

The Author Writes Back (and Speaks Up)

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The author speaks and writes back against his or her metaphorical death. Aristotle's Poetics is helpful for this context when it discusses the effect that the poet's plot and character have on the audience. Literary and non-literary texts involve a dramatic engagement between author and audience.

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People write and read or tell stories and listen to them, so that there is a rhetorical contract and dual function of written and oral culture. In our lives we change in what Jacques in his “All the world’s a stage” speech in Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* calls the “seven ages” (see Shakespeare, ed. G. B. Evans, *ALYI* II. vii. 139–66). Children become women and men, and many write and read many different types of works. As someone who writes what bookstores call fiction and non-fiction and who publishes regularly in the fields of poetry, criticism and theory, and history and who reads as widely as possible, I am just another person who has the drama of reading and writing, speaking and hearing going on. Like the kings in medieval political theology, we all have two bodies, mortal and immortal, or in terms more in tune with modern parlance, dead and alive (see Kantorowicz 1957, rpt. 1997). Characters outlive their authors and readers, and so a new generation has to embody them and engage with them in a drama of meaning. The author is dead. Long live the author. Who is also a reader and whose writing and reading, speaking and listening have many aspects.

So while I am not playing a variation on Luigi Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, I do think that as refracted as the relation is between authors and their characters and authors’ fictions and their world, the lives of authors and readers matter (see Pirandello). Perhaps as a balance to Socrates’ scepticism about poets and how they imitate more than they know, I am interested in bringing to bear Aristotle’s analysis in *Poetics* of the effect that the poet’s creation of plot and character has on the audi-

ence before a brief discussion of other kinds of texts. Literature, philosophy, history as well as sacred texts, psychology and other works involve a dramatic engagement between author and audience.

Anagnorisis, which is a major focus of this article, occurs in the character and in the audience, and catharsis is the fear and pity that the representation of tragedy purges from the audience. In addition to Aristotle and poetics, I will raise the cognate world of rhetoric, which he defined as the art of persuasion, but which is also, in my terms, the relation between speaker and audience, writer and audience. As in poetics, in rhetoric, there is the drama of meaning in the tension between and alignment of author and reader or author and audience. The author as maker is also related in less obvious and direct ways to the author as person. The unconscious world of Freud, and the world of symbols, complicates the conscious mind in its attempt to reason and make sense of literary and other forms of experience.

To return to rhetoric for a moment, Aristotle connects it with another key form: "Rhetoric is the counterpart of Dialectic" (Aristotle, Roberts, trans. 1354A, p. 3; see McAdon). He sees this as being part of the common state of humanity: "Both alike are concerned with such things as come, more or less, within the general ken of all men and belong to no definite science." Rhetoric has practical ends. Both dialectic and rhetoric are part of civic, political and everyday discourse: "Accordingly all men make use, more or less, of both; for to a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others." To persuade is, as Aristotle emphasizes repeatedly, the end of the rhetoric: "rhetorical study, in its strict sense, is concerned with the modes of persuasion. Persuasion is clearly a sort of demonstration, since we are most fully persuaded when we consider a thing to have been demonstrated" (1355a). Representing the truth is, contrary to popular belief, central to the role of rhetoric:

Rhetoric is useful (1) because things that are true and things that are just have a natural tendency to prevail over their opposites, so that if the decisions of judges are not what they ought to be, the defeat must be due to the speakers themselves, and they must be blamed accordingly. Moreover, (2) before some audiences not even the possession of the exactest knowledge will make it easy for what we say to produce conviction. For argument based on knowledge implies instruction, and there are people whom one cannot instruct. Here, then, we must use, as our modes of persuasion and argument, notions possessed by everybody, as we observed in the *Topics* when dealing with the way to handle a popular audience. Further, (3) we must be able to employ persuasion, just as strict reasoning can be employed, on opposite sides of a question, not in order that we may in practice employ it in both ways (for we must not make people believe what is wrong), but

in order that we may see clearly what the facts are, and that, if another man argues unfairly, we on our part may be able to confute him. No other of the arts draws opposite conclusions: dialectic and rhetoric alone do this. Both these arts draw opposite conclusions impartially (1355a).

Rhetoric had forensic origins in the Greek settlement in Sicily. A lawyer represents his case to the judge in order to present the truth. Knowing both sides of an argument is a means of knowing how best to present the truth. That representative needs to know his audience in court just as a playwright does in a theatre. Rhetoric is a means to truth, and legal representation, at least in Aristotle, is not a matter of sophistry (on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*; see Arnhart, Atwill, Brandes, Burns, Clayton, Erickson, *Aristotle; Aristotle's*; "A Bib.," Farrell, Garver, Green, Haskins, Hultzåen, Hunt, Leff, Levin, London, Moss, Neel, Newman, Poulakos, Roberts, "Notes"; "Ref.," Rorty, Speight, Wildermuth, Wisse). Plato is less convinced that rhetoricians are not Sophists. In both cases, the relation of the speaker and the audience is vital in the representation and misrepresentation of truth. It may well be that recognition is a means to the truth of poetry or art in the theatre for Aristotle, although Plato is sceptical, particularly in the tenth book of *Republic* (see Plato, trans. F. Cornford, Book X, 595 A–608 B). Rhetoric and *mimesis* (representation) are places where Plato and Aristotle differ.

The question of representation has a long and vexed history. Rather than enter this enduring debate in a general sense, I wish to focus on how art and life, that is how the author makes art from life and even in opposition to it. There is no escaping his or her life, no ready escape from personality as T. S. Eliot would have it, because the poet writes in genres. So while there is some truth to Eliot's declaration – "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" – he or she paradoxically invests in life through representations of action and character (Eliot, section 1, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," 1920). While these have conventions and rules and are in this sense impersonal, the poet expresses a confidence in life by representing plot and character and even anti-plot and anti-character. The death of the author is really, like the death of God or the death of the novel, a metaphor for how one would think of a world or a fictional world without authors, God or the persistence of novels.

