel is that which without any addition has an audible sound; a semivowel needs the addition of another letter to give it audible sound, for instance S and R; a mute is that which with addition has no sound of its own but becomes audible when combined with some of the letters which have a sound. Examples of mutes are G and D.

Letters differ according to the shape of the mouth and the place at which they are sounded; in being with or without aspiration; in being long and short; and lastly in having an acute, grave, or intermediate accent. But the detailed study of these matters properly concerns students of metre.

A syllable is a sound without meaning, composed of a mute and a letter that has a sound. GR, for example, without A is a syllable just as much as GRA with an A. But these distinctions also belong to the theory of metre.

A conjunction is a sound without meaning, which neither hinders nor

[117] A translator is bound to render this chapter, since the balance of evidence is in favour of its inclusion. But the readaer is advised to skip it, since it is written from the point of view of grammar and philology, and does not, like the succeeding chapter, deal with the literary use of words. It is also very obscure. Students should refer to Bywater's edition.

[118] A "joint," as defined below, appears to be a word which indicates the beginning or end of a clause.

causes the formation of a single significant sound or phrase out of several sounds, and which, if the phrase stands by itself, cannot properly stand at the beginning of it, e.g. *μέν, δή, τοί, δέ*; or else it is a sound without meaning capable of forming one significant sound or phrase out of several sounds having each a meaning of their own, e.g. *ἀμφί, περί*.

A joint is a sound without meaning which marks the beginning or end of a phrase or a division in it, and naturally stands at either end or in the middle.[119]

A noun is a composite sound with a meaning, not indicative of time, no part of which has a meaning by itself; for in compounds we do not use each part as having a meaning of its own, for instance, in "Theodorus," there is no meaning of *δῶρον* (gift).

A verb is a composite sound with a meaning, indicative of time, no part of which has a meaning by itself—just as in nouns. "Man" or "white" does not signify time, but "walks" and "has walked" connote present and past time respectively.

A case (or inflection) of a noun or verb is that which signifies either "of" or "to" a thing and the like;or gives the sense of "one or many" e.g. men and man; or else it may depend on the delivery, for example question and command. "Walked?" and "Walk!" are verbal "cases" of this kind.

A phrase[120] is a composite sound with a meaning, some parts of which mean something by themselves.

It is not true to say that every "phrase" is made up of nouns and verbs, e.g. the definition of man[121]; but although it is possible to have a "phrase" without verbs, yet some part of it will always have a meaning of its own, for example, Cleon in "Cleon walks."

A "phrase" may be a unit in two ways; either it signifies one thing or it is a combination of several "phrases." The unity of the *Iliad*, for instance, is due to such combination, but the definition of man is "one phrase" because it signifies one thing.

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[119] This paragraph remains a cause of despair. Bywater's notes suggest a restoration.

[120] There is no exact English equivalent of this meaning of *λόγος*, which has been used already in 7 above without explanation. "Statement" and "proposition" also cover part of its meaning.

[121] Probably one of the two definitions given in the *Topics*, "a two-footed land animal" and "an animal amenable to reason."

Chapter 21

Nouns are of two kinds. There is the simple noun, by which I mean one made up of parts that have no meaning, like *γῆ*, and there is the compound noun.
These may be made up either of a part which has no meaning and a part which has a meaning—though it does not have its meaning in the compound—or of two parts both having a meaning.
A compound noun may be triple and quadruple and multiple, e.g. many of the bombastic names like Hermocaicoxanthus.[122] . . .
Every noun is either "ordinary"[123] or "rare" or "metaphorical" or "ornamental" or "invented" or "lengthened" or "curtailed" or "altered."
An "ordinary" word is one used by everybody, a "rare" word one used by some;
so that a word may obviously be both "ordinary" and "rare," but not in relation to the same people. *σίγυνον*,[124] for instance, is to the Cypriots an "ordinary" word but to us a "rare" one.
Metaphor is the application of a strange term either transferred from the genus and applied to the species or from the species and applied to the genus, or from one species to another or else by analogy.
An example of a term transferred from genus to species is "Here stands my ship." Riding at anchor is a species of standing.
An example of transference from species to genus is "Indeed ten thousand noble things Odysseus did," for ten thousand, which is a species of many, is here used instead of the word "many."
An example of transference from one species to another is "Drawing

[122] A compound of the names of three rivers, Hermus, Caicus, and Xanthus.

[123] i.e., one which has dined normal currency as contrasted with the "rare word," which is confined to a dialect or borrowed from a foreign language.

