S K E N È

Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

7:2 2021

"Well-Staged Syllables": From Classical to Early Modern English Metres in Drama

Edited by Silvia Bigliazzi

SKENÈ Journal of Theatre and Drama Studies

Founded by Guido Avezzù, Silvia Bigliazzi, and Alessandro Serpieri

Published in December 2021
ISSN 2421-4353

SKENÈ Theatre and Drama Studies
https://skenejournal.skeneproject.it
info@skeneproject.it

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Guido Avezzù*

"Secundum quasdam suas partes": Renaissance Readings of the Lyric Structures of Greek Tragedy

Abstract

This article aims to offer a contribution to the study of the reception of metrical forms and related performative features from classical to Renaissance tragedy. In particular, it focuses on how the reader of ancient Greek drama perceived its performative varieties, and therefore it is concerned with the continental prehistory of the English reception of the lyrical performance of Greek tragedy. It first deals with how Greek plays were presented in printed editions, and then moves on to consider Aristotle's *Poetics* with regard to the description of the linguistic resources of the tragic *poiesis*, in particular the use of *rhythmos*, *metron*, and *melos*, and their varying pertinence to the different structures of tragedy. In this respect, the article discusses a curious misreading of a passage of the *Poetics* that was to affect its interpretation as well as the reception of the notion of tragedy and the reuses of ancient versifications over time.

Keywords: Greek tragedy; Aristotle's *Poetics*; Renaissance typography: Andronicos Callistos; Aldo Manuzio; Adrien Turnèbe; Willem Canter; Théodore de Bèze; Theodore Goulston

Premises

This article is concerned with the Renaissance reception of Aristotle on lyric performance and its possible impact on contemporary drama based on knowledge of ancient tragedy. It provides a starting point for a close study of metre, acting and singing in drama stemming from that ancient knowledge. This initial overview of the continental reception of Aristotle will pave the way for a reconsideration of the English reception of the *Poetics* in view of revising some established beliefs about the alleged absence of specific theoretical approaches in England.[1] The study of metre in connection with the performance of Greek drama is a wide-ranging issue implying a whole gamut of considerations. Here I will focus on two issues: the ways in which classical models were presented to readers in printed editions and Aristotle's

[1] See, for example, Vickers (1999, 5-6) and the discussion by Lazarus (2015a, 433-7).

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description of tragedy in the *Poetics*. First, I will briefly discuss the layout of Greek tragedy in some exemplary printed editions; then I will move on to consider how Aristotle's *Poetics* deals with the linguistic resources of tragic *poiesis*, with special regard to the use of *rhythmos*, *metron*, and *melos*, and their varying relevance to the different parts of tragedy. Finally, I will analyse an exegetical error in the reading of a passage of the *Poetics* that may have influenced the reuses and interpretations of ancient versification forms in later dramas. The assumption of this article is that the indistinction, or poor distinction, between the 'parts' of tragedy, together with a misinterpretation of the definition of tragedy have contributed to blurring its complex articulation into recitation, chant and song.

1. Reading Greek Tragedy[2]

> Typography may be defined as the craft . . . of so arranging the letters, distributing the space and controlling the type as to aid to the maximum the reader's comprehension of the text.
>
> Stanley Morison, *First Principles of Typography*, 1936, 5

"Typography mediates and materializes '*the* text' for readers".[3] My emphasis on the uniqueness of *the* text wants to suggest the ambiguity residing in any conception of the Renaissance book as the exclusive witness of the final version of a play, whose production was the centre of multifaceted relationships between authorial and collaborative preparation, staging, and printed book. Theoretically, this should also be true for classical Greek playtexts, but in their case we are entitled to think that the printed book, like the medieval manuscript, aims to materialise for readers *a* particular text which was fixed at a certain moment of its transmission.[4] Thus, the printed book, even in the case of ancient dramas, is likely to materialise at least some of the dynamics of the performance: not only the *intrat* and *exit* of the characters and the sequence of interlocutors in dialogical exchanges, but also various modes of expression – that is, speech, recitative and (choral or individual) singing in the Greek dramas of the fifth century BCE. Also

[2] In this section, I will only try to provide, in very general terms, some notions concerning the presentation of Greek dramatic texts in Renaissance printed books and the inferences that can be drawn from it as to the importance assigned to performative features. For a deeper analysis of the *mise en page* in manuscripts, see Tessier 2020.

[3] Kastan 2001, 4 – cited by Bourne 2020, 2n8.