The author represents or imitates and provides, perhaps, a discovery. Translations into English render *mimesis* variously into "representation" or "imitation." The Loeb translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* of 1927 into English renders a key sentence thus: "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.’” Another translation by Butcher (last edition in 1911) gives the sentence as “Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy also and Dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation.” In Butcher’s translation, Aristotle says that these genres or modes “differ, however, from one another in three respects – the medium, the objects, the manner or mode of imitation, being in each case distinct.” Aristotle also adds that “For as there are persons who, by conscious art or mere habit, imitate and represent various objects through the medium of color and form, or again by the voice; so in the arts above mentioned, taken as a whole, the imitation is produced by rhythm, language, or ‘harmony,’ either singly or combined.” Representation, even in Aristotle’s view, can be unconscious or conscious.

“Mimesis,” mostly translated as “representation” or “imitation,” is refractory and complex and not some simple one to one correspondence between word or image and the world. To see mimesis otherwise is to reduce it. In chapter two, Aristotle views representation in terms of different poets and their practices, which he relates to genre: “Since the objects of imitation are men in action, and these men must be either of a higher or a lower type (for moral character mainly answers to these divisions, goodness and badness being the distinguishing marks of moral differences), it follows that we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are.” Homer and the other epic and tragic poets represent people better than they are, whereas the comic and satiric poets, less than they are (see Frobish). Aristotle says: “Homer, for example, makes men better than they are; Cleophon as they are; Hegemon the Thasian, the inventor of parodies, and Nicochares, the author of the *Deiliad*, worse than they are.” Moreover, later, Aristotle is explicit in relating genre to representing the world: “The same distinction marks off Tragedy from Comedy; for Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life.” Aristotle connects morality, character, action and genre. The implication is that the aesthetic is ethical and that art is measured according to how much it is like the world (see Oates, Randall, Tessitore). The author is a person representing persons, and the higher the art, the more the characters are better than people in life. “Representing life as it is” lies somewhere between in the hierarchy of Aristotle’s art. Representation is not, then, a slavish reproduction of reality.

Nor is the author, according to Aristotle, solid and simple. Instead, the author has a number of options available. In chapter 3, he says: “the poet may imitate by narration – in which case he can either take another personality as Homer does, or speak in his own person, unchanged – or he

may present all his characters as living and moving before us.” The poet has many options and his or her art does not do one thing. The person and persona mean that a human representing the human may express himself or herself as a person or enact another personality or present a drama of characters in action before the audience. Drama especially allows for embodiment when person and character in the actor show what the author has presented, usually having erased himself or herself, to a live audience that has members who act as the people they are but also as individuals and a body that is part of the performance of the play. The actual performance is not the same as the rehearsal mainly because of the audience. Aristotle is clear on the functions of representation that may mean one author can be like other ones in different ways: “These, then, as we said at the beginning, are the three differences which distinguish artistic imitation – the medium, the objects, and the manner.” Aristotle then gives an example: “So that from one point of view, Sophocles is an imitator of the same kind as Homer – for both imitate higher types of character; from another point of view, of the same kind as Aristophanes – for both imitate persons acting and doing.” Thus, Aristotle reminds us of the relation between drama and action: “Hence, some say, the name of ‘drama’ is given to such poems, as representing action.” The actors are part of an action. In the dynamic theatre of meaning, writer, character and audience partake in the continuum between enactment and re-enactment.

In Aristotle’s view, poetry sprung from two elements deep in human nature – imitation and harmony and rhythm. It came to be divided in two main parts. For Aristotle, there is a relation between the character of the author and the choice of genre. In chapter 4, it is also clear what genres and character traits that Aristotle prizes most: “Poetry now diverged in two directions, according to the individual character of the writers. The graver spirits imitated noble actions, and the actions of good men. The more trivial sort imitated the actions of meaner persons, at first composing satires, as the former did hymns to the gods and the praises of famous men.” Aristotle, however, shows that the poet is not simply given to one kind of writing. Homer, who had been the target of Socrates’ critique of poets and poetry, once more becomes a key example: “As, in the serious style, Homer is pre-eminent among poets, for he alone combined dramatic form with excellence of imitation so he too first laid down the main lines of comedy, by dramatizing the ludicrous instead of writing personal satire.” Aristotle shows the range of the Homeric reach: “His *Margites* bears the same relation to comedy that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do to tragedy.” The development of drama came to complicate matters in Aristotle’s account: “But when Tragedy and Comedy came to light, the two classes of poets still

followed their natural bent: the lampooners became writers of Comedy, and the Epic poets were succeeded by Tragedians, since the drama was a larger and higher form of art.” Homer could, like Shakespeare after him, express a wide range of experiences from the ludicrous to the solemn. Genre is a register of possibility, a scale on which author and audience interact in the play of meaning. There is a play in the sense of give and in the ludic aspect.

It is also too cursory to dismiss comedy as not being worthy. When Aristotle is writing, there seems to be less of a history of comedy or the critical assessment of this genre. This implies its lack of framework and not of worth. In chapter 5 of *Poetics*, Aristotle implies that he and others think comedy is important even if he seems to favour tragedy: “The successive changes through which Tragedy passed, and the authors of these changes, are well known, whereas Comedy has had no history, because it was not at first treated seriously.” Just because Aristotle might rate one genre above another does not mean that he devalues or attacks another. His method is famously analytical, and by showing how something works, Aristotle does it justice and increases its profile and our understanding of it. Aristotle’s analysis gives credibility to the art of the poet whereas in the tenth book of *Republic*, the Platonic Socrates does not see the benefits of this art unless poetry should be plainly in the service of the republic. Plato’s poet as imitator only seems to have knowledge and may distract the philosopher and the ideal state from truth.