[124] Meaning, "spear."

off his life with the bronze" and "Severing with the tireless bronze," where "drawing off" is used for "severing" and "severing" for "drawing off," both being species of "removing."[125]

Metaphor by analogy means this: when B is to A as D is to C, then instead of B the poet will say D and B instead of D.

And sometimes they add that to which the term supplanted by the metaphor is relative.[126]For instance, a cup is to Dionysus what a shield is to Ares; so he will call the cup "Dionysus's shield" and the shield "Ares' cup."

Or old age is to life as evening is to day; so he will call the evening "day's old-age" or use Empedocles' phrase[127]; and old age he will call "the evening of life" or "life's setting sun."

Sometimes there is no word for some of the terms of the analogy but the metaphor can be used all the same. For instance, to scatter seed is to sow, but there is no word for the action of the sun in scattering its fire. Yet this has to the sunshine the same relation as sowing has to the seed, and so you have the phrase "sowing the god-created fire."

Besides this another way of employing metaphor is to call a thing by the strange name and then to deny it some attribute of that name.

For instance, suppose you call the shield not "Ares' cup" but a "wineless cup." . . .[128][...]

An invented word is one not used at all by any people and coined by the poet. There seem to be such words, eg. "sprouters" for horns and "pray-er" for priest.

A word is "lengthened" or "curtailed," the former when use is made of a longer vowel than usual or a syllable inserted, and the latter when part of the word is curtailed.

An example of a lengthened word is *πόληος* for *πολέως* and *Πηληιάδεω* for *Πηλείδου*; and of a curtailed word *κρῖ* and *δῶ*, and e.g. *μία γίνεται*

[125]Probably "the bronze" is in the first case a knife and in the second a cupping-bowl. This would make the metaphor intelligible.

[126]This may claim to be one of Aristotle's least lucid sentences. It means this: If Old Age: Life :: Evening: Day, then we may call old age " the Evening of Life." In that case "old age" is the "term supplanted by the metaphor," and it is relative to " Life"; therefore "Life" (i.e., "that to which the term supplanted by the metaphor is relative") is added to the metaphorical (or "transferred") term "Evening."

[127]Unknown to us.

[128]Or you might call Love "Venus's bloodless War." At this point a few lines on "Ornament" have evidently been lost, since this is its place in the catalogue of nouns above. By "ornament" he seems to mean an embellishing epithet or synonym. In the *Rhetoric* he quotes "Our lady the fig-tree" as a misplaced "ornament." One might add the seventeenth-century use of "Thames" for "water."

ἀμφοτέρων ὄψ.[129]
A word is "altered" when the poet coins part of the word and leaves the rest unchanged, e.g. *δεξιτερὸν κατὰ μαζόν* instead of *δεξιόν*.
Of the nouns themselves, some are masculine, some feminine, and some neuter.[130]
Masculine are all that end in N and P and *Σ* and in the two compounds of *Σ*, *Ψ* and *Ξ*.
Feminine are all that end in those of the vowels that are always long, for instance *H* and *Ω*, and in *A* among vowels that can be lengthened. The result is that the number of masculine and feminine terminations is the same, for *Ψ* and *Ξ* are the same as *Σ*.
No noun ends in a mute or in a short vowel.
Only three end in *I*, *μέλι*, *κόμμι*, and *πέπερι*. Five end in *Υ*. The neuters end in these letters and in *N* and *Σ*.

[129] *κρῖ* for *κριθή*, "barley"; *δῶ* for *δῶμα* "house"; *ὄψ* for *ὄψις* "face, eye, or appearance."

[130] This paragraph the reader should either skip or study with Bywater's notes. Without them these generalizations on gender seem merely wrong.

Chapter 22

The merit of diction is to be clear and not commonplace. The clearest diction is that made up of ordinary words, but it is commonplace.
An example is the poetry of Cleophon and of Sthenelus.[131]
That which employs unfamiliar words is dignified and outside the common usage. By "unfamiliar" I mean a rare word, a metaphor, a lengthening,[132] and anything beyond the ordinary use.
But if a poet writes entirely in such words, the result will be either a riddle or jargon; if made up of metaphors, a riddle and if of rare words, jargon.
The essence of a riddle consists in describing a fact by an impossible combination of words. By merely combining the ordinary names of things this cannot be done, but it is made possible by combining metaphors. For instance, "I saw a man weld bronze upon a man with fire," and so on.[133]
A medley of rare words is jargon.
We need then a sort of mixture of the two. For the one kind will save the diction from being prosaic and commonplace, the rare word, for example, and the metaphor and the "ornament," whereas the ordinary words give clarity.
A considerable aid to clarity and distinction are the lengthening and abbreviation and alteration of words. Being otherwise than in the ordinary form and thus unusual, these will produce the effect of distinction,

[131] A tragedian whom Aristophanes ridicules for the insipidity of his diction.

