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HOW TO TELL A STORY

HOW TO TELL A STORY

1. Περὶ ποιητικῆς αὐτῆς τε καὶ τῶν εἰδῶν αὐτῆς, ἦν τινα δύναμιν ἕκαστον ἔχει, καὶ πῶς δεῖ συνίστασθαι τοὺς μύθους εἰ μέλλει καλῶς ἔξειν ἢ ποιήσεις, ἔτι δὲ ἐκ πόσων καὶ ποίων ἐστὶ μορίων, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα τῆς αὐτῆς ἐστὶ μεθόδου, λέγωμεν ἀρξάμενοι κατὰ φύσιν πρῶτον ἀπὸ τῶν πρῶτων.

Ἐποποιία δὴ καὶ ἡ τῆς τραγωδίας ποιήσεις ἔτι δὲ κωμωδία καὶ ἡ διθυραμβοποιητικὴ καὶ τῆς αὐλητικῆς ἢ πλείστη καὶ κιθαριστικῆς πάσαι τυγχάνουσιν οὔσαι μιμήσεις τὸ σύνολον· διαφέρουσι δὲ ἀλλήλων τρισίν, ἢ γὰρ τῷ ἐν ἑτέροις μιμείσθαι ἢ τῷ ἕτερα ἢ τῷ ἑτέρως καὶ μὴ τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον.

Ὡσπερ γὰρ καὶ χρώμασι καὶ σχήμασι πολλὰ μιμοῦνται τινες ἀπεικάζοντες (οἱ μὲν διὰ τέχνης οἱ δὲ διὰ συνηθείας), ἕτεροι δὲ διὰ τῆς φωνῆς, οὕτω κἀν ταῖς εἰρημέναις τέχναις ἅπασαι μὲν ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν ἐν ῥυθμῷ καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἀρμονίᾳ, τούτοις δ'

Storytelling Is Imitation

Introduction: Storytelling Is Imitation

1. In this book we are going to discuss the craft of poetry¹—that is, of storytelling—of all kinds, along with the power each kind of poetry can have. We will also examine how to put together plots of high quality, the number and nature of the parts that make up a story, and other topics of this sort.

Let us begin, as is natural, with basic principles.

Epic² and tragic poetry,³ as well as comedy, dithyrambic poetry,⁴ and most music played on the pipes and lyre—these are all a kind of *imitation*.⁵

But these arts differ from one another in their imitation in three ways—namely, they use different media, different objects, or different manners.

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ἢ χωρὶς ἢ μειγμένοις· οἷον ἀρμονία μὲν καὶ ῥυθμῶ χρώμεναι μόνον ἢ τε αὐλητικὴ καὶ ἢ κιθαριστικὴ κἄν εἴ τινες ἕτεραι τυγχάνωσιν οὔσαι τοιαῦται τὴν δύναμιν, οἷον ἢ τῶν συρίγγων, αὐτῶ δὲ τῷ ῥυθμῶ χωρὶς ἀρμονίας ἢ τῶν ὄρχηστών (καὶ γὰρ οὔτοι διὰ τῶν σχηματιζομένων ῥυθμῶν μιμούνται καὶ ἦθη καὶ πάθη καὶ πράξεις)·

Ἡ δὲ μόνον τοῖς λόγοις ψιλοῖς ἢ τοῖς μέτροις καὶ τούτοις εἶτε μιγνύσα μετ' ἀλλήλων εἶθ' ἐνί τινι γένει χρωμένῃ τῶν μέτρων ἀνώνυμοι τυγχάνουσι μέχρι τοῦ νῦν· οὐδὲν γὰρ ἂν ἔχοιμεν ὀνομάσαι κοινὸν τοὺς Σώφρονος καὶ Ξενάρχου μίμους καὶ τοὺς Σωκρατικούς λόγους οὐδὲ εἴ τις διὰ τριμέτρων ἢ ἐλεγείων ἢ τῶν ἄλλων τινῶν τῶν τοιούτων ποιοῖτο τὴν μίμησιν. Πλὴν οἱ ἄνθρωποι γε συνάπτοντες τῷ μέτρῳ τὸ ποιεῖν ἐλεγειοποιούς τοὺς δὲ ἐποιοιούς ὀνομάζουσιν, οὐχ ὡς κατὰ τὴν μίμησιν ποιητὰς ἀλλὰ κοινῇ κατὰ τὸ μέτρον προσαγορεύοντες· καὶ γὰρ ἂν ἱατρικὸν ἢ φυσικὸν τι διὰ τῶν μέτρων ἐκφέρωσιν, οὕτω καλεῖν εἰώθασιν· οὐδὲν δὲ κοινὸν ἐστὶν Ὀμήρῳ καὶ Ἐμπε-

How Do You Tell Your Story?