Aristotle’s technical repertoire implies that poetry has craft and skill that are as worthy to study as any of the other subjects he studies, like politics and physics, in his other books. His focus is tragedy, which, like epic, has a strong aristocratic element. He does not object on ideological or practical grounds as Plato did or as we might find in the English-speaking world in the wake of a kind of run-down version of utilitarianism that Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill might not recognize. Representation is historical and culturally specific in Aristotle even if his views have had wide implications for millennia. The main shifts have been religious and linguistic, through Christianity in the Latin West as well as through the Orthodox East. Moreover, in Europe generally and the West earlier on, industrialization and the move to democracy through revolution and reform have led people, as Arthur Miller realized, to consider whether there can be the tragedy of the common man (Miller 1949, rpt. 1977, 147). Mimesis in the tragic genre involves catharsis: “Tragedy, then, is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude; in language embellished with each kind of artistic ornament, the several kinds being found in separate parts of the play; in the form of action, not of narrative; through

pity and fear effecting the proper purgation of these emotions.” The dramatist has a dramatic contract with the audience to represent an action that effects a purging of feelings in the audience. Plot or action drives tragedy. For Aristotle, “Tragedy is the imitation of an action; and an action implies personal agents, who necessarily possess certain distinctive qualities both of character and thought; for it is by these that we qualify actions themselves, and these – thought and character – are the two natural causes from which actions spring, and on actions again all success or failure depends.” As plot is central to the argument, Aristotle clarifies its meaning in relation to character and thought: “Hence, the Plot is the imitation of the action – for by plot I here mean the arrangement of the incidents. By Character I mean that in virtue of which we ascribe certain qualities to the agents. Thought is required wherever a statement is proved, or, it may be, a general truth enunciated.” Actions spring from thought and character that involves personal agency. Even a matter of structure in Aristotle does not evade the realm of ideas and personality.

There are twists and turns in Aristotle. There are subtle relations that he sets out with a series of qualifications. He defines and amplifies: “Tragedy is an imitation, not of men, but of an action and of life, and life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality.” It might be hard for us to see how the tragic imitates action and life but not people. This is not as categorical a distinction as it first seems. Aristotle does bring in the question of character: “Now character determines men’s qualities, but it is by their actions that they are happy or the reverse.” What Aristotle seems to be saying is that action is the first principle in life and that character arises from action. In plays, he makes a further observation: “Dramatic action, therefore, is not with a view to the representation of character: character comes in as subsidiary to the actions.” This view leads Aristotle to the following conclusion: “Hence the incidents and the plot are the end of a tragedy; and the end is the chief thing of all.” In keeping with his method of incremental amplification, Aristotle adds something that might be surprising: “Again, without action there cannot be a tragedy; there may be without character.” This observation might lead us to think that Aristotle has, at the last minute, thrown out character, perhaps enacting the death of character or even the author who is expressing and representing character. Aristotle is really thinking about what makes for the successful writing of tragedy: he is writing for readers about the nature of making poetry, and his theoretical views also have practical implications for this audience and the poets themselves: “Again, if you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play

which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents.” The well-made play with a well-constructed plot is the basis for success. Stringing together speeches that express character is not enough. What Aristotle is saying is that get the plot right and character will follow. He also sees the need for ability to write plots and character, but is setting up an analysis of what is primary.

The plot is not such a ready construction. Besides having close relations to thought and character, action has many dimensions. Mimesis involves more than catharsis. Aristotle focuses on some key aspects of plot: “the most powerful elements of emotional interest in Tragedy – Peripeteia or Reversal of the Situation, and Recognition scenes – are parts of the plot.” Peripeteia and anagnorisis involve an about-face and a moment of self-knowledge or knowledge that occurs in the action. The author and the audience share, often in a dramatic irony, a character’s recognition. The character mediates between author and audience in a knowledge that is in drama but also is made by people who have lives outside the drama – the playwright, the actor in question, the acting company and members of the audience. Aristotle finds another way to argue for the primacy or first principle of plot: “A further proof is, that novices in the art attain to finish of diction and precision of portraiture before they can construct the plot. It is the same with almost all the early poets.” The plot becomes a pretext for character and the expression of thought and affects the self-knowledge and knowledge of all the people involved in this performance and its reception, inside and outside the theatre. Although Aristotle is analytical, he presents a scheme that is interactive and dynamic.

Aristotle says more to achieve greater clarity. If in an egalitarian society we might well tend to hide hierarchies, Aristotle has no such qualms. He seeks ways to parse what is most important and what leads to what. In case we missed his hierarchy of elements in tragedy, he states it explicitly: “The plot, then, is the first principle, and, as it were, the soul of a tragedy; Character holds the second place.” If plot comes before character, character comes before thought. *Dianoia* or thought, which is still a key to Aristotle’s tragic domain, is “the faculty of saying what is possible and pertinent in given circumstances.” Aristotle connects poetics and rhetoric. In regards to thought, of expressing possibility and pertinency, he observes: “In the case of oratory, this is the function of the political art and of the art of rhetoric: and so indeed the older poets make their characters speak the language of civic life; the poets of our time, the language of the rhetoricians.” It turns out that although character and thought stem from plot, they are closely tied to it and are part of that vital nexus. Morality and choice are at its core: “Character is that which reveals moral purpose,

showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids.” In a practical sense, to avoid choice is to be without character: “Speeches, therefore, which do not make this manifest, or in which the speaker does not choose or avoid anything whatever, are not expressive of character.” Words can express thought but do not necessarily express character at the same time. For Aristotle, thought “is found where something is proved to be or not to be, or a general maxim is enunciated.” As much as Aristotle wishes to show that plot and thought do not necessarily involve character, they can do so, and this connection is a key to tragedy. As tragedy represents the purging of pity and terror and is thus a knowledge of feelings and how to experience them in art in order to achieve a balance in life, the poet and the audience exist not simply in the putative realm of art but also in actual world of life. Diction, song and spectacle round out the six parts of drama.