[132] See preceding chapter 19.

[133] The answer is a cupping-bowl. This was a bronze vessel which was applied to the body at the place at which a small incision had been made. Heated lint was placed in the bowl of it and the reduction of air-pressure thus caused a strong flow of blood. For this form of riddle cf. "Out of the strong came forth sweetness."

and clarity will be preserved by retaining part of the usual form.
Those critics are therefore wrong who censure this manner of idiom and poke fun at the poet, as did the elder Eucleides[134] who said it was easy to write poetry, granted the right to lengthen syllables at will. He had made a burlesque in this very style: " Ἐπῐχᾰ|ρῆν εἶδŏν Μᾰρᾰ|θωνᾰδĕ | βᾱδῐ|ζοντᾰ οὐκ ἄν | γ' ἐρᾰμĕνος τον | ἐκεῑνοῡ ἐλλĕβŏρον. "[135]

Now to make an obtrusive use of this licence is ridiculous;
but moderation is a requisite common to all kinds of writing. The same effect could be got by using metaphors and rare words and the rest unsuitably for the express purpose of raising a laugh.
What a difference is made by the proper use of such licence may be seen in epic poetry, if you substitute in the verse the ordinary forms.
Take a rare word or metaphor or any of the others and substitute the ordinary word; the truth of our contention will then be obvious.For instance, Aeschylus and Euripides wrote the same iambic line with the change of one word only, a rare word in place of one made ordinary by custom, yet the one line seems beautiful and the other trivial. Aeschylus in the *Philoctetes* wrote, "The ulcer eats the flesh of this my foot," and Euripides instead of "eats" put "feasts upon." Or take "I that am small, of no account nor goodly;" suppose one were to read the line substituting the ordinary words, "I that am little and weak and ugly." Or compare "He set a stool unseemly and a table small." with "He set a shabby stool and a little table," or "the sea-shore is roaring" with "the sea-shore is shrieking."[136]
Ariphrades[137] again made fun of the tragedians because they employ phrases which no one would use in conversation, like "δωμάτων ἄπο" instead of *ἀπὸ δωμάτων* and their "σέθεν" and "ἐγὼ δέ νιν" and "Ἀχιλλέως πέρι" for *περὶ Ἀχιλλέως*, and so on.
All that sort of thing, not being in the ordinary form, gives distinction

[134]A critic of this name wrote on the drama, but his date is uncertain.

[135]In Homer we find short vowels lengthened "by position," but, whereas Homer uses the licence sparingly, Eucleides raised a laugh by overdoing it and writing in parody such hexameters as those here quoted. A modern parallel may illustrate this. The poet Stephen Phillips employed to excess the licence whihc allows a clash between the natural accent and the metrical ictus, and Mr. Owen Seaman, "for the express purpose of raising a laugh," parodied the trick by carrying it to further excess and wrote in blank verse, "She a milliner was and her brothers Dynamiters."

[136]Similarly we might use "ordinary" words instead of those which Keats chose so carefully and speak of "wonderful windows abutting on to a dangerous sea-shore in a dreary, mysterious country."

[137]Unknown.

to the diction, which was what he failed to understand.
It is a great thing to make a proper use of each of the elements mentioned, and of double words and rare words too, but by far the greatest thing is the use of metaphor.
That alone cannot be learnt; it is the token of genius. For the right use of metaphor means an eye for resemblances.[138]
Of the various kinds of words the double forms are most suited for dithyrambs, rare words for heroic verse and metaphors for iambics.
And indeed in heroic verse they are all useful; but since iambic verse is largely an imitation of speech, only those nouns are suitable which might be used in talking. These are the ordinary word, metaphor, and "ornament."
Now concerning tragedy and the art of representing life in action, what we have said already must suffice.

[138]i.e., the power of detecting "identity in difference" which distinguishes also both the philosopher and the scientist.

Chapter 23

We come now to the art of representation which is narrative and in metre.[139] Clearly the story must be constructed as in tragedy, dramatically, round a single piece of action, whole and complete in itself,with a beginning, middle and end, so that like a single living organism it may produce its own peculiar form of pleasure.

It must not be such as we normally find in history, where what is required is an exposition not of a single piece of action but of a single period of time, showing all that within the period befell one or more persons, events that have a merely casual relation to each other.

For just as the battle of Salamis occurred at the same time as the Carthaginian battle in Sicily, but they do not converge to the same result[140]; so, too, in any sequence of time one event may follow another and yet they may not issue in any one result.

Yet most of the poets do this.

