

**ARISTOTLE'S POETICS :  
LITERALLY TRANSLATED,  
WITH EXPLANATORY  
NOTES AND AN ANALYSIS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649756117

Aristotle's poetics : literally translated, with explanatory notes and an analysis by Aristotle

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**ARISTOTLE**

**ARISTOTLE'S POETICS :  
LITERALLY TRANSLATED,  
WITH EXPLANATORY  
NOTES AND AN ANALYSIS**



ARISTOTLE'S  
**P O E T I C S,**

LITERALLY TRANSLATED,

WITH

*EXPLANATORY NOTES,*

AND

AN ANALYSIS.

---

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR G. & W. E. WHITTAKER,

BY N. BLISS, 21, WATER LANE,

FLEET STREET.

1819.

Stack  
Annex

PA

3893

P5E5

1819

## P R E F A C E.

---

**T**HE following translation of Aristotle's Poetics is intended solely for the use of Students. The chief object which it has in view, is a strict adherence to the original, for the attainment of which, the English idiom is frequently, nay generally sacrificed. It is very obvious that this circumstance must render it a work of no elegance, but it was never intended to be such. It was written for the express purpose of assisting those, who might be desirous of reading the book, for their instruction, both in the language and matter; and this end is most readily attained by attending to the exact meaning of every word in the original, rather than by giving what is called a free translation, that the sentences may be neatly rounded.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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