Organic unity is a key to life and plot in Aristotle’s poetics. A singleness out of diverse elements makes for the structure a poet should strive to make. Unlike Plato, Aristotle gives Homer a place in the sun, not as a cultural and educational icon who must be displaced, so that philosophy can take its rightful place of leadership in the republic. In chapter 8, Aristotle says, “Homer, as in all else he is of surpassing merit, here too – whether from art or natural genius – seems to have happily discerned the truth.” This verity was the importance of a unified plot: “In composing the *Odyssey* he did not include all the adventures of Odysseus – such as his wound on Parnassus, or his feigned madness at the mustering of the host-incidents between which there was no necessary or probable connection: but he made the *Odyssey*, and likewise the *Iliad*, to center round an action that in our sense of the word is one.” Aristotle draws a general conclusion from this example: “As therefore, in the other imitative arts, the imitation is one when the object imitated is one, so the plot, being an imitation of an action, must imitate one action and that a whole, the structural union of the parts being such that, if any one of them is displaced or removed, the whole will be disjointed and disturbed.” Why is this? According to Aristotle, “For a thing whose presence or absence makes no visible difference, is not an organic part of the whole.” The organic unity was a mainstay of New Criticism, and although others cast doubt on it, whether it is Bertolt Brecht in the alienation or estrangement effect or Roland Barthes’s view of the double sign that call into question the natural and the real in representation, from an poet’s point of view, and I speak as a poet, I see nothing wrong with art that, like a good sonnet, puts in nothing extraneous (see Brecht and Barthes). The tight construction of Shakespeare’s mature history plays, for instance *Richard II*, 1 and 2, *Henry IV* and *Henry*

✓, do seem to get more out of their subject than the episodic chronicle play like *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* (anon. 1598). It is understandable that some of the episodic plays of the twentieth century were as much a reaction to the well-made plays of Eugène Scribe, whose plays appeared in Paris between 1815 and 1830, and Victorien Sardou, whose *Daniel Rochat* (1880) tended more to realism – playwrights Bernard Shaw summed up as “Sardoddledom” in a review of June 1895 – as an opposition to Aristotle.

What I have been trying to show here is that Aristotle’s mimesis allows for representing nature as it is, might be and might not be. The comic exaggerates life and human behaviour in order to make satiric points or to create laughter or effect the block of a Senex or old man to the young lovers in New Comedy and Romantic Comedy from the Renaissance onward. Aristotle is not saying that plays cannot be written otherwise, but he is saying why unified plots make them more effective. There may be exceptions to this rule. It is also true that neo-Aristotelians might have been, as often disciples or those invoking the name of the master are, more zealous in the unities. Lodovico Castelvetro, Antonio Minturno and others are cases in point (Carlson 44–52). Still, even the neo-Aristotelians were not without humour or an appreciation of comedy. Rules and social control can become hardened versions of Aristotle, which can be irksome in egalitarian democracies, but Aristotle gives more of a place in the sun to poetry than Plato does and seems not to have reacted with the same force against Homer as a centre of Greek education. My own propensity is not to come down on the side of neo-classicism or Romanticism or any other period or school of art or poetry. Still, by excavating Aristotle, I am interested in seeing the author unearthed, a little like Lazarus back from the dead.

Nor do I concur with Aristotle’s hierarchy of philosophy above poetry above history because it is the most universal and avoids the particular. Yet there is some truth to Aristotle’s observations, especially if, as a counter-example to the main current of the past thirty or forty years, we assume that the dreaded universals are not the foundation of knowledge and art. At one point, philosophy was said to be a footnote to Plato, and I suppose the biggest footnote was his student, Aristotle. Others might have argued that Plato was a preface to Aristotle. Both insisted on universals, not the minute particulars of William Blake or the particulars of the Annales School in France, where villages became the protagonists, or of micro-history, cultural materialism or new historicism (see Burguière, Ginzburg 1980 and 1999, Brannigan). Blake, for instance, uses the phrase “Minute particulars” in various places in his epic, *Jerusalem*, and says in “A Vision of

the Last Judgement”: “General Knowledge is Remote Knowledge it is in Particulars that Wisdom consists & Happiness too” (Blake, ed. Erdman, 1965). All these historical schools, I can say as a historian as well as a poet and literary critic and theorist, produced suggestive and exciting work. Philip Sidney in the last decades of the sixteenth century, argued that poetry was more universal than philosophy because it moved people through its concrete images to virtuous action (Sidney, see Payne). It was not as abstract as philosophy. In the democratic world of the English-speaking nations, Sidney might be right, even though the political context has changed since his day, because Hamlet reaches more people than the “to be or not to be” of existential philosophy. History is popular because of its particularity, although English speakers might well get their version of the history of the War of the Roses through Shakespeare than through actual histories. The compression and concreteness of much of poetry might well allow for representative art rather than exhaustive documentation. The novel, and the historical novel in this context, would be even more accessible to many. Aristotle and Sidney did not have film or television to make things even more accessible to the audience, even the history plays of Shakespeare as Laurence Olivier’s and Kenneth Branagh’s film versions of *Henry V* make apparent (see Olivier and Branagh). How much is the power of language and the construction of plot and character the reasons for an enduring work? Shakespeare endures, but a wildly popular historical novel or television series might not. What might make it popular at one time will seem quaint and dated at another.