So in this respect, too, compared with all other poets Homer may seem, as we have already said, divinely inspired, in that even with the Trojan war, which has a beginning and an end, he did not endeavor to dramatize it as a whole, since it would have been either too long to be taken in all at once or, if he had moderated the length, he would have complicated it by the variety of incident. As it is, he takes one part of the story only and uses many incidents from other parts, such as the Catalogue of Ships and other incidents with which he diversifies his poetry.

The others, on the contrary, all write about a single hero or about a single period or about a single action with a great many parts, the

[139] i.e., epic.

[140] Gelo's defeat of the Carthaginians in Sicily in 480 B.C. took place, according to Herodotus, on the same day as the battle of Salamis.

authors, for example, of the *Cypria* and the *Little Iliad*.[141]
The result is that out of an *Iliad* or an *Odyssey* only one tragedy can be made, or two at most, whereas several have been made out of the *Cypria*, and out of the *Little Iliad* more than eight, e.g. *The Award of Arms*, *Philoctetes*, *Neoptolemus*, *Eurypylus*, *The Begging*, *The Laconian Women*, *The Sack of Troy*, and *Sailing of the Fleet*, and *Sinon*, too, and *The Trojan Women.*

[141] As we have seen already in chapter 8, a poem or a play must be one story and not several stories about one hero. Thus, since the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have this essential unity (i.e., one thread runs through the narrative of each), few plays can be made out of them but many out of the *Cypria* or the *Little Iliad*, which are merely collections of lays on similar themes.

Chapter 24

The next point is that there must be the same varieties of epic as of tragedy[142]: an epic must be "simple or complex,"[143] or else turn on "character" or on "calamity."

The constituent parts, too, are the same with the exception of song and spectacle. Epic needs reversals and discoveries and calamities, and the thought and diction too must be good.

All these were used by Homer for the first time, and used well. Of his poems he made the one, the *Iliad*, a "simple" story turning on "calamity," and the *Odyssey* a "complex" story—it is full of "discoveries"—turning on character. Besides this they surpass all other poems in diction and thought.

Epic differs from tragedy in the length of the composition and in metre. The limit of length already given[144] will suffice—it must be possible to embrace the beginning and the end in one view,which would be the case if the compositions were shorter than the ancient epics but reached to the length of the tragedies presented at a single entertainment.[145]

Epic has a special advantage which enables the length to be increased, because in tragedy it is not possible to represent several parts of the story as going on simultaneously, but only to show what is on the stage, that part of the story which the actors are performing; whereas, in the epic, because it is narrative, several parts can be portrayed as being

[142]See *Aristot. Poet. 18.4.*

[143]See chapter 10.

[144]See *Aristot. Poet. 7.12.*

[145]"Entertainment" must mean a festival. At the City Dionysia three poets competed, each with three tragedies. By the end of the fifth century only one Satyr play was performed at each festival. But the tragedies were longer than those we possess. It is therefore likely that the nine tragedies together with one Satyr play amounted to about 15,000 lines. The *Iliad* contains between 16,000 and 17,000 lines.

enacted at the same time.
If these incidents are relevant, they increase the bulk of the poem, and this increase gives the epic a great advantage in richness as well as the variety due to the diverse incidents; for it is monotony which, soon satiating the audience, makes tragedies fail.
Experience has shown that the heroic hexameter is the right metre. Were anyone to write a narrative poem in any other metre or in several metres, the effect would be wrong.
The hexameter is the most sedate and stately of all metres and therefore admits of rare words and metaphors more than others, and narrative poetry is itself elaborate above all others.
The iambic and the trochaic tetrameter are lively, the latter suits dancing and the former suits real life.
Still more unsuitable is it to use several metres as Chaeremon did.
So no one has composed a long poem in any metre other than the heroic hexameter. As we said above, Nature shows that this is the right metre to choose.
Homer deserves praise for many things and especially for this, that alone of all poets he does not fail to understand what he ought to do himself.
The poet should speak as seldom as possible in his own character, since he is not "representing" the story in that sense.[146] Now the other poets play a part themselves throughout the poem and only occasionally "represent" a few things dramatically, but Homer after a brief prelude at once brings in a man or a woman or some other character, never without character, but all having character of their own.
Now the marvellous should certainly be portrayed in tragedy, but epic affords greater scope for the inexplicable(which is the chief element in what is marvellous), because we do not actually see the persons of the story.
The incident of Hector's pursuit[147] would look ridiculous on the stage,

[146]This takes us back to the beginning of chapter 3, where the various "manners" of representation are distinguished. Homer represents life partly by narration, partly by assuming a character other than his own. Both these "manners" come under the head of "Imitation." When Aristotle says "the poet speaks himself" and "plays a part himself" he refers not to narrative, of which there is a great deal in Homer, but to the "preludes" (cf. *φροιμιασάμενος* below) in which the poet, invoking the Muse, speaks in his own person. Ridgeway points out that in the whole of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* Homer thus "speaks himself" only 24 lines.