[4] Thus, it would not be fully appropriate to assimilate the production of editions such as Richard Pynson's Terence (1495-1497) to the publishing of (early) modern plays, and to include them in the problematic between "validat[ion] and reject[ion] of the printed book as a legitimate medium for plays", as proposed by Bourne 2020, 6.

in this respect, the book can offer "a *perception* of the theatre available to readers by appending a set of instructions for how to read the play's textual divisions".[5] I will, therefore, consider the layout of Greek tragedies in the numerous editions which followed Janus Lascaris' Euripides printed by Lorenzo d'Alopa in Florence in 1494/1495,[6] and then proliferated during the 16th century. Yet in England the first edition of a tragedy in the Greek original, Euripides' *Troades*, was only published in 1575 by John Day (USTC 508002). This edition "has neither a prefatory epistle, nor an apparatus of comments, a life of the author or any introduction to the tragedy, except for the alexandrine *hypothesis*", and "does not specify the name of any scholar as editor" (Duranti 2021, 118-9). It is "a small format book . . . with a single tragedy for Greek learners", and gives no help to the reader who wants to know how a classical Greek tragedy is structured, so that it is reasonable to imagine that any relevant information was intended to be given in the course of teaching. This should be kept in mind as my discussion will instead focus on how editor, publisher, and reader perceived the qualitative differences between the parts of a classical tragedy.Therefore, I will examine how the *mise en page* of Greek tragedy develops from an initial lack of distinctions to an increasingly editorial articulation supported by descriptive annotations of the metrical and performative formats as witnessed by some editions of Greek tragedies in the second half of the sixteenth century. An example from Euripides' *Medea* 410-31 for each of the two cases may suffice:

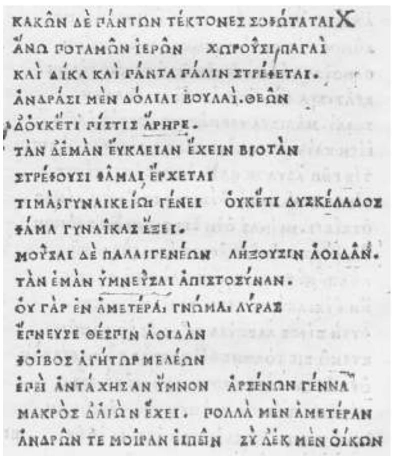

Fig. 1a: J. Lascaris 1495 (USTC 760838), sign. B1*v*.

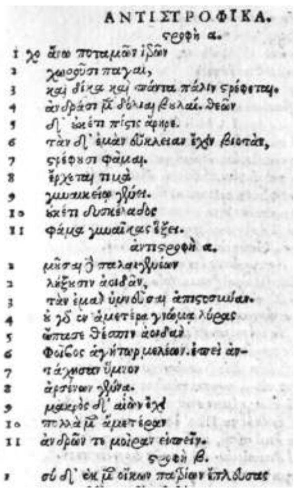

Fig. 1b: W. Canter 1571 (USTC 411593), 161.

[5] Bourne 2020, 6; the use of the word "perception" was suggested to Bourne by William B. Worthen (ibid., n16).

[6] It contains only *Medea*, *Hippolytus*, *Alcestis*, and *Andromacha* (USTC 760838). USTC inventories are not always consistent or correct with regard to the indication of authors and titles, therefore I will quote the USTC number for each printed work to facilitate the retrieval of digitised copies, when available.

The edition arranged by Lascaris (Fig. 1a) presents the first choral song around the altar (*stasimon*) without any distinction between subsequent stanzas (here *strophe* 1, ll. 410-20, *antistrophe* 1, ll. 421-30, and *strophe* 2, from l. 431), and the minor metrical units (*cola*) are often positioned in the same line, in accordance with the pattern applied in multi-column Byzantine manuscripts, whereas the copyists of the late 15th century used to write the text in a single column.[7] On the contrary, Canter's edition (Fig. 1b) signals to the reader the antistrophic rationale of the sequence, whose stanzas correspond metrically in pairs; the individual *cola* are printed in a single column and numbered, so that their correspondences are made immediately clear. Overall, the occurrence of lyrical parts (*parodos*, *stasima*, etc.) interspersed with recited ones (*prologos*, *epeisodia*) is distinctly perceptible, as will be their performative character. For several decades, until Adrien Turnèbe's Sophocles (1553, Fig. 3a) and Canter's Euripides (1571, Fig. 1b), the *mise en page* of the lyrical sections of tragedy – those that according to Aristotle, as we shall see later, used rhythm, metre and song – is essentially undifferentiated from that of the spoken parts, and distinguishable only by the various lengths of the lines. Yet the case was different for comedy: as early as Aristophanes' *editio princeps* (Aldo Manuzio, 1498) the layout was very dissimilar and therefore worth comparing with the editions of tragic plays. Aristophanes is not only the first of the four great Greek dramatists to be published by Aldo, but is also the only one whose works, since the first edition, are accompanied by *scholia* (comments of various extensions, found in Byzantine manuscripts). See e.g. the treatment of *Clouds* 298ff. in the *princeps* (USTC 760251) in Fig. 2a.[8]

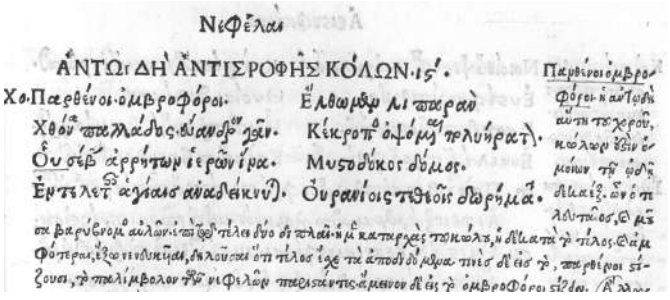

Fig. 2a: Aristophanes (Manuzio 1498, ed. by M. Musuros), sign. ζ7*r*.