Media—How Do You Tell Your Story?

Some people, either by artistic training or by natural ability, use colors and shapes to imitate various things, while others imitate with their voices.

In the same way the poetic arts I have mentioned produce imitations by means of rhythm, language, and melody, whether using them separately or in combinations. For example, music for the pipes or lyre or similar instruments like panpipes⁶ uses only melody and rhythm.

The art of dancing uses rhythm alone, without melody, but its rhythmic movements also imitate character, emotion, and action.

The craft that uses only words for imitation—either in prose or in verse, whether using a single meter or a mixture of meters—has no name even today.⁷ We have no common term for the mimes of Sophron and Xenarchus and

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δοκλεῖ πλὴν τὸ μέτρον, διὸ τὸν μὲν ποιητὴν δίκαιον καλεῖν, τὸν δὲ φυσιολόγον μᾶλλον ἢ ποιητὴν ὁμοίως δὲ κἂν εἴ τις ἅπαντα τὰ μέτρα μιγνύων ποιῶτο τὴν μίμησιν καθάπερ Χαιρήμων ἐποίησε Κένταυρον μικτὴν ῥαψωδίαν ἐξ ἁπάντων τῶν μέτρων, καὶ ποιητὴν προσαγορευτέον.

Περὶ μὲν οὖν τούτων διωρίσθω τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον. εἰσὶ δὲ τινες αἱ πᾶσι χρῶνται τοῖς εἰρημένοις, λέγω δὲ οἶον ῥυθμῶ καὶ μέλει καὶ μέτρῳ, ὥσπερ ἢ τε τῶν διθυραμβικῶν ποίησις καὶ ἡ τῶν νόμων καὶ ἢ τε τραγωδία καὶ ἡ κωμωδία· διαφέρουσι δὲ ὅτι αἱ μὲν ἅμα πᾶσιν αἱ δὲ κατὰ μέρος. ταύτας μὲν οὖν λέγω τὰς διαφορὰς τῶν τεχνῶν ἐν οἷς ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν.

How Do You Tell Your Story?

the Socratic dialogues, nor for imitation that one might make using iambic trimeters, elegiac couplets, or other kinds of meters.⁸

Of course people attach the term *poetry* to different types of meter and so call some writers *elegiac poets* or *epic poets*, but they call them all a certain type of poet because they use the same poetic meter, not because they are similar in the nature of their imitation. Even if someone writes about medicine or physics in verse, they are still called poets. But Homer and Empedocles⁹ have nothing in common except that they both use the same type of poetic meter. We should certainly call Homer a poet, but Empedocles is clearly a scientist. And if someone mixes many different meters, not just a single form, like Chaeremon¹⁰ did in his metric medley *Centaur*, we should include him among the poets too. We should pay attention to distinctions like this.

HOW TO TELL A STORY

2. Ἐπεὶ δὲ μιμῶνται οἱ μιμούμενοι πράττοντας, ἀνάγκη δὲ τούτους ἢ σπουδαίους ἢ φαύλους εἶναι (τὰ γὰρ ἦθη σχεδὸν ἀεὶ τούτοις ἀκολουθεῖ μόνοις, κακία γὰρ καὶ ἀρετὴ τὰ ἦθη διαφέρουσι πάντες), ἦτοι βελτίονας ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἢ χείρονας ἢ καὶ τοιούτους, ὥσπερ οἱ γραφεῖς· Πολύγνωτος μὲν γὰρ κρείττους, Παύσων δὲ χείρους, Διονύσιος δὲ ὁμοίους εἶκαζεν. Δῆλον δὲ ὅτι καὶ τῶν λεχθεισῶν ἐκάστη μιμήσεων ἔξει ταύτας τὰς διαφορὰς

What Are Your Characters Like?

There are also some types of poetic works, such as dithyramb, nome,¹¹ tragedy, and comedy, that use all the different media mentioned above—rhythm, melody, and meter. They differ in that some use them all together while others use them at different times.