The aesthetic and the historical are persistent concerns in philosophy or literary theory. What does Aristotle say about the relation between poetry and history? Like Plato, Aristotle has much to say about what was, is and might be. In chapter 9, he asserts: “The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with metre no less than without it.” So verse does not distinguish poetry. What is the distinction? “The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen.” Aristotle does not hide his hierarchy: “Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.” He is also explicit in his definition: “By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages.” Poetry takes the universal and attaches a name to it, so that the characters are not as particular as those in history, which has to stick to actual people and events. History is closest to representing the

world, but in what might be surprising to those who criticize Aristotle and his followers or those he has influenced for naturalizing hierarchy and mimesis itself, history finds itself in the bottom of the three places because of its verisimilitude, or at least its particularity. In that way, the historian and his historical personages are not dead but are less likely to achieve the esteem of the universal. Too much character and actuality in this particular might well lead to the death in interest in these historical authors and their actual worlds. Aristotle's comments also explain well the success of Shakespeare's histories: "And even if he chances to take a historical subject, he is none the less a poet; for there is no reason why some events that have actually happened should not conform to the law of the probable and possible, and in virtue of that quality in them he is their poet or maker." The poet has the best of both worlds and although some have tried to kill him off just as they have God, the novel or history in one of a series of "the death of" accounts or critiques, he or she comes back. The question of the author as text function or as person and the relation between poet and audience are refractory. Whatever theorists may say, in the mind of the reading public there are authors and readers. One has to go against the demos to assume they are wrong.

The poetic bond and rhetorical contract bring together author and audience through action, character and thought. The role of plot through reversal and recognition allows for a sharing of knowledge or dramatic irony. In chapter 11, Aristotle defines the about-turn or bringing in the converse in plot: "Reversal of the Situation is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity." Aristotle provides a famous example: "Thus in the Oedipus, the messenger comes to cheer Oedipus and free him from his alarms about his mother, but by revealing who he is, he produces the opposite effect." All comes clear as Oedipus, through this reversal in plot, expresses his thought and character in the form of a recognition.

The question of recognition is a key to the poet's art and the audience's experience. At its centre is the question of knowledge. For Aristotle, "Recognition, as the name indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune." Aristotle amplifies by mentioning again the connection between recognition and reversal: "The best form of recognition is coincident with a Reversal of the Situation, as in the Oedipus." Once more, Aristotle does not limit his observations as he sets out the multifold nature of recognition: "There are indeed other forms. Even inanimate things of the most trivial kind may in a sense be objects of recognition. Again, we may recognize or discover whether a person has done a thing or

not.” Still, he chooses one form of anagnorisis, which he considers to be most effective: “But the recognition which is most intimately connected with the plot and action is, as we have said, the recognition of persons.” The personal is key in Aristotle’s focus on structure, so that although he seems to subjugate character, he in fact binds it to thought and action through plot, which is his first principle. He adds: “This recognition, combined with Reversal, will produce either pity or fear; and actions producing these effects are those which, by our definition, Tragedy represents. Moreover, it is upon such situations that the issues of good or bad fortune will depend.” Anagnorisis can be one-way or two-way and can hinge on people or things.

Recognizing recognition is central to Aristotle’s view of the relations among author, characters and audience. Through plot, but also expressed through the characters’ part in the action and their thoughts expressed through words, a movement towards self-knowledge and knowledge occurs in a drama of meaning that involves the analogous realms of theatre and world. The plot reveals reversals and astonishing changes that involve characters whom the playwright has represented to the audience. The new recognition of situation on the stage among the characters is also something that represents a translation of that knowledge from poet to audience. Ever the anatomist, Aristotle clarifies: “Recognition, then, being between persons, it may happen that one person only is recognized by the other – when the latter is already known – or it may be necessary that the recognition should be on both sides.” Nor is recognition necessarily instant. It can rely on delay or three parts: “Thus Iphigenia is revealed to Orestes by the sending of the letter; but another act of recognition is required to make Orestes known to Iphigenia. Two parts, then, of the Plot – Reversal of the Situation and Recognition – turn upon surprises.” These are the two parts that Aristotle has mentioned before, but he also adds something more: “A third part is the Scene of Suffering. The Scene of Suffering is a destructive or painful action, such as death on the stage, bodily agony, wounds, and the like.” The suffering of tragedy is a human suffering that creates a bond among poet, characters/actors and audience and has an analogue in the silent imaginative world of the reader reading the tragic play. The drama of the human is an embodiment, a lively art that gives meaning and creates a space in theatre, poetry and life for the people and the performance in which they participate.