[7] See, for example, the complete Euripides in two volumes written by Aristobulos (Arsenios) Apostolides a few years before the Lascaris edition (mss. Paris BnF Gr. 2887 and 2888).

[8] A total of 214 copies have been identified, 41 of them in Italy, but as many as 38 in the UK: this testifies to the remarkable success of this edition on English soil, if compared to the 29 copies in Germany and 13 in France.

The metrical and performative indications about the two responsive stanzas printed above ll. 298-9 are inspired by a *scholium* that we can read in the margin: "this *antode* of the chorus counts sixteen *cola* as in the *ode*" [Ἡ ἀντῳδὴ αὕτη τοῦ χοροῦ κώλων ἐστὶν ὁμοίων τῇ ᾠδῇ δεκαέξ]. *Scholia*, particularly those produced, like this one, by Byzantine scholars such as Demetrius Triclinius,[9] are valuable tools for decoding the metrical and performative characteristics – whether spoken, chanted or sung – of individual parts of the drama. An ingenious editor such as Marcos Musuros and the ready availability of a text accompanied by *scholia* made it possible to share with the reader a certain way of perceiving the text I mentioned above. In his prefatory letter, Aldo promised that the *scholia* would accompany both his Sophocles (1502) and his Euripides (1503). However, they were published a few years later, the former in 1518 (Rome: Ginnasio Mediceo), the latter in 1534 (Venice: Giunta), and those on Aeschylus were printed only in 1552 by Francesco Robortello (Venice: Valgrisi).[10] The information provided by the 'Byzantine' *scholia* qualify visually the different sections of the dramatic text. In his letter of dedication of Aristophanes' plays to Daniele Clario, who taught Latin and Greek in Ragusa (Dubrovnik), Aldo wrote: "mitto ad te Aristophanem, ut illum non modo legendum, *sed ediscendum quoque* discipulis praebeas tuis" [I send you Aristophanes so that you may offer it to your disciples not only to read it *but also to learn it by heart* (emphasis mine)][11]. Aldo was aware that the *mise en page* not only facilitates comprehension, but also allows for a mnemonic learning of the text – a memorisation which was also facilitated by the performative indications provided by the *scholia*. These indications will also accompany later Aristophanes' editions, frequently printed without *scholia*;[12] see e.g. the *Knights* printed by Joseph Barnes in Oxford (1593: USTC 512311), Fig. 2b:

[9] Cf. Koster 1974, 53.

[10] (USTC 852747) http://diglib.hab.de/drucke/alv-cc-350-2s/start.htm. The publication of the *Scholia* was parallel to Robortello's edition of Aeschylus (Venice, Scotto; USTC 807823), but it only consisted of the *scholia vetera* ('old'), not those produced by the Byzantine scholars of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and did not suggest any useful information as to the present discussion.

[11] If not otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

[12] Paris: Gourmont 1528 (USTC 160569), Basle: Cratender 1532 (USTC 612851), the *Clouds* edited alone by Philip Melanchthon in 1521 (Wittenberg: Lotter; USTC 612854) and the *Clouds* with *Plutus*, also by Melanchthon (Hagenau: Setzer 1528; USTC 612849), and up to the *Knights* USTC 512311.

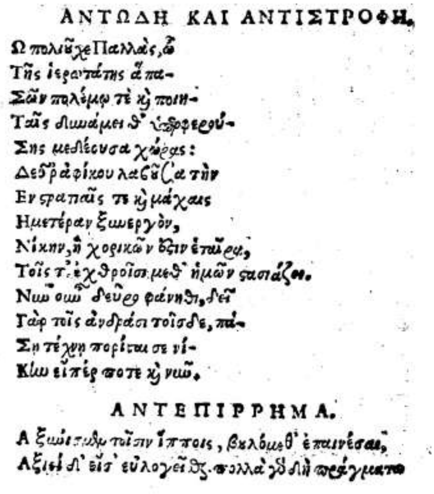
ΑΝΤΩΔΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΤΙΣΤΡΟΦΗ.
Ὦ πολιοῦχε Παλλάς, ὦ
Τῆς ἱερωτάτης ἁπα-
σῶν πολέμῳ τε καὶ ποιη-
Ταῖς δυνάμει θ' ὑπερφερού-
Σης μεδέουσα χώρας:
Δεῦρ' ἀφικοῦ λαβοῦσα τὴν
Ἐν στρατιαῖς τε καὶ μάχαις
Ἡμετέραν ξυνεργὸν,
Νίκην, ἣ χορικῶν ἐστιν ἑταίρα,
Τοῖς τ' ἐχθροῖσι μεθ' ἡμῶν στασιάζει.
Νῦν οὖν δεῦρο φάνηθι, δεῖ
Γὰρ τοῖς ἀνδράσι τοῖσδε, πά-
Σῃ τέχνῃ πορίσαι σε νί-
Κην εἴπερ ποτὲ καὶ νῦν.
ΑΝΤΕΠΙΡΡΗΜΑ.
Ἃ ξυνίσμεν τοῖσιν ἵπποις, βουλόμεσθ' ἐπαινέσαι,
Ἄξιοι δ' εἰσ' εὐλογεῖσθαι. πολλὰ γὰρ δὴ πράγματα

Fig. 2b: Aristophanes, *Knights* 581-96: Joseph Barnes 1593, sign. Di*v*.