This then is what I mean by the differences between the arts and how they use different media to create imitation.

Objects—What Are Your Characters Like?

2. Everyone who uses imitation in their art represents people engaged in actions.

The people represented must be either good or bad in their character. Almost everyone is marked by either a good or a bad character, since it is by virtue or vice that the character of a person is known.

People imitated by artists can be better than us, worse than us, or much the same as us.

HOW TO TELL A STORY

καὶ ἔσται ἕτερα τῷ ἕτερα μιμῆσθαι τοῦτον τὸν τρόπον.

Καὶ γὰρ ἐν ὀρχήσει καὶ αὐλήσει καὶ κιθαρῖσει ἔστι γενέσθαι ταύτας τὰς ἀνομοιότητας, καὶ περὶ τοὺς λόγους δὲ καὶ τὴν ψιλομετρίαν, οἷον Ὀμηρος μὲν βελτίους, Κλεοφῶν δὲ ὁμοίους, Ἡγήμων δὲ ὁ Θάσιος ὁ τὰς παρωδίας ποιήσας πρῶτος καὶ Νικοχάρης ὁ τὴν Δειλιάδα χείρους· ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ περὶ τοὺς διθυράμβους καὶ περὶ τοὺς νόμους, ὥσπερ γὰρ Κύκλωπας Τιμόθεος καὶ Φιλόξενος μιμήσαιο ἄν τις. Ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ διαφορᾷ καὶ ἡ τραγωδία πρὸς τὴν κωμωδίαν διέστηκεν· ἡ μὲν γὰρ χείρους ἡ δὲ βελτίους μιμῆσθαι βούλεται τῶν νῦν.

What Are Your Characters Like?

Painters illustrate this in their subjects. Polygnotus depicted superior people, Pauson the inferior sort, while Dionysius painted ordinary people.¹²

It is clear that each of the different kinds of artistic imitation we mentioned earlier follows this same pattern—better, worse, or the same as us—and they are distinguished from each other in how they represent their objects in different ways.

These differences are also seen in dance, along with music for the pipe and lyre. This also holds true for prose and for verse not accompanied by music. Homer, for example, imitates superior people, while Cleophon's characters are similar to us.¹³ On the other hand, Hegemon of Thasos, who invented parody, and Nicochares, author of the *Deiliad*, imitated inferior people.¹⁴

HOW TO TELL A STORY

3. "Ἐτι δὲ τούτων τρίτη διαφορὰ τὸ ὡς ἕκαστα τούτων μιμήσαιοτο ἂν τις. καὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ μιμῆσθαι ἔστιν ὅτε μὲν ἀπαγγέλλοντα, ἢ ἕτερόν τι γιγνόμενον ὥσπερ Ὅμηρος ποιεῖ ἢ ὡς τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ μὴ μεταβάλλοντα, ἢ πάντας ὡς πράττοντας καὶ ἐνεργοῦντας τοὺς μιμουμένους.

Ἐν τρισὶ δὴ ταύταις διαφοραῖς ἢ μίμησις ἔστιν, ὡς εἵπομεν κατ' ἀρχάς, ἐν οἷς τε καὶ ἂ καὶ ὡς. ὥστε τῇ

Who Is Telling Your Story?

The same is true of dithyrambs and nomos, for a writer could imitate Cyclopes as did Timotheus and Philoxenus.¹⁵

But most importantly, tragedy and comedy differ from each other in the same way. Tragedy imitates a better sort of person than us. Comedy imitates people worse than we are.

Manner—Who Is Telling Your Story?

3. A third way in which the arts differ from one another in imitation is manner or mode. In the same type of media you can imitate the same objects in different ways. In telling a story, you can use multiple narrators with different personalities, as Homer does,¹⁶ or single-person narration. You can also have the characters performing actions directly.

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μὲν ὁ αὐτὸς ἂν εἴη μιμητῆς Ὀμήρω Σοφοκλῆς, μιμοῦνται γὰρ ἄμφω σπουδαίους, τῇ δὲ Ἀριστοφάνει, πράττοντας γὰρ μιμοῦνται καὶ δρῶντας ἄμφω. ὅθεν καὶ δράματα καλεῖσθαι τινες αὐτὰ φασιν, ὅτι μιμοῦνται δρῶντας.