Aristotle argues for universals above particulars, but he knowingly situates his examples in the contexts and practices of Greek culture. Somehow this historical situation has been able to speak to other historical contexts since. This philosopher has been able to provide recognition through his

discussion of recognition despite differences and changes in language, religion and culture. Even when Aristotle most differs from our views, he still surprises us with some part of his analysis that enables more understanding and knowledge. Even when his ideas are debatable, he prompts debate. In chapter 16, after speaking about character and catharsis and making remarks about the inferiority of women and slaves, which distinguishes his time from ours, Aristotle returns to recognition. He sets out four kinds of anagnorisis: "First, the least artistic form, which, from poverty of wit, is most commonly employed – recognition by signs." One of the examples he gives is Odysseus's scar, which is "made in one way by the nurse, in another by the swineherds." The second is another type of recognition that Aristotle does not value highly: these recognitions are "invented at will by the poet, and on that account wanting in art." Aristotle gives an instance: "Orestes in the *Iphigenia* reveals the fact that he is Orestes. She, indeed, makes herself known by the letter; but he, by speaking himself, and saying what the poet, not what the plot requires. "For Aristotle, the author moves from first principles when straying from maximizing the construction of plot. The third kind of recognition "depends on memory when the sight of some object awakens a feeling" as "in the *Lay of Alcinous*, where Odysseus, hearing the minstrel play the lyre, recalls the past and weeps; and hence the recognition."

The fourth kind of anagnorisis "is by process of reasoning." Aristotle gives examples, including a moment of reasoning in "the *Choephoroi*: 'Some one resembling me has come: no one resembles me but Orestes: therefore Orestes has come.'" Logic becomes part of recognition. Aristotle speaks about "a composite kind of recognition involving false inference on the part of one of the characters, as in the *Odysseus Disguised as a Messenger*. A said [that no one else was able to bend the bow; ... hence B (the disguised Odysseus) imagined that A would] recognize the bow which, in fact, he had not seen; and to bring about a recognition by this means – the expectation that A would recognize the bow – is false inference." The author, character and audience share the power of inference and logic more generally in what is, paradoxically, an emotional scene. Aristotle cannot fail but construct a hierarchy. Thus, he gives the ultimate anagnorisis: "But, of all recognitions, the best is that which arises from the incidents themselves, where the startling discovery is made by natural means." In Aristotle's usual fashion, he gives telling examples: "Such is that in the *Oedipus of Sophocles*, and in the *Iphigenia*; for it was natural that *Iphigenia* should wish to dispatch a letter." Why does Aristotle favour this type of anagnorisis that these instances exemplify? He explains: "These recognitions alone dispense with the artificial aid of tokens or amulets. Next come the

recognitions by process of reasoning.” Aristotle is true to his scheme that plot provides for reversals that lead to the surprise of recognition and that anagnorisis has four types that may also involve a composite. Action best provides recognition as expressed through thought and character in which words and acts are related.

When shifting his attention to epic, the topic of Homer arises once more. Homer is, for Aristotle, an example of an accomplished poet, so much so that Aristotle returns to him as a model. In chapters 23 and 24, Aristotle sings Homer’s praise, saying, for instance, that “In all these respects Homer is our earliest and sufficient model. Indeed each of his poems has a twofold character. The *Iliad* is at once simple and ‘pathetic,’ and the *Odyssey* complex (for Recognition scenes run through it), and at the same time ‘ethical.’” In case this is not enough praise, Aristotle compliments these poems for other important qualities: “Moreover, in diction and thought they are supreme.” In the context of epic, the question of the author and of character arises again as it did in regard to tragedy.

This theme leads Aristotle to exalt Homer even more: “Homer, admirable in all respects, has the special merit of being the only poet who rightly appreciates the part he should take himself.” Aristotle explains further: “The poet should speak as little as possible in his own person, for it is not this that makes him an imitator.” The paradox, Aristotle implies, is that a poet by erasing himself from the equation is better able to create characters that are not simply expressions of himself, and perhaps this is a view that led T. S. Eliot to talk about poet’s escaping from personality. In contra-distinction, according to Aristotle, “Other poets appear themselves upon the scene throughout, and imitate but little and rarely.” The exemplar is clear in Aristotle’s view: “Homer, after a few prefatory words, at once brings in a man, or woman, or other personage; none of them wanting in characteristic qualities, but each with a character of his own” (ch. 24). Well before Oscar Wilde’s *Decay of Lying*, Aristotle is praising Homer for his lies: “It is Homer who has chiefly taught other poets the art of telling lies skilfully” (see Wilde). Anyone doubting Aristotle’s subtlety and flexibility even in the face of his analytical penchant for hierarchies of value should consider his succinct view of impossibility: “the poet should prefer probable impossibilities to improbable possibilities.” Wonder and the irrational are important for poetics in both tragedy and epic, so that Aristotle, who uses logic to speak about reversals and plots generally, recognizes the significance of what is not reason. In chapter 25, Aristotle says that poetry is a subject unto itself with its own sense of right: “the standard of correctness is not the same in poetry and politics.” In chapter 26, Aristotle, after praising Homer at such length, argues that tragedy is

superior to epic, which is Homer's main medium, because it is more concise and unified. Still, Homer comes out well, as if his greatness exempts him from such a general rating of genres: "Yet these poems are as perfect as possible in structure; each is, in the highest degree attainable, an imitation of a single action." The after-life of this author is something Aristotle perpetuates whereas Plato had tried to kill him off in *Republic*.

In reading Aristotle, we wrestle with our own recognitions and misrecognitions. To conclude, I would like to focus on anagnorisis and its life through later authors in different fields. Aristotle has given us tools to read other texts and traditions. I will only give a few brief examples. In the Bible, the vision of recognition takes on many shapes (Bible, Authorized Version). In Genesis, anagnorisis reminds Adam and Eve of their shameful bodies and their fall from grace. Recognition and misrecognition depend on temporal framework. For instance, in the short term, Jacob knows a little of how Esau felt. However, in the long term, he makes his peace and covenant with Laban as God desires it. Reversals and tragic aspects of Jacob's stories are part of a series of falls, reversals (chaos), and triumphs. These all occur within the comic structure that extends within the Bible from Creation and the Fall through the death and resurrection of Christ to the Last Judgement. Recognition also relates to Jesus. He foretells Peter's three denials, which Peter recognizes when the cock crows. On the road to Damascus, Christ speaks to Saul, who has been persecuting Jesus's followers. Here, a light blinds Saul, who hears and changes, sees through his blindness. In Revelation, recognition becomes an aspect of prophecy. It is a vision of the present through future projection and the last of the prophecies. At prison in Patmos, Christ appears to John and creates a revelation in him. John has a vision of heaven, where he sees Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus opens the book of redemption as a great chorus sings of him as the redeemer. John recognizes the triumph of God, through Jesus, over Satan and evil. He sees the end of the fallen world and the advent of the redeemed world, the recognition of the end of exile, pain, and death and the beginning of home, peace, and eternal life.