The page reproduced here contains the indications *antode* and *antistrophe* before the lyric stanza in response to ll. 551-64, and *counter-epirrhema*, for the recitative of the Coryphaeus symmetrical to ll. 565ff. This example is particularly revealing when compared to the edition of Euripides' *Troades* printed by John Day in 1575. That of the *Knights* also lacks paratexts, and everything suggests that it had the same scholastic destination as *Troades*; however, it retains the strophic indications of the major editions, albeit reduced to a minimum, proving that the editorial characteristics of the Greek comedy have by 1593 been appropriated in England, too. The information provided by the *scholia* can also be glimpsed, albeit in a simplified form, in the Latin translations of Aristophanes, as for example in the *Clouds* translated by Andrea Divo from Capodistria (Fig. 2b):[13]

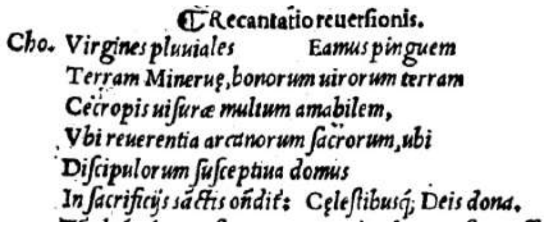
Recantatio reuersionis.
Cho. Virgines pluuiales Eamus pinguem
Terram Mineruę, bonorum uirorum terram
Cecropis uisuræ multum amabilem,
Vbi reuerentia arcanorum sacrorum, ubi
Discipulorum susceptiua domus
In sacrificijs sāctis ōndit: Cęlestibusq; Deis dona.

Fig. 2c: Aristophanes, *Clouds* 298ff. (trans. by A. Divo, 1538), 29*v*.

The translator does not respect the division into *cola* in the Greek text, but in his own way tries to provide some information concerning the strophic

[13] Venice: Zanetti 1538 (USTC 810846).

structure: e.g. here by the title "Recantatio reversionis" for the Greek ἀντῳδὴ ἀντιστροφῆς.

Even considering that these are books for reading and not for the stage, and that they do not reflect any prior staging of the play, it cannot be denied that they make the reader aware of the plurality of sections which make up the dramatic text, as well as of the properties and the performative features of each section. As mentioned above, however, this is not the case with tragedies, and will not be so for a long time. Apparently, a key to understanding the responsive structure of the lyric stanzas is provided exclusively by Byzantine scholars, and is therefore conditional on the rediscovery of manuscripts that preserve traces of their work. Evidence of the relevance of these particular *scholia* may for instance be found in the Aeschylus edited by Pier Vettori and printed by Henri Estienne (1557; USTC 450455): this edition is accompanied only by the 'old' *scholia* and these do not clarify the structure of the lyrical parts and their difference from the chanted ones. One can compare *Agamemnon* 101-6 in the Aeschylus edited by Turnèbe in 1552 (USTC 154188; Fig. 3a), in the Latin translation by Jean Saint-Ravy (Joannes Sanravius) published in 1555 (USTC 609466; Fig. 3b), which preserves the layout of Turnèbe's Aeschylus, in the Aeschylus of Vettori (USTC 45045; Fig. 3c), and finally in the new setting given to the page by Willem Canter in his 1580 edition (USTC 407824; Fig. 3d).

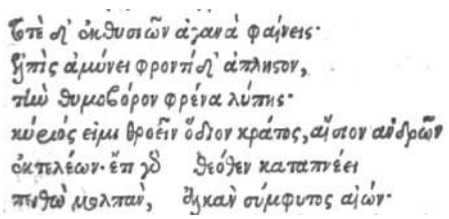
Τοτὲ μ' ὀνθυσιῶν ἀζανὰ φαίνεις·
ἔμπας ἀμύνει φροντίδ' ἄπλητον,
πλὴν θυμοβόρον φρένα λύπης·
κύκλος εἰμὶ θροεῖν ὅδιον κράτος, αἴσιον ἀνδρῶν
ἀκτελέων· ἔπ γὸ θεόθεν καταπνέει
πειθὼ μολπαὶ, ἀγκαὶ σύμφυτος αἰών·

Fig. 3a: Turnèbe 1552, 111.[14]

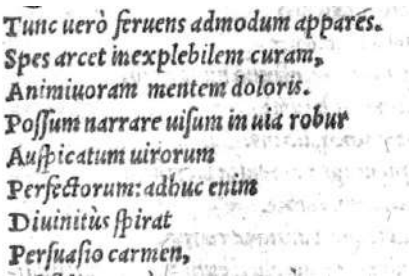
Tunc uerò feruens admodum appares.
Spes arcet inexplebilem curam,
Animiuoram mentem doloris.
Possum narrare uisum in uia robur
Auspicatum uirorum
Perfectorum: adhuc enim
Diuinitùs spirat
Persuasio carmen,

Fig. 3b: Trans. Sanravius 1555, 128.

[14] https://books.google.be/books?vid=GENT900000004884&hl=it. Similar presentation of the text also in Robortello 1552 (USTC 807823).