Διὸ καὶ ἀντιποιοῦνται τῆς τε τραγωδίας καὶ τῆς κωμωδίας οἱ Δωριεῖς (τῆς μὲν γὰρ κωμωδίας οἱ Μεγαρεῖς οἳ τε ἐνταῦθα ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς παρ' αὐτοῖς δημοκρατίας γενομένης καὶ οἱ ἐκ Σικελίας, ἐκεῖθεν γὰρ ἦν Ἐπίχαρμος ὁ ποιητῆς πολλῶ πρότερος ὢν Χιωνίδου καὶ Μάγνητος· καὶ τῆς τραγωδίας ἔνιοι τῶν ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ) ποιούμενοι τὰ ὀνόματα σημείον·

Differences and Overlap

Differences and Overlap in Storytelling

So these then are the three differences in types of artistic imitation, as we said at the beginning: media (how the story is told), object (characters), and manner (narration).

In one respect Sophocles is the same type of imitator as Homer, since both portray superior characters. On the other hand, Sophocles is like the comic writer Aristophanes¹⁷ since both of them present their characters performing actions directly. This is where some say *drama* gets its name, since it represents people in action.¹⁸

A Brief Dorian Digression

Because of this, the Dorians¹⁹ claim to have invented both tragedy and comedy. The Megarians specifically say they invented comedy, both those from Megara on the mainland (who say

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αὐτοὶ μὲν γὰρ κώμας τὰς περιοικίδας καλεῖν φασιν, Ἀθηναίους δὲ δῆμους, ὡς κωμωδοὺς οὐκ ἀπὸ τοῦ κωμάζειν λεχθέντας ἀλλὰ τῇ κατὰ κώμας πλάνῃ ἀτιμαζομένους ἐκ τοῦ ἄστεως· καὶ τὸ ποιεῖν αὐτοὶ μὲν δρᾶν, Ἀθηναίους δὲ πράττειν προσαγορεύειν.

Περὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν διαφορῶν καὶ πόσαι καὶ τίνες τῆς μιμήσεως εἰρήσθω ταῦτα.

A Brief Dorian Digression

it was invented during their democracy)²⁰ and those Megarian colonists in Sicily (because it was the birthplace of Epicharmus, who lived long before Chionides and Magnes).²¹ Certain Peloponnesians claim they themselves invented tragedy.²²

The Dorians say the words they use prove they were the inventors of both tragedy and comedy, since they call their country villages *kômai* while the Athenians call theirs *dêmoi*. From this the Dorians claim that comic performers didn't get their name *kômôdoi* from the word *kômazein* (to revel, make merry), but from the villages they wandered through after they were expelled from the cities. They furthermore say the Dorian word for acting or doing is *dran*, not *prattein* as it is among the Athenians.

So much then for the discussion of the number and nature of the distinctions in imitation.

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4. Ἐοίκασι δὲ γεννηῆσαι μὲν ὄλως τὴν ποιητικὴν αἰτίαι δύο τινές καὶ αὗται φυσικαί. τό τε γὰρ μιμῆσθαι σύμφυτον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐκ παιδῶν ἐστὶ καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρουσι τῶν ἄλλων ζώων ὅτι μιμητικώτατόν ἐστι καὶ τὰς μαθήσεις ποιεῖται διὰ μιμήσεως τὰς πρώτας, καὶ τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς μιμήμασι πάντας. σημεῖον δὲ τούτου τὸ συμβαῖνον ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων· ἃ γὰρ αὐτὰ λυπηρῶς ὀρώμεν, τούτων τὰς εἰκόνας τὰς μάλιστα ἠκριβωμένας χαίρομεν θεωροῦντες, οἷον θηρίων τε μορφᾶς τῶν ἀτιμοτάτων καὶ νεκρῶν. αἴτιον δὲ καὶ τούτου, ὅτι μανθάνειν οὐ μόνον τοῖς φιλοσόφοις ἤδιστον ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὁμοίως, ἀλλ' ἐπὶ βραχὺ κοινωνοῦσιν αὐτοῦ. διὰ γὰρ τοῦτο χαίρουσι τὰς εἰκόνας ὀρώντες, ὅτι συμβαίνει θεωροῦντας μανθάνειν καὶ συλλογίζεσθαι τί ἕκαστον, οἷον ὅτι οὗτος ἐκεῖνος· ἐπεὶ ἐὰν μὴ τύχη προεωρακῶς, οὐχ ἢ μίμημα ποιήσει τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν ἀπεργασίαν ἢ τὴν χροιάν ἢ διὰ τοιαύτην τινὰ ἄλλην αἰτίαν.