[147]*Iliad*, xxii. 205. sq. "And to the host divine Achilles nodded with his head a sign and let them not launch their bitter darts at Hector, lest another should win glory by shooting him and Achilles himself come second."

the people standing still and not pursuing and Achilles waving them back, but in epic that is not noticed.

But that the marvellous causes pleasure is shown by the fact that people always tell a piece of news with additions by way of being agreeable.

Above all, Homer has taught the others the proper way of telling lies,that is, by using a fallacy. When B is true if A is true, or B happens if A happens, people think that if B is true A must be true or happen. But that is false. Consequently if A be untrue but there be something else, B, which is necessarily true or happens if A is true, the proper thing to do is to posit B, for, knowing B to be true, our mind falsely infers that A is true also. This is an example from the Washing.[148]

What is convincing though impossible should always be preferred to what is possible and unconvincing.

Stories should not be made up of inexplicable details; so far as possible there should be nothing inexplicable, or, if there is, it should lie outside the story—as, for instance, Oedipus not knowing how Laius died—and not in the play; for example, in the *Electra* the news of the Pythian games,[149] or in the Mysians the man who came from Tegea to Mysia without speaking.[150]

To say that the plot would otherwise have been ruined is ridiculous. One should not in the first instance construct such a plot, and if a poet does write thus, and there seems to be a more reasonable way of treating the incident, then it is positively absurd.

Even in the *Odyssey* the inexplicable elements in the story of his landing[151] would obviously have been intolerable, had they been written by an inferior poet. As it is, Homer conceals the absurdity by the charm

[148] *Odyssey* 19. Odysseus tells Penelope that he is a Cretan from Gnossus, who once entertained O. on his voyage to Troy. As evidence, he describes O.'s dress and his companions (*Hom. Od. 19.164-260*). P. commits the fallacy of inferring the truth of the antecedent from the truth of the consequent: "If his story were true, he would know these details; But he does know them; Therefore his story *is* true."" The artist in fiction uses the same fallacy, e.g.: "If chessmen could come to life the white knight would be a duffer; But he is a most awful duffer (look at him!); Therefore chessmen can come to life." He makes his deductions so convincing that we falsely infer the truth of his hypothesis.

[149] In Sophocles' *Electra* the plot hinges on a false story of Orestes' death by an accident at the Pythian games. Presumably the anachronism shocked Aristotle.

[150] Telephus.

[151] *Hom. Od. 13.116ff.* It seemed to the critics inexplicable that Odysseus should not awake when his ship ran aground at the harbour of Phorcys in Ithaca and the Phaeacian sailors carried him ashore.

of all his other merits.
The diction should be elaborated only in the "idle" parts which do not reveal character or thought.[152] Too brilliant diction frustrates its own object by diverting attention from the portrayal of character and thought.

[152]The Messengers' speeches, a regular feature of Greek tragedy, may serve to illustrate what is here called the "idle part" of a play, i.e., passages which, but for brilliant writing, might be dull, since no character is there elucidated and no important "sentiments" expressed.

Chapter 25

With regard to problems,[153] and the various solutions of them, how many kinds there are, and the nature of each kind, all will be clear if we look at them like this.

Since the poet represents life, as a painter does or any other maker of likenesses, he must always represent one of three things—either things as they were or are; or things as they are said and seem to be; or things as they should be.

These are expressed in diction with or without rare words and metaphors, there being many modifications of diction, all of which we allow the poet to use.

Moreover, the standard of what is correct is not the same in the art of poetry as it is in the art of social conduct or any other art.

In the actual art of poetry there are two kinds of errors, essential and accidental.

If a man meant to represent something and failed through incapacity, that is an essential error. But if his error is due to his original conception being wrong and his portraying, for example, a horse advancing both its right legs, that is then a technical error in some special branch of knowledge,in medicine, say, or whatever it may be; or else some sort of impossibility has been portrayed, but that is not an essential error. These considerations must, then, be kept in view in meeting the charges contained in these objections.