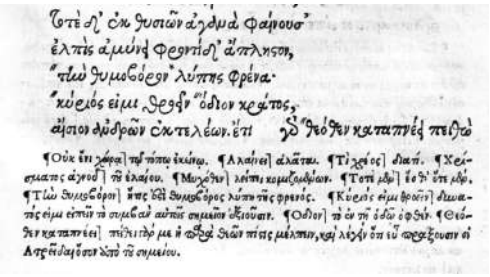

Fig. 3c: Vettori 1557, 179.

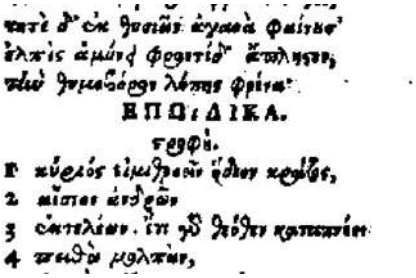

Fig. 3d: Canter 1580, 157.

Canter is the first editor of Aeschylus to use the Byzantine *scholia* in order to distinguish the sung section (105ff.) from the preceding recitative one (101-4).

Even Giunta's publication of the *Enchiridion* ('manual') of the metricologist Hephaestion (second century CE), in Florence in 1526 (USTC 832088), does not bring about a breakthrough. This will take place in 1553, when Turnèbe, who had a manuscript of Sophocles where the metrical structure was inspired by Triclinios,[15] publishes, once again, the *Enchiridion* (USTC 204143), the tragedies of Sophocles (USTC 154217), and the Triclinian *scholia* to them (USTC 151271). Turnèbe's edition of Sophocles makes it very clear how useful the Byzantine *scholia* were. He derives from the *scholia* the distinction between spoken, chanted, and sung verses, and defines the basic components (*cola*) of the last ones. Consider, for example, Turnèbe's marginal annotations on *Aias* 233-48 (Fig. 4a) in which, by using the *scholia* (Fig. 4c), he informs the reader that the passage comprises an anapaestic *systema* (recitative) (233-44) and a sung stanza (*antistrophe*, 245ff.), in response to an earlier one (221-32), both consisting of twelve *cola* (cf. Tessier 2015, 6-7). In his 1579 edition, Canter will merely echo the structure defined by Turnèbe (Fig. 4b).

[15] Paris BnF grec 2711; cf. Tessier 2018.

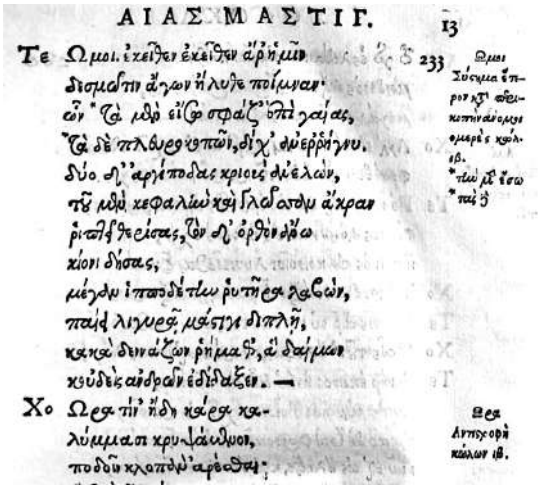

Fig. 4a: Turnèbe 1553, 13. Fig. 4b: Canter 1579, 34.

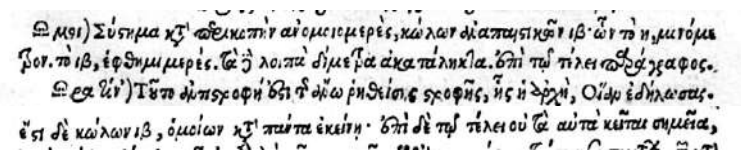

Fig. 4c: Scholia byzantina ad *Ai.* 233ff., Turnèbe 1553, 7-8.

Turnèbe, who from 1547 was *lecteur royal* and from 1551 *imprimeur royal* for Greek,[16] may have begun to include in his lectures the results of observations based on Byzantine *scholia* before 1550. As we shall see, this date is not coincidental. However, his Aeschylus of 1552 (USTC 154188; see Fig. 3a) still shows no trace of the new method.

Marking a decisive turning point, Turnèbe's edition of Sophocles was destined to set the standard, though not immediately. We can indeed imagine that the novelty represented by the reintroduction of the formal connotations of the lyric sections was rejected by those who possessed a radical conception of tragedy, marked by religious maximalism and ostentatiously distant from formal embellishments. A passage from the letter "to the reader" (Lausanne, 1 October 1550) accompanying Théodore de Bèze's *Abraham sacrifiant* may be of some interest:[17]

[16] Cf. Lewis 1998, esp. 43-76; Constantinidou 2018, 266-7.

[17] This "letter", reprinted in French editions until at least 1598 and translated into English by Golding in 1575, has also been recently discussed by Duranti (2021, 115-16).

