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

The Harvard community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you. Your story matters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citable link</td>
<td><a href="http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:39699961">http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:39699961</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terms of Use</td>
<td>This article was downloaded from Harvard University’s DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Other Posted Material, as set forth at <a href="http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA">http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#LAA</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Classical Inquiries**

**Editors:** Angelia Hanhardt and Keith Stone  
**Consultant for Images:** Jill Curry Robbins  
**Online Consultant:** Noel Spencer

**About**

*Classical Inquiries (CI)* is an online, rapid-publication project of Harvard's Center for Hellenic Studies, devoted to sharing some of the latest thinking on the ancient world with researchers and the general public.

While articles archived in DASH represent the original *Classical Inquiries* posts, *CI* is intended to be an evolving project, providing a platform for public dialogue between authors and readers. Please visit [http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.eresource:Classical_Inquiries](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.eresource:Classical_Inquiries) for the latest version of this article, which may include corrections, updates, or comments and author responses.

Additionally, many of the studies published in *CI* will be incorporated into future CHS publications. Please visit [http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.eresource:CHS.Online_Publishing](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.eresource:CHS.Online_Publishing) for a complete and continually expanding list of open access publications by CHS.

*Classical Inquiries* is published under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/). Every effort is made to use images that are in the public domain or shared under Creative Commons licenses. Copyright on some images may be owned by the Center for Hellenic Studies. Please refer to captions for information about copyright of individual images.

**Citing Articles from Classical Inquiries**

To cite an article from *Classical Inquiries*, use the author’s name, the date, the title of the article, and the following persistent identifier:  
[http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.eresource:Classical_Inquiries](http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.eresource:Classical_Inquiries).

For example:

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

January 28, 2016 By Gregory Nagy listed under By Gregory Nagy

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

'Ετι δὲ τούτων τρίτη διαφορά τὸ ὡς ἔκσαστα τούτων 1448a.20 μιμήσαι ἂν τις, καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ μιμεῖσθαι ἔστιν ὅτι μὲν ἀπαγγέλλοντα, ἢ ἔπερον τι γιγνόμενον ὥσπερ Ὄμηρος ποιεῖ ἢ ἦς τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ μὴ μεταβάλλοντα, ἢ πάντως ὡς πράττοντα καὶ ἐνεργοῦντας τοὺς μιμούμενους, ἐν τριάδι δὴ ταύταις διαφοραῖς ἢ μίμησις ἔστιν, 1448a.25 ὡς εἶπομεν κατ᾽ ἄρχας, ἐν οἷς τε <καὶ ἄ> καὶ ἄ, ὡστε τῇ μὲν ὁ αὐτὸς ἄν εἰς μιμησὶς Ὄμηρος Σικελίας, μιμοῦται γὰρ ἁμφότερος, πη δὲ Ἀριστοφάνει, πράττοντας γὰρ μιμοῦται καὶ δράντας ἄμερως. ἰδον καὶ δράματα καλεῖσθαι τινὲς αὐτὰ φασιν, ὅτι μιμοῦται δράντος, διὸ καὶ 1448b.30 ἀντιπαροίκουται τῇ τε τραγῳδίᾳ καὶ τῇ κωμῳδίᾳ αἱ δωρίες (τὴς μὲν γάρ κωμῳδίας αἱ Μεγαρεῖς οἱ τε ἐνταῦθα ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς παρ᾽ αὐτοῖς δημοκρατίας γενομένης καὶ αἱ ἐκ Σικελίας, ἐκεῖθεν γὰρ ἦν Ἑπίχριμος ὃ ποιήσης πολὺ πρότερος ἢν Χιώνιδου καὶ Μάγνητος· καὶ τῆς τραγῳδίας ἐνόι 1448b.35 τῶν ἐν Πελοποννησίῳ) ποιομένου τὸ ἀνόματα σημεῖον· αὐτοῖς μὲν γὰρ κώμας τὰς περιοδικὰς καλεῖν φασιν, Ἀθηναίους δὲ δῆμους, ὡς κωμῳδοῦς οὐκ ἀπὸ τοῦ κωμάξεως λεγέντας ἀλλὰ τῇ κατὰ κώμας πλὴν ἁμαινομένους ἐκ τοῦ ἄτοσκος· 1448b.1 καὶ τὸ ποιεῖν αὐτὸν μὲν δράνιν, Ἀθηναίους δὲ πράττειν προσαγορεύειν. πρὶν μὲν οὖν τῶν διαφορῶν καὶ πῆςα καὶ τίνες τῆς μιμήσεως ἐλθθά τοῖς.

1448a Besides these things, there is a third difference [diaphorā], which is, the actual way in which one makes-mimesis [mimelēthai] of each and every thing. So, you see, it is possible to make-mimesis [mimelēthai] 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 [energein] 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
[poiētēs] 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] démoi, and they assume that kōndidoi or
'performers-of-comedy' were so called not from kōmazēin, '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 poiēin 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

Comments are closed.