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For example:

Aristotle’s Poetics, translation and commentary in progress, Chapter 3

January 28, 2016 By Gregory Nagy Comments off

In the postings for 2015.11.27 and 2016.01.21, I translated and commented on Chapters 1 and 2 of Aristotle’s Poetics. In the posting here for 2016.01.28, I continue by translating and commenting on Chapter 3. For my overall strategy, I refer back to my Introduction in the posting for 2015.11.27.

Introduction

In the postings for 2015.11.27 and 2016.01.21, I translated and commented on Chapters 1 and 2 of Aristotle’s Poetics. In the posting here for 2016.01.28, I continue by translating and commenting on Chapter 3. For my overall strategy, I refer back to my Introduction in the posting for 2015.11.27.

Aristotle’s Poetics Chapter 3

Ἐν τοῖς τρίτης διαφοράς τὸ ως ἔκαστα τούτων, 1448a.20 μιμήσατο ἄν τις, καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ μιμεῖθαι ἐστιν ὅτι μὲν ἀπαγγέλλοντα, ἤ ἔτερον τι γιγνόμενον ὄψιν ὃν τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ μὴ μεταβάλλοντα, ἢ πάντως ὡς πράττοντας καὶ ἐνεργοῦντας τοὺς μιμουμένους, ἐν τριάς δὴ ταύτας διαφοράς ἡ μιμήσης ἐστιν. 1448a.25 ὡς εἴπομεν κατ' ἀρχής, ἐν τοῖς τε <καὶ δὲ> καὶ ἄστε τὸ μὲν ὁ αὐτὸς ἐν εἰς μιμήσῃ Ὄμηρος Σοφικῆς, μιμοῦται γὰρ ἄμφω σπουδάζοις, τῇ δὲ Ἀριστοφάνει, πράττοντά γὰρ μιμοῦνται καὶ δρώντας ἄμφω. θέναν καὶ δρῶμα καλεῖσθαι τινὲς αὐτὰς φασιν, ὅτι μιμοῦνται δρώντας, διὸ καὶ 1448a.30 ἀντιποίονται τῆς τε τραγῳδίας καὶ τῆς κωμῳδίας οἱ δωρείς (τῆς μὲν γὰρ κωμῳδίας οἱ μεγαρεῖς οί τε ἐναύθα ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς παρ’ αὐτοῖς δημοκρατίας γενομένης καὶ οί ἐκ Σικελίας, ἐκεῖθεν γὰρ ἦν Ἐπίχριμος ὁ ποιητής πολύν πρότερον ἦν Χιωνίδου καὶ Μάγνητος· καὶ τῆς τραγῳδίας ἔνοι 1448a.35 τῶν ἐν Πελατοπονησίῳ ποιομένων τὰ ἄνωτα σημείον· αὐτοὶ μὲν γὰρ κώμας τὰς περιοδίκας καλεῖσθαι φασιν, Ἀθηναίους δὲ δήμους, ἣς κωμῳδίας οίκῳ ἀπὸ τοῦ κωμιδῶν λεγέντας ἀλλὰ τῇ κατὰ κώμας πλάνη ἀτήμωμον γειτὸν τοῦ ἄστεως· 1448b.1 καὶ τὸ ποιεῖν αὐτοὶ μὲν ἄκρως, Ἀθηναίους δὲ πράττεις προαγορεύειν. περὶ μὲν αὐτῶν τὰ διαφορὰν καὶ πόσαι καὶ τίνες τῇ μιμήσεως εἰρηθαν ταῦτα.

1448a Besides these things, there is a third difference [diaphorā], which is, the actual way in which one makes-mimesis [mimelthai] of each and every thing. So, you see, it is possible to make-mimesis [mimelthai] of the same things by using the same media, as when one makes-mimesis by being-the-narrator [ap–angellein]—or by becoming some other thing. That is just exactly the way Homer composes [poieîn]. He either makes a mimesis of his own same self [as narrator] and thus does not get transformed [into some other thing = character], or he makes a mimesis of any and all persons...
who are in the act of doing things [prattein] and engaging-in-the action [energēin] as they thus make-their own -mimesis [mimēsthai] of themselves.[1] So, now we see that there are these three differences [diaphorai] that constitute mimesis [mimēsis], as we said from the start: (1) what forms are used for representation, (2) what things are represented, and (3) how does the representation happen. So, in one way, Sophocles would be the same kind of a master-of-mimesis [mimētēs] as Homer, since both of them make-mimesis [mimēsthai] of noble [spoudaiol] persons; in another way, Sophocles would be the same kind of a master-of-mimesis as Aristophanes, since both make a mimesis of persons in the act of doing [prattontes] things and performing-deeds [drân]. It is for this reason, some say, that these things are called 'dramas' [drāmata], since they [= Sophocles and Aristophanes] make-mimesis [mimēsthai] of people who are performing-deeds [drân]. And it is for this reason this reason that the Dorians claim as their own both tragedy and comedy (you see, the [Dorian] people of Megara claim comedy—both those [Megarians] here [in Greece proper], who say that it originated in the era of their democracy, and those [Megarians] from Sicily, since the poet [poītēs] Epicharmus, who is much earlier than Chionides and Magnes, was from there—and certain Dorians in the Peloponnesus claim tragedy [as well as comedy]), and they consider the words [for tragedy and comedy] to be evidence [sēmeion]. They say that they call their outlying settlements [periokis plural] kōmai, but that the Athenians [call them] dēmoi, and they assume that kōmēdiō or 'performers-of-comedy' were so called not from kōmazein, 'to revel', but because they wandered from 1448b settlement [kōmē] to settlement [= kata kōmēs], dishonorably excluded from the city [astu]. And they say that the Dorian word for poiein or 'to do' is drân, while the corresponding Athenian word is prattein. With regard to speaking about the distinctions [diaphorai] to be made about how many kinds of mimesis [mimēsis] there are, let these things [as I have just spoken them] be spoken.

Notes

[1] When 'Homer' makes mimesis of himself, he is speaking as the character of 'Homer' the narrator. But when he makes mimesis of characters who figure in the action of what he narrates, then he is speaking as those characters. Then he becomes transformed into 'some other thing', and that 'some other thing' is whatever character is speaking when quoted, as it were, by 'Homer'. In Aristotle's view of mimesis, when characters in the narrative are represented as acting and even speaking in their own right, they are representing their own characters just as Homer is representing his own character when he speaks as a narrator. [[GN 2016.01.28.]]

Tags: Aristotle, Commentary, Poetics

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