Epic, tragedy and comedy also show moments of recognition, often through peripeteia or reversal. As we saw in Aristotle, the recognition of Odysseus's scar was well known, so I will focus on Book 24 of *The Iliad*. Here, Priam, asking Achilles to think of his own father and to see similarities between his father's situation and Priam's, kisses the great warrior's hand. With both gestures, Priam asks for Achilles's mercy. Priam leads Achilles to a recognition because he does think of his father and takes the hand of the Trojan king. Their memories join them and make them weep.

The author speaks to the audience through them and shares this recognition: the enemies see each other's humanity (Homer 450–51). In tragedy, Oedipus is blind to his situation until his knowledge actually moves him to blind himself. In the final move toward anagnorisis, the Herdsman who saved the infant Oedipus is ushered in and the Chorus recognizes him. When Oedipus cross-examines the Herdsman, the dramatic irony increases (Sophocles 1152). *Cognitio* is a form of comic recognition or an uncovering of the confusions, disguises, concealments that New Comedy represents. Menander's only complete extant comedy *Dyskolos* (translated as *The Curmudgeon* or as *The Grouch*) represents the killjoy Cnemon, who tries to thwart the lovers under the protection of Pan until this senex falls into a well. This grouch is rescued – and after his *cognitio*, where he recognizes his error and changes his mind, he joins in the dance that celebrates a double wedding (Menander 303–04). Comic structure and laughter allow for a bond between author and audience through the character's recognition of his situation.

Philosophy is also full of recognitions in its quest for knowledge, so anagnorisis can be extended beyond the literary or poetic. The author has many sides. Having focused on Aristotle most, let me turn to Plato briefly. He denies the importance of knowledge through mimesis. Plato's argument against poetry depends in part on a world of forms behind words and on a downgrading of rhetoric into a verbal art of persuasion without the foundation of truth. Francis Cornford aptly sums up the paradox that lies at the centre of the philosophy of the Platonic Socrates: "wisdom begins when a man finds out that he does not know what he thinks he knows" (Plato, *Republic*, Cornford trans., xxix). This self-knowledge occurs through a recognition of one's own ignorance. It resembles the dramatic irony that leads to discovery in the religious and literary texts we have examined. This is also true of other philosophers and can be seen, for example, in Hegel's philosophy of history. His recognition is the dialectics of freedom. Hegel announces: "The History of the World is not the theatre of happiness," and returns to where he began: "The History of the World is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom" (Hegel 537, see 531). In making this statement, Hegel recognizes the pattern of history while admitting that the structure of human time is not yet complete.

History is also a subject that Aristotle concentrated on in *Poetics*. The example of Herodotus brings us back to particulars in the use of recognition to connect author and reader. He made exploration and discovery of the world a central part of his historiography. One aspect of Herodotus's recognition lies in the reader who will find individuated scenes without vast generalizations. Jean de Léry's *History of Brazil* (1578 1st ed., 1580 2nd

ed.) takes up this ethnological aspect that explores otherness and tries to recognize it. He warns of the difficulty of recognition in relation to observing the Tupinamba people in Brazil: "But their gestures and expressions are so completely different from ours, that it is difficult, I confess, to represent them well by writing or by pictures. To have the pleasure of it, then, you will have to go see and visit them in their own country" (Léry 67). The ability to understand the possibility of misrecognition, that is our own potential for blindness and ignorance, is important for understanding the limits of knowledge, including historical knowledge.

Psychology or psychoanalytical texts also express patterns of recognition that engage author and audience in a contract. The case of Sigmund Freud and Julia Kristeva should help make this point. The connection between speaker and audience, author and reader, doctor and patient involves a contract of signs, a space of interpretation, a desire for catharsis and anagnorisis leading to self-knowledge and a wider knowledge that speaker, author and doctor enable through language. We, the readers, overhear, perhaps sometimes overlook and oversee, characters in fiction and patients in cases (presented as characters as Aristotle sets out as representatives), in something like dramatic irony in both cases. We recognize them and ourselves, and their knowledge becomes, to some degree our own, as in a theatre of meaning.

Freud's "On Beginning the Treatment" (1913) is a good place to start. One of the central aspects of psychoanalysis is recognition even if it is not called by that name. Freud asks: "When is the moment for disclosing to him the hidden meaning of the ideas that occur to him, and for initiating him into the postulates and technical procedures of analysis?" (Freud 375). Freud warns that the analyst must build up a rapport with the patient as opposed, in the first interview, to thrusting guesses at the symptoms in the patient's face. For Freud, the patient needs time for recognition. Conscious recognition is not enough. The resistance of the unconscious has to be overcome. By way of communicating repressed material to the consciousness of the patient, psychoanalysis begins a process of thought. Here, the influence of the unconscious recollection ultimately occurs. Only through intense transference that overcomes the resistances has being ill become impossible. This, as Freud presents it, is the ultimate cure or recognition that the analyst enacts in the patient.