Where Does Storytelling Come From?

Where Does Storytelling Come From?

4. In general, it seems that there are two causes for the beginnings of poetry, both of them arising from human nature.

Imitation—First, imitation comes naturally to people from childhood. Indeed this is one thing that distinguishes us from other animals, since we have a powerful and natural inclination to imitating. This is how we learn our earliest lessons in life.

We all take great pleasure in imitation. The experience of our lives is proof enough of this since we naturally delight in seeing the most accurate imitations possible even when they cause us distress, such as representations of vile creatures or corpses. The reason for this is that we all enjoy understanding things—especially philosophers, but others too even though they aren't able to do it as well.²³

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Κατὰ φύσιν δὲ ὄντος ἡμῖν τοῦ μιμεῖσθαι καὶ τῆς ἀρμονίας καὶ τοῦ ῥυθμοῦ (τὰ γὰρ μέτρα ὅτι μόρια τῶν ῥυθμῶν ἐστὶ φανερόν) ἐξ ἀρχῆς οἱ πεφυκότες πρὸς αὐτὰ μάλιστα κατὰ μικρὸν προάγοντες ἐγέννησαν τὴν ποίησιν ἐκ τῶν αὐτοσχεδιασμάτων.

Διеспάσθη δὲ κατὰ τὰ οἰκεία ἦθη ἢ ποίησις· οἱ μὲν γὰρ σεμνότεροι τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμοῦντο πράξεις καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων, οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι τὰς τῶν φαύλων,

The Early History of Greek Poetry

This is why people enjoy viewing images, because when we see them we began to understand and work out what each image represents—“Oh, this is a picture of so-and-so!” But if it isn’t something or someone you’ve seen before, it won’t give you pleasure as an imitation, though you can still appreciate the skill in creating it or its color or for some similar reason.

Rhythm—The second cause for the beginnings of poetry is that melody and rhythm are also natural to us—and poetic meter is certainly a type of rhythm. From the start those who had a special talent for these things created poetry gradually through improvisation.

The Early History of Greek Poetry

Poetry developed into two genres according to the character of those who composed it.

HOW TO TELL A STORY

πρώτον ψόγους ποιούντες, ὡς περ ἕτεροι ὕμνους καὶ ἐγκώμια. τῶν μὲν οὖν πρὸ Ὅμηρου οὐδενὸς ἔχομεν εἰπεῖν τοιοῦτον ποίημα, εἰκὸς δὲ εἶναι πολλούς, ἀπὸ δὲ Ὅμηρου ἀρξαμένοις ἔστιν, οἷον ἐκείνου ὁ Μαργίτης καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα. ἐν οἷς κατὰ τὸ ἀρμόττον καὶ τὸ ἱαμβεῖον ἦλθε μέτρον—διὸ καὶ ἱαμβεῖον καλεῖται νῦν, ὅτι ἐν τῷ μέτρῳ τούτῳ ἱάμβιζον ἀλλήλους. καὶ ἐγένοντο τῶν παλαιῶν οἱ μὲν ἡρωικῶν οἱ δὲ ἱάμβων ποιηταί.

Ὡς περ δὲ καὶ τὰ σπουδαῖα μάλιστα ποιητῆς Ὅμηρος ἦν (μόνος γὰρ οὐχ ὅτι εἶ ἀλλὰ καὶ μιμήσεις δραματικὰς ἐποίησεν), οὕτως καὶ τὸ τῆς κωμωδίας σχῆμα πρῶτος ὑπέδειξεν, οὐ ψόγον ἀλλὰ τὸ γελοῖον δραματοποιήσας· ὁ γὰρ Μαργίτης ἀνάλογον ἔχει, ὡς περ Ἰλιάς καὶ ἡ Ὀδύσεια πρὸς τὰς τραγωδίας,

The Early History of Greek Poetry

Serious authors imitated in their works serious people and their noble actions. Less serious authors composed stories about common and less admirable people, creating satires in verse. The serious authors however composed hymns and poems of praise.