> Mesmes i'ay faict un cantique hors le Chorus, et n'ay usé de strophes, antistrophes, epirremes, parecbases, ny autre tels mots qui ne servent que d'espoventer les simples gens, puis que l'usage de telles chose est aboly, et n'est de soy tant recommandable qu'on se doyve tourmenter à le remettre sus. (1967, 49-50)
>
> [Thus in William Golding's translation: "Verily I haue made a songe without a chorus, nother haue I used the termes of Strophies, Antistrophies, Epirrhemes, Parecbases, and other such wordes, which serue to no purpose but to amase simple folke, seeing the use of such thinges is worne away, & they be not so commendable of them selues, that a man should trouble him selfe to bringe them up again." (1577, sign. A4*v*-5*r*)]

Here Bèze not only distances himself from classical tragedy in order to adhere to a different kind of theatre – French and biblical – but also seems to reject the related terminology ("tels mots"), in other words, its definitions as parts of a theoretical equipment unrelated to the plays stylistic features. Perhaps it is significant that Bèze focuses his critique on words such as "strophes" and "antistrophes", which define the structures of the lyric stanzas in Greek tragedy in both Turnèbe's philological approach and, possibly, his own teaching. Therefore, it is not inappropriate to see in Bèze's position an implicit devaluation of Turnèbe's contemporary teaching in Paris, as well as a criticism of orthographic "fantaisies" perceivable in his "Letter to the reader", which seems especially to allude to Louis Meigret's *Traite touchant le commun usage de l'escriture Françoise* (1542) (Bèze 1967, 50n).

In conclusion, it can be claimed that, in the absence of a fixed visual paradigm granted by typography, the perception of the spoken, chanted, and lyric sections into which the tragic text is divided relied on the indications offered by some chapters of Aristotle's *Poetics*. But also its Renaissance commentators, two of whom – Robortello and Vettori – were also editors of Aeschylus, could not benefit from autoptic access to texts showing in their arrangement the play's performative varieties.

If we now turn to the text of the *Poetics* and to some Renaissance interpretations of its famous definition of tragedy, we come across an interesting passage whose peculiar interpretative bias has obtained a curious weight.

2. *Melopoeia summa oblectatio*[18]

The process that will lead to the conception of Greek tragedy as *Musikdrama* is a long one and begins in the Italian culture at the end of the fifteenth century. The first humanist Latin translation of the *Poetics*, printed in 1498 and then

[18] "Lyric poetry is the greatest delight"; Giorgio Valla's translation of *Poetics* 1450b16 (1498, sign. r3*r*).

reprinted in Venice and in Paris in 1504, is due to Giorgio Valla (1447-1500), who had in previous years offered lectures on this subject in the Venetian School of Rialto. After this debut and the printing of the *editio princeps* (Aldo, 1508: USTC 809782), the next translation, by Alessandro Pazzi (Venice: heirs of Aldo; USTC 810904, coupled with Aldo's text), will appear in 1536. Following this translation, Italy saw a great flourishing of theoretical texts, from the commentaries to the *Poetics*, some of which were widely circulating on the Continent and beyond, to numerous treatises, now preciously collected by Bernard Weinberg (1970-1974). Outside Italy, the first edition of the Greek text, a replica of the 1508 Aldine, was printed at Basle in 1531 in the whole *corpus* of Aristotle (USTC 555012), and was followed by that of 1537, also at Basle, together with the translation of Pazzi (USTC 612826). Continental, and especially Italian, mediations conditioned the approach of intellectuals to Aristotle's *Poetics* in early modern England: the first edition on English soil, exclusively in Latin translation, is the *analytica methodo* commented on by Theodore Goulston (1572-1632), printed in 1623 and preceded by an edition of the *Rhetoric* including the Greek text (Goulston 1619).[19] This does not mean, of course, that editions and commentaries of Aristotle's *Poetics* produced on the Continent did not circulate and were not read in England, nor that they did not suggest critical and poetic views, sometimes even through not entirely discernible mediations. As Sarah Dewar-Watson has observed,

> the significance of mediating sources is often underestimated, but the transmission of Greek literature through a variety of textual and oral sources clearly played a crucial role in a culture which was intent on rediscovering its classical heritage, but in which direct access to Greek texts remained the privilege of a scholarly elite. (2004, 4)

Sometimes even direct dependence can be discerned, as in the case of Sir Philip Sidney's reading of the ninth chapter of the *Poetics* on poetry and history, as Micha Lazarus well demonstrated (2015b).[20] On the presence in England of continental editions, translations and commentaries, which "suggests that language was no obstacle", see Lazarus 2016. Bernardo Segni's Italian translation (1549, cf. 54) was widespread there and the "functional bilingualism" of the "most educated Elizabethans" allowed access to Latin translations, such as those by Pazzi, despite the lower circulation of commentaries (ibid.).

It can be anticipated that, on the one hand, a poor layout or lack of

[19] Apart from the Göttingen University Library, copies both of *Rhetoric* (USTC 3008774) and *Poetics* (USTC 3011104) are identified to date only in the UK, Ireland, and the US.