Let us first take the charges against the art of poetry itself. If an

[153] A "problem" in this sense is a difficult passage or expression which explanation and may easily be censured by an unsympathetic critic. Aristotle here classifies the various grounds of censure and the various lines of defence. Most of his illustrations are drawn from the critical objections lodged against the *Iliad* by Zoilus and other "hammerers of Homer." As the reader will see, many of them are abysmally foolish.

impossibility has been portrayed, an error has been made.
But it is justifiable if the poet thus achieves the object of poetry—what that is has been already stated—and makes that part or some other part of the poem more striking. The pursuit of Hector is an example of this.[154]
If, however, the object could have been achieved better or just as well without sacrifice of technical accuracy, then it is not justifiable, for, if possible, there should be no error at all in any part of the poem.
Again one must ask of which kind is the error, is it an error in poetic art or a chance error in some other field? It is less of an error not to know that a female stag has no horns than to make a picture that is unrecognizable.
Next, supposing the charge is "That is not true," one can meet it by saying "But perhaps it ought to be," just as Sophocles said that he portrayed people as they ought to be and Euripides portrayed them as they are.
If neither of these will do, then say, "Such is the tale"; for instance, tales about gods.
Very likely there is no advantage in telling them, and they are not true either, but may well be what Xenophanes declared[155]—all the same such is the tale.
In another case, perhaps, there is no advantage but "such was the fact," e.g. the case of the arms, "Their spears erect on butt-spikes stood,"[156] for that was then the custom, as it still is in Illyria.
As to the question whether anything that has been said or done is morally good or bad, this must be answered not merely by seeing whether what has actually been done or said is noble or base, but by taking into consideration also the man who did or said it, and seeing to whom he did or said it, and when and for whom and for what reason; for example, to secure a greater good or to avoid a greater evil.
Some objections may be met by reference to the diction, for example, by pleading "rare word," e.g. *οὐρῆας μὲν πρῶτον*, for perhaps he means not mules but sentinels.[157] And Dolon, "One that was verily evil of form," it may be not his deformed body but his ugly face, for the

[154]See *Aristot. Poet. 24.16* and note.

[155]i.e., immoral and therefore untrue. He opened the assault on Homeric theology at the end of the sixth or the beginning of the fifth century B.C.

[156]*Hom. Il. 10.152.* Problem: "Surely a bad stance: they might so easily fall and cause alarm." Solution: "Homer does not defend it. He merely states a fact." It is thus that we excuse "unpleasant" fiction.

[157]*Hom. Il. 1.50*: "The mules and swift-footed hounds he first beset with his arrows." Apollo is sending plague upon the Greek army. Problem: "Why should he

Cretans use "fair-formed" for "fair-featured."[158] And again "Livelier mix it" may mean not undiluted as for drunkards but quicker.[159]
Other expressions are metaphorical, for example: "Then all the other immortals and men lay all night in slumber," while yet he says: "Yea, when indeed he gazed at the Trojan plain Agamemnon Marvelled at voices of flutes . . ." "All" is used instead of "many" metaphorically, "all" being a species of "many."[160] And again, "Alone unsharing"[161] is metaphorical; the best known is called the only one.
By intonation also; for example, the solutions of Hippias of Thasos, his "δίδομεν δέ οἱ"[162] and *τὸ μὲν οὗ καταπύθεται ὄμβρῳ*[163];
and by punctuation; for example, the lines of Empedocles: "Soon mortal grow they that aforetime learnt Immortal ways, and pure erstwhile

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first attack the mules?" Solution: "The word may here mean "sentiels.""

[158] *Hom. Il. 10.316*: "One that was verily evil inform but swift in his running." Problem: "If Dolon were deformed, how could he run fast?" Solution: ""Form" may here mean "feature.""

[159] *Hom. Il. 9.202*: "Set me, Menoetius' son, a larger bowl for the mingling, Livelier mix it withal and make ready for each one a beaker." Problem: ""Livelier" suggests intemperance." Solution: "Perhaps the word means "quicker."" Similar scruples emended the lines in "Young Lochinvar" to read: "And now am I come with this pretty maid To dance but one measure, drink one lemonade."

[160] *Hom. Il. 2.2* (quoted by mistake for *Hom. Il. 10.1*) and *Hom. Il. 10.13, 14*: "Then all the other immortals and all the horse-crested heroes Night-long slumbered, but Zeus the sweet sleep held not. . ." *Hom. Il. 2.1, 2* "Yea, when indeed he gazed at the Trojan plain, Agamemnon Marvelled at voices of flutes and of pipes and the din of the soldiers." *Hom. Il. 10.13, 14* Problem: "If all were asleep, who was playing the flute?" Solution: "This may be a metaphor; as explained in chapter 21, "all" is one kind or species of "many", and thus by transference "all" is used for "many", the species for the genus."