We don't know of any satiric works before Homer, though there were probably many, but we can begin with his *Margites* and other stories of the same kind.²⁴ The iambic verse form developed because it worked very well in these types of poems. Such poems are called *iambic* now because in those days poets used this meter to satirize each other.²⁵

And so some ancient poets wrote heroic epics while others wrote satires. Homer was certainly the greatest of the serious poets since he not only wrote very well but also was able to dramatize his imitations. In addition, he was the first author to define the forms of comedy by

HOW TO TELL A STORY

οὕτω καὶ οὗτος πρὸς τὰς κωμωδίας. παραφανείσης δὲ τῆς τραγωδίας καὶ κωμωδίας οἱ ἑφ' ἑκατέραν τὴν ποιήσιν ὀρμῶντες κατὰ τὴν οἰκείαν φύσιν οἱ μὲν ἀντὶ τῶν ἰάμβων κωμωδοποιοὶ ἐγένοντο, οἱ δὲ ἀντὶ τῶν ἐπῶν τραγωδοδιδάσκαλοι, διὰ τὸ μείζω καὶ ἐντιμότερα τὰ σχήματα εἶναι ταῦτα ἐκείνων.

Τὸ μὲν οὖν ἐπισκοπεῖν εἰ ἄρα ἔχει ἤδη ἡ τραγωδία τοῖς εἶδεσιν ἰκανῶς ἢ οὐ, αὐτό τε καθ' αὐτό κρῖναι καὶ πρὸς τὰ θεάτρα, ἄλλος λόγος.

Γενομένη δ' οὖν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτοσχεδιαστικῆς (καὶ αὐτὴ καὶ ἡ κωμωδία, καὶ ἡ μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐξάρχοντων τὸν διθύραμβον, ἡ δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν τὰ φαλλικά ἄ

The History of Tragedy

adding drama to what we laugh about, though he didn't engage in personal satire. His *Margites* bears the same relation to comedy as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* do to tragedy.

The History of Tragedy

When tragedy and comedy first appeared, many poets were led by their own nature to produce one or the other. Some turned to composing comic plays instead of long lampoons, while others produced tragic dramas instead of lengthy epic poems. These new, shorter forms of storytelling were seen as more important and esteemed than the earlier types.

This isn't the place to examine whether or not tragedy is sufficiently developed in its various parts or whether we should judge it just in relation to itself or how it relates to audiences in theatrical performances. All of that is a separate matter.

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ἔτι καὶ νῦν ἐν πολλαῖς τῶν πόλεων διαμένει νομιζόμενα) κατὰ μικρὸν ἠϋξήθη προαγόντων ὅσον ἐγένετο φανερόν αὐτῆς· καὶ πολλὰς μεταβολὰς μεταβαλοῦσα ἢ τραγωδία ἐπαύσατο, ἐπεὶ ἔσχε τὴν αὐτῆς φύσιν.

Καὶ τό τε τῶν ὑποκριτῶν πλῆθος ἐξ ἑνὸς εἰς δύο πρῶτος Αἰσχύλος ἤγαγε καὶ τὰ τοῦ χοροῦ ἠλάττωσε καὶ τὸν λόγον πρωταγωνιστεῖν παρεσκεύασεν· τρεῖς δὲ καὶ σκηνογραφίαν Σοφοκλῆς. ἔτι δὲ τὸ μέγεθος· ἐκ μικρῶν μύθων καὶ λέξεως γελοίας διὰ τὸ ἐκ σατυρικοῦ μεταβαλεῖν ὀψὲ ἀπεσεμνύθη, τό τε μέτρον ἐκ τετραμέτρου ἰαμβεῖον ἐγένετο. τὸ μὲν γὰρ πρῶτον τετραμέτρῳ ἐχρῶντο διὰ τὸ σατυρικὴν καὶ ὀρχηστικωτέραν εἶναι τὴν ποίησιν, λέξεως δὲ γενομένης αὐτῇ ἢ φύσιν τὸ οἰκτεῖον μέτρον εὔρε· μάλιστα γὰρ

The History of Tragedy

In a sense, tragedy first arose accidentally, as did comedy. Tragedy came about from the leaders of a dithyrambic chorus, comedy from the leaders of groups singing phallic songs, as they still do in some cities.²⁶

Tragedy gradually evolved as writers developed new aspects and potential in its performance. After these changes were introduced, it eventually became fixed in how it was presented onstage since it had achieved its true nature.