[20] On Sidney and the Aristotelian doctrines of catharsis and mimesis see Rist 2016, 134-8.

convenient printed indications, and, on the other hand, textual mistakes in the *Poetics*, especially concerning the distribution of stylistic resources in the different parts of tragedy, for a long time contributed to obliterating the most salient peculiarities of the choral and individual lyric parts, that is, polymetry and responsiveness between the stanzas. Let us therefore turn to the places in the *Poetics* where Aristotle discusses the linguistic tools used by the tragic poet. He defines the role of rhythm, metre and song in dramatic poetry in three distinct loci. The first one is shortly after the beginning, and both its position and the wording show that it has a defining function:

> Εἰσὶ δέ τινες αἳ πᾶσι χρῶνται τοῖς εἰρημένοις, λέγω δὲ οἷον ῥυθμῷ καὶ μέλει καὶ μέτρῳ, ὥσπερ ἥ τε τῶν διθυραμβικῶν ποίησις καὶ ἡ τῶν νόμων καὶ ἥ τε τραγῳδία καὶ ἡ κωμῳδία· διαφέρουσι δέ, ὅτι αἱ μὲν ἅμα πᾶσιν αἱ δὲ κατὰ μέρος. Ταύτας μὲν οὖν λέγω τὰς διαφορὰς τῶν τεχνῶν, ἐν οἷς ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν. (1447b24-9)[21]

> [There are also some arts which use all the stated media – rhythm, melody, metre – as do dithyramb and nomes,[22] tragedy and comedy. They differ in that some employ all together, others use them in certain parts [*kata meros*]. So these are the distinctions between the arts in the media in which they produce mimesis.]

In his translation, Stephen Halliwell renders with "media" what the Greek expresses with linguistic neutral names (first αἳ πᾶσι χρῶνται τοῖς εἰρημένοις, lit. "which use all the things we have said", then πᾶσιν scil. χρῶνται, i. e. "which use all [these] things"). In drama, these media constitute not its structural articulation, but its communicative tools. Hence we learn that tragedy and comedy use rhythm, metre and *melos* to varying degrees in the different parts of which they are composed. In other words, the different combinations of the three media differentiate the parts (*mere*) of drama, just as, on a different level, they characterise the different poetic genres. Aristotle will say what these *mere* (plur. of *meros*) are at 52b14-8: differently from the "components" (*mere* also these) "that must be used as basic elements (*eide*)", coinciding with the "media" (rhythm, melody, and metre) we have just considered, these are quantitative structures (*kata de to poson*), that is, "formal and discrete sections" common to every tragedy: "prologue, episode,

[21] Unless otherwise indicated, for the text and translation of *Poetics* I am relying on Halliwell 1995. Henceforth in quotations from the *Poetics* I will omit the first two digits of the Bekker pagination (e.g. 47b24-9).

[22] "Nomes were traditional styles of melody, for string or wind instrument, to which various texts could be set; by Aristotle's time the term covered elaborate compositions closely related to dithyramb: cf. 48a15" (Halliwell 1995, 33nb).

exodos, choral unit (further divisible into *parodos* and *stasimon*)", to which can be added monodies ("actors' songs", from the scene) and melodramatic dialogues, mostly laments (*kommoi*), mixed of spoken, recitative and sung verses.[23] The *Poetics* shows a recurrent concern to ensure the distinction between the structural parts, which in 49b26 will be called μόρια (*moria*), and, in correspondence to these, between the "media" that characterise each one of them – to this end Aristotle frequently uses the adverb/preposition χωρίς, 'separately' (47a23, 49b25 and 29, and cf. 47a26) and the passive of the verb χωρίζω (52b16 and 27).

Unfamiliarity with the *Poetics* could make it difficult to interpret the term μέρος (*meros*), which recurs in several pages with different purposes and different meanings. In order to better understand the effects ensuing from this terminological ambiguity, let us return to Giorgio Valla's translation (1447-1500: 1498), which marks the beginning of the "arduous conquest of the *Poetics*"[24] in the Renaissance.[25] Here is the first proposition of 47b24-9:

> [S]unt nimirum quae iam dictis utant omnibus rhythmo inquam et melo et *carmine* . . . (sign. r1*v*)
>
> [Certainly there are some [kinds of poetry] that use all that has been said, I mean rhythm, song and *composition in verse* . . . (emphasis mine)]

It has been remarked that "Valla's translation is free from any bias of an interpretative nature", and it has been unanimously acknowledged that his errors mostly correspond to the text of the Greek manuscript he used.[26] It should be added that, at least with regard to the *Poetics*, the relationship that

[23] Μέρη δὲ τραγῳδίας οἷς μὲν ὡς εἴδεσι δεῖ χρῆσθαι, πρότερον εἴπομεν, κατὰ δὲ τὸ ποσόν καὶ εἰς ἃ διαιρεῖται [the subject is the *mere*/*eide* which in the definition of tragedy (49b28-30, see below, 24) must be variously distributed *en tois moriois*] κεχωρισμένα τάδε ἐστί, πρόλογος ἐπεισόδιον ἔξοδος χορικόν, καὶ τοῦτου τὸ μὲν πάροδος τὸ δὲ στάσιμον, κοινὰ μὲν ἁπάντων ταῦτα, ἴδια δὲ τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ κόμμοι. In the brief recapitulation that closes the *Poetics* we find again the distinction between *eide*, "varieties", and *mere*, "(structural) components" (62b16).

[24] Aguzzi-Barbagli 1988, 108. Valla "probably lectured on the *Poetics* in Venice about 1485" (97-8, and see Garin 1973, 448).