Kristeva is interested in the speaking subject underlying meaning and its structures and is mindful of the "discovery of the unconscious." The moment Kristeva chooses to define a subjectivity that can utter, occurs when she is reading Sollers's *H* (1973) and *Sur le matérialisme* (1974). This reading allows her to see the fissures of the split "I" and to rescript the

often rewritten Oedipal myth and the banishment of poets from Plato's utopian republic. Kristeva's recognition here is paradoxical, so that this family romance depends on the family becoming a signifying process that abolishes itself in its becoming, withdrawing before the contradiction of *jouissance* and work. These paradoxes and tensions make author and reader less solid and identifiable. The quest for an identity that is and is not seems endlessly deferred. Reading *H*, Kristeva builds a utopian history that sacrifices the subject on this negativity – rejection – death. It is where all the continents are inextricably mingled and would be partners who, nevertheless, point out the shortcomings of one another: “Each one admitting of different semiotic practices (myths, religions, art, poetry, politics) whose hierarchies are never the same; each system in turn questioning the values of the others” (Kristeva 207). The mythical and the psychological play a role in the interpretation of self-knowledge and knowledge in the possible world of literature just as it had been in the actual world of Freud's cases.

Different authors bring something to recognition, which is as diverse as authors and readers. The boundaries between non-fiction and fiction, though both need to be distinct, are not as absolute as we might like. Both actual and fictional worlds are made of those who act and speak in relation to themselves and others. This is both dramatic and rhetorical. Poet and audience are people in the world as well as in the theatre or in the implicit space of reading. Aristotle and some more recent instances have allowed us to think some more on these ancient questions.

So Aristotle has been a pretext for finding the poet in poetics, the relation between author and reader through action, thought and character. Readers and audiences find their own personality and character through the characters that occur in the action or argument of fictional and non-fictional texts. Recognition has been a key to all this. In the Bible, a tension exists between the situational recognition of individuals and the structural recognition of the collective. The classical sources explore recognition in terms of genre. For instance, epic involves recognition of the hero as a central myth for the society; tragedy represents the discovery of the protagonist's isolation from that community or nation; comedy includes a moment of insight for the main characters that allows for their reintegration into a regenerated society.

Other disciplines, based on argument and dialectic, confront the problem of knowledge in terms of the recognition without using the term. For instance, Plato attacks poetry as the way to recognize self-knowledge and knowledge of reality. Whereas poetry sees appearances, philosophy discovers truth. Like Plato, Hegel finds truth and knowledge difficult to recognize. However, he sees that recognition as a possibility. It is possible

by way of reason in History realized through the World Spirit, in a kind of incomplete dialectic of human freedom. History also has its forms of recognition. Herodotus and Léry find ways to raise the problem of otherness and recognition in their ethnographical history. In psychoanalysis Freud represents the ambivalence and complex relation between doctor and patient, male and female, in representation. The connection between the conscious and unconscious mind complicates this relation. Kristeva splits the subject of author and reader and raises some suggestive questions about identity.

Recognition recognizes its own limits. It enacts an interplay of blindness and insight, a tension between situation and structure, stability and instability. It is a play among knowledge, wisdom and ignorance where people live in art and life, as authors and readers as though in a theatre or a putative space. But when the writer writes back and speaks up is there anyone to hear her?

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Avtor odgovarja (in spregovori)

Ključne besede: poetika / retorika / Aristoteles / pisatelj / bralec / anagnorisis / katarza

Avtor je mrtev. Naj živi avtor, ki je hkrati bralec in čigar pisanje in branje, govorjenje in poslušanje ima mnogo vidikov. V svojem vsakdanjem življenju so pismeni ljudje govorniki, bralci, poslušalci in avtorji. Kot protitež Sokratovemu skepticizmu do pesnikov in tega, da stvari prej oponašajo kot pa dejansko poznajo, članek obravnava analizo učinka pesnikovega oblikovanja zgodbe in lika na občinstvo, ki jo je Aristotel predstavil v svoji *Poetiki*. Temu sledi kratka razprava o drugih vrstah besedil. Književna, filozofska in zgodovinska dela, pa tudi sveta besedila, psihološka in druga dela poznajo dramatični odnos med avtorjem in občinstvom. Članek se osredotoča predvsem na *anagnorisis* (prepoznanje), ki ga doživljata lik in občinstvo, a je *katarza* (očiščenje) prav tako pomembna. Uprizarjanje tragedije občinstvo očisti strahu in sočutja. Poleg Aristotela in poetike članek obravnava tudi sorodno področje retorike, ki jo je Aristotel označil kot umetnost prepričevanja. Po mnenju pisca članka pa gre pri retoriki tudi za odnos med govorcem oziroma pisateljem in občinstvom. Kot v poetiki je tudi v retoriki prisotna drama pomena, in sicer v napetosti med avtorjem in bralcem oziroma občinstvom. Avtor kot ustvarjalec je na manj očitne in neposredne načine povezan tudi z avtorjem kot osebo. Nekatere zapletene podrobnosti pravega in nepravega prepoznanja lahko najdemo v ključnih besedilih, kot so na primer *Sveto pismo*, Homerjeva *Iliada* in Platonova *Država*, pa tudi v poznejših delih različnih zvrsti Jeana de Léryja, Williama Shakespeara, Sigmunda Freuda in Julie Kristeve. Pravo in nepravo prepoznanje včasih težko razlikujemo, pomagata pa nam prebroditi zamotanost diskurza in podob ter umetnosti in življenja. Pisec članka zagovarja igro med slepoto in uvidom v domnevnem prostoru književnosti in gledališča ter pisanja in branja na splošno.

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