Aeschylus was the first playwright to increase the number of speaking actors from one to two, making the actors the focus of the drama and reducing the importance of the chorus.²⁷ Sophocles then introduced a third actor and painted scenery.²⁸ It was only at a later stage that tragedy developed longer plots and more dignified diction as it evolved away from its roots in satyr plays, along with a shift in meter from trochaic tetrameter to iambic trimeter.²⁹

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λεκτικὸν τῶν μέτρων τὸ ἰαμβεῖόν ἐστιν· σημεῖον δὲ τούτου, πλείστα γὰρ ἰαμβεῖα λέγομεν ἐν τῇ διαλέκτῳ τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους, ἐξάμετρα δὲ ὀλιγάκις καὶ ἐκβαίνοντες τῆς λεκτικῆς ἀρμονίας. ἔτι δὲ ἐπεισοδίων πλήθη. καὶ τὰ ἄλλ' ὡς ἕκαστα κοσμηθῆναι λέγεται ἔστω ἡμῖν εἰρημένα· πολὺ γὰρ ἂν ἴσως ἔργον εἴη διεξιέναι καθ' ἕκαστον.

5. Ἡ δὲ κωμωδία ἐστὶν ὡσπερ εἵπομεν μίμησις φαυλοτέρων μὲν, οὐ μέντοι κατὰ πάσαν κακίαν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ αἰσχροῦ ἐστὶ τὸ γελοῖον μόριον. τὸ γὰρ γελοῖόν ἐστιν ἀμάρτημά τι καὶ αἰσχος ἀνώδυνον καὶ

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They used trochaic tetrameter at first because it better fit the style of a satyr play and was more like the rhythm of a dance. But when actors began to step out from the chorus and speak, the writers found that it was natural to switch to iambic trimeters because they are closer to the way we normally speak. We often use trimeters in everyday conversation, but not other meters such as hexameters,³⁰ except when we're departing from our normal style of speech.

As for the number of episodes³¹ in tragedy and other such features, we will pass over these as it would take too long to give a full history of each development.

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5. Comedy, as we have said, is an imitation of inferior people.

Comic characters are not cruel or vicious, but laughable—laughability being one category of

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οὐ φθαρτικόν, οἷον εὐθύς τὸ γελοῖον πρόσωπον αἰσχρόν τι καὶ διεστραμμένον ἄνευ ὁδύνης.

Αἱ μὲν οὖν τῆς τραγωδίας μεταβάσεις καὶ δι' ὧν ἐγένοντο οὐ λελήθασιν, ἡ δὲ κωμωδία διὰ τὸ μὴ σπουδάζεσθαι ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἔλαθεν· καὶ γὰρ χορὸν κωμωδῶν ὀψέ ποτε ὁ ἄρχων ἔδωκεν, ἀλλ' ἐθέλονται ἦσαν. ἤδη δὲ σχήματά τινα αὐτῆς ἐχούσης οἱ λεγόμενοι αὐτῆς ποιηταὶ μνημονεύονται. τίς δὲ πρόσωπα ἀπέδωκεν ἢ προλόγους ἢ πλήθη ὑποκριτῶν καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, ἠγγόνηται. τὸ δὲ μύθους ποιεῖν [Ἐπίχαρμος καὶ Φόρμις] τὸ μὲν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐκ Σικελίας ἦλθε, τῶν δὲ Ἀθήνησιν Κράτης πρῶτος ἤρξεν ἀφέμενος τῆς ἰαμβικῆς ἰδέας καθόλου ποιεῖν λόγους καὶ μύθους.

Ἡ μὲν οὖν ἐποποιία τῇ τραγωδίᾳ μέχρι μὲν τοῦ μετὰ μέτρου λόγῳ μίμησις εἶναι σπουδαίων ἠκολούθησεν· τῷ δὲ τὸ μέτρον ἀπλοῦν ἔχειν καὶ ἀπαγγελίαν εἶναι, ταύτη διαφέρουσιν· ἔτι δὲ τῷ μήκει· ἡ μὲν ὅτι μάλιστα πειράται ὑπὸ μίαν περίοδον ἡλίου εἶναι ἢ μικρὸν ἐξαλλάττειν, ἡ δὲ ἐποποιία ἀόριστος τῷ χρόνῳ καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρει, καίτοι τὸ πρῶτον