[161] *Hom. Il. 18.489*: "She alone of all others shares not in the baths of the Ocean." The reference is to the Great Bear. Problem: "Why does Homer say "she alone" when the other Northern Constellations also do not set?" Solution: "As in the last instance, the may be "metaphorical," i.e., the genus, "sole," may be here used by transference for one of its species, "best known.""

[162] *Hom. Il. 2.15*. Our text is different. Aristotle, who quotes the line again elsewhere, read thus: "No longer the gods in the halls of Olympus Strive in their plans, for Hera has bent them all to her purpose Thus by her prayers; and we grant him to win the boast of great glory." Zeus is instructing the Dream, whom he is sending to lure Agamemnon to disaster. Problem: "The last statement is a lie." Solution: "Change the accent and the statement *δίδομεν δέ οἱ* becomes a command (the infinitive *διδόμεναι* written in a shortened form and used as an imperative). The lie will then be told by the Dream and not by Zeus, who may thus save his reputation for veracity."

[163] *Hom. Il. 23.327*: "A fathom high from the earth there rises a stump all withered, A stump of an oak or a pine, that rots not at all in the rain." Problem: "The last statement is incredible." Solution: "Alter the breathing and *τὸ μὲν οὗ* becomes *τὸ μὲν οὗ* and means "part of it rots in the rain.""

commingled."[164]
Or again by ambiguity, e.g. παρῴχηκεν δὲ πλέω νύξ, where πλείω is ambiguous.[165]
Others according to the habitual use of the phrase, e.g. wine and water is called "wine" so you get the phrase "greaves of new-wrought tin";[166] or workers in iron are called "braziers," and so Ganymede is said to pour wine for Zeus, though they do not drink wine. This last might however be metaphorical.[167]
Whenever a word seems to involve a contradiction, one should consider how many different meanings it might bear in the passage, e.g. in "There the bronzen shaft was stayed,"[168] we should ask in how many ways "being stayed" might be taken,
interpreting the passage in this sense or in that,
and keeping as far as possible from the attitude which Glaucon[169] describes when he says that people make some unwarrantable presupposition and having themselves given an adverse verdict proceed to argue from it, and if what they think the poet has said does not agree with their own preconceived ideas, they censure him, as if that was what he had said.
This is what has happened in the case of Icarius.[170] They assume that

[164]The Problem is "erstwhile" goes with "pure" or with "commingled." The former interpretation seems to give the best solution. Empedocles is speaking of the elements or atoms.

[165]*Hom. Il. 10.252*: "Come now, the night is far spent and at hand is the dawning, Far across are the stars and more than two parts of the night-time Are gone, but a third is still left us." Problem: If "more than two parts" are gone, a third cannot be left. Solution: πλέω here means "full," i.e., " the full night of two-thirds" = "full two-thirds of the night is gone," and so Homer's arithmetic is saved.

[166]Problem: "Greaves are made not of tin but of an alloy of tin and copper." Solution: "Compounds are called by the name of the more important partner. Just as a mixture of wine and water is called "wine," so here an alloy of tin and copper is called "tin."" So, too, is whisky and water called "whisky."

[167]Nectar:gods :: wine: men. Therefore, according to the rules of metaphor in chapter 21, nectar may be called "wine" or "the wine of the gods."

[168]*Hom. Il. 20.272*: "Nay but the weighty shaft of the warlike hero Aeneas Brake not the shield; for the gold, the gift of a god, did withstand it. Through two folds it drave, yet three were beneath, for Hephaestus, Crook-footed god, five folds had hammered; two were of bronze-work, Two underneath were of tin and one was of gold; there the bronzen Shaft of the hero was stayed in the gold." Problem: "Since the gold was presumably outside for the sake of ornament, how could the spear he stayed in the gold and yet penetrate *two* folds?" Bywater suggests as a solution that "the plate of gold sufficed to stop the course of the spear, though the spear-point actually pierced it and indented the underlying plates of brass."

[169]This may well be the Glaucon mentioned in Plato's *Ion* as an authority on Homer.

he was a Spartan and therefore find it odd that when Telemachus went to Sparta he did not meet him. But the truth may be, as the Cephallenians say, that Odysseus married a wife from their country and that the name was not Icarius but Icadius. So the objection is probably due to a mistake.

In general any "impossibility" may be defended by reference to the poetic effect or to the ideal or to current opinion.

For poetic effect a convincing impossibility is preferable to that which is unconvincing though possible.

It may be impossible that there should be such people as Zeuxis[171] used to paint, but it would be better if there were; for the type should improve on the actual.

Popular tradition may be used to defend what seems irrational, and you can also say that sometimes it is not irrational, for it is likely that unlikely things should happen.