[25] His translation occupies pp. r1*v*-s3*v* of the collection printed by Simon Bevila[c]qua in Venice in 1498 (USTC 992882). USTC records 90 copies, distributed across the Continent (5 in the UK, one of which [PLRE.Folger: 67.92] is in a private inventory of 1558). Textual references are to the copy marked 2 Inc.c.a. 3671 in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, München (https://www.ustc.ac.uk/editions/992882). It was replicated in 1504 in Venice by Bernardino Vitali, together with various Latinised writings on rhetoric (USTC 810865; five copies are recorded, including one in the UK).

[26] Aguzzi-Barbagli 19ss, 109. The manuscript was identified by Lobel (1933, 25-6) in Estensis gr. 100 = *alpha*.T.8.3 of the National and University Library of Modena. Raschieri provides a description of it (2013, 355-6).

bound him to one of his teachers, Andronicos Callistos, who for some time would condition the reception of the original text, remains without effect (see below, 22).[27] However, it is immediately evident that the translation of the third term, i. e. *metron*, with *carmen* obliterates the tripartition of variously dosed elements – almost as if Valla had difficulty in understanding the two functions of *metron* in the sung and the recited sections, respectively. This, however, is what was available at the end of the fifteenth century for those who wished to approach the ancient poetic theory in a modern translation. The Greek text would follow only ten years later, in the *editio princeps* printed by Aldo. As we shall see, precisely the definition of tragedy contains an erroneous conjectural insertion that will affect the whole conception of the relationship between these "media" and the parts of tragedy. Before considering the definition given in 49b24-31, famous – if for no other reason – because it also concerns catharsis, let us consider a passage that follows it, where Aristotle concludes his extensive examination of the six "components" of tragedy – as Halliwell here translates *mere* (50a7-10):

> ἀνάγκη οὖν πάσης τραγῳδίας μέρη εἶναι ἕξ, καθ' ἃ ποιά τις ἐστὶν ἡ τραγῳδία· ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶ μῦθος καὶ ἤθη καὶ λέξις καὶ διάνοια καὶ ὄψις καὶ μελοποιία.
>
> [Tragedy as a whole, therefore, must have six components, which give it its qualities – namely, [1] plot, [2] character, [3] diction, [4] thought, [5] spectacle, and [6] lyric poetry.]

At 50b12-6, in particular, Aristotle will deal with *lexis*:

> Τέταρτον δὲ τῶν μὲν λόγων[28] ἡ λέξις· λέγω δέ, ὥσπερ πρότερον εἴρηται, λέξιν εἶναι τὴν διὰ τῆς ὀνομασίας ἑρμηνείαν, ὃ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἐμμέτρων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν λόγων ἔχει τὴν αὐτὴν δύναμιν. Τῶν δὲ λοιπῶν ἡ μελοποιία μέγιστον τῶν ἡδυσμάτων.
>
> [Fourth is the diction of the spoken sections: as stated earlier, I define diction as expression through choice of words – something which has the same capacity in both verse and prose. Of the remainder, lyric poetry is the greatest embellishment.]

[27] Many codices written by Callistos passed into Valla's ownership, as Janus Lascaris attests in 1492 (Avezzù 1992), yet not the one containing the *Poetics* (Parisinus gr. 2038, for which see below 22, and cf. Tarán 2016. On Valla's library see now Raschieri 2013, 353; and 2020, 318-21.

[28] Omitted in the Arabic translation and deleted by an unknown scholar at some time after 1760, the words τῶν μὲν λόγων are considered by both Kassel (1966) and Tarán and Gutas (2012). However, given the generic meaning of *lexis*, these words can have an explanatory function, i. e. "spoken sections" versus "lyric poetry".

It may be noticed that here the discussion does not reproduce the order of the "components" given above, which Aristotle replaces with the following: [1] "plot", [2] "character", [4] "thought", [3] "diction", [6] "lyric poetry", and [5] "spectacle". The variation corresponds to the intention to group together the three "objects" (ἃ μιμοῦνται: [1], [2], [4]), the two "media" (οἷς, *scil.* μιμοῦνται: [3] and [6]), and the "mode" (ὡς μιμοῦνται: [5]) of *mimesis* (50a10-12). A little earlier within what is traditionally read as the sixth chapter, Aristotle provides the famous definition of tragedy, where we find the media we have already briefly dealt with. Here is the full passage:

> Ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἑκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας, δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. Λέγω δὲ ἡδυσμένον μὲν λόγον τὸν ἔχοντα ῥυθμὸν καὶ ἁρμονίαν {καὶ μέλος}, τὸ δὲ χωρὶς τοῖς εἴδεσι τὸ διὰ μέτρων ἔνια μόνον περαίνεσθαι καὶ πάλιν ἕτερα διὰ μέλους.[29] (49b24-31)

[Tragedy, then, is mimesis of an action which is elevated, complete, and of magnitude; in language embellished [*hedysmenos*] by distinct forms in its sections [*moria*]; employing the mode of enactment, not narrative; and through pity and fear accomplishing the catharsis of such emotions. I use "embellished" for language with rhythm and melody {