Contradictions in terms must be examined in the same way as an opponent's refutations in argument, to see whether the poet refers to the same thing in the same relation and in the same sense, and has contradicted either what he expressly says himself or what an intelligent person would take to be his meaning.

It is right, however, to censure both improbability and depravity where there is no necessity and no use is made of the improbability.An example is Euripides' intro duction of Aegeus[172] or(of depravity)the character of Menelans in the *Orestes*.

The censures they bring are of five kinds; that things are either impossible or irrational or harmful or inconsistent or contrary to artistic correctness. The solutions must be studied under the heads specified above, twelve in number.[173]

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[170]Penelope's father.

[171]See *Aristot. Poet. 6.15.*

[172]*Eur. Medea 663.* In Aristotle's opinion there is no good reason for Aegeus's appearance and no good use is made of it.

[173]i.e., any expression that is criticized should be considered with reference to (1) things as they were; (2) things as thy are; (3) things as they are said to be; (4) things as they seem to be; (5) things as they ought to be. Further, we should consider whether (6) a rare word or (7) a metaphor is used; what is the right (8) accent and (9) punctuation; also where there may be (10) ambiguity and what is (11) the habitual use of the phrase; also we may refer to (12) the proper standard of correctness in poetry as distinct from other arts.

Chapter 26

The question may be raised whether the epic or the tragic form of representation is the better.

If the better is the less vulgar and the less vulgar is always that which appeals to the better audience, then obviously the art which makes its appeal to everybody is eminently vulgar.[174]

And indeed actors think the audience do not understand unless they put in something of their own, and so they strike all sorts of attitudes, as you see bad flute-players whirling about if they have to do "the Discus," or mauling the leader of the chorus when they are playing the "Scylla."[175]

So tragedy is something like what the older school of actors thought of their successors, for Mynniscus used to call Callippides "the monkey," because he overacted, and the same was said of Pindarus.[176]

The whole tragic art, then, is to epic poetry what these later actors were compared to their predecessors, since according to this view epic appeals to a cultivated audience which has no need of actor's poses, while tragedy appeals to a lower class. If then it is vulgar, it must obviously be inferior.

First of all, this is not a criticism of poetry but of acting: even in reciting a minstrel can overdo his gestures, as Sosistratus did, or in a singing competition, like Mnasitheus of Opus.[177]

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[174] Aristotle first states the popular condemnation of tragedy on the ground that it can be and often is spoilt by the stupid vulgarity of actors. So might spectators of certain productions of Shakespeare in their haste condemn the poet. The refutation of this view begins at 6.

[175] Cf. *Aristot. Poet. 15.8*

[176] Mynniscus acted for Aeschylus: Callippides belonged to the next generation, end of fifth century. Pindarus is unknown.

Besides it is not all attitudinizing that ought to be barred any more than all dancing, but only the attitudes of inferior people. That was the objection to Callippides; and modern actors are similarly criticized for representing women who are not ladies.

Moreover, tragedy fulfils its function even without acting, just as much as epic, and its quality can be gauged by reading aloud. So, if it is in other respects superior, this disadvantage is not necessarily inherent.

Secondly, tragedy has all the elements of the epic

—it can even use the hexameter—and in addition a considerable element of its own in the spectacle and the music, which make the pleasure all the more vivid;

and this vividness can be felt whether it is read or acted.

Another point is that it attains its end with greater economy of length. What is concentrated is always more effective than what is spread over a long period; suppose, for example, Sophocles' *Oedipus* were to be turned into as many lines as there are in the *Iliad*.

Again, the art of the epic has less unity, as is shown by the fact that any one epic makes several tragedies. The result is that, if the epic poet takes a single plot, either it is set forth so briefly as to seem curtailed, or if it conforms to the limit of length[178] it seems thin and diluted.

In saying that epic has less unity I mean an epic made up of several separate actions.

The *Iliad* has many such parts and so has the *Odyssey*, and each by itself has a certain magnitude. And yet the composition of these poems is as perfect as can be and each of them is—as far as an epic may be—a representation of a single action.

If then tragedy is superior in these respects and also in fulfilling its artistic function—for tragedies and epics should produce not any form of pleasure but the pleasure we have described[179]—then obviously, since it attains its object better than the epic, the better of the two is tragedy.

This must suffice for our treatment of tragedy and epic, their characteristics, their species, their constituent parts, and their number and attributes; for the causes of success and failure; and for critical problems and their solutions. . . .

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[177] Both unknown.

[178] Literally "the length of the (proper) limit."

[179] i.e., the pleasure felt when by the representation of life in art "relief is given" to pity, fear, and other such emotions, or, to use a term now prevalent, when such emotions are "released."Cf. *Aristot. Poet. 14.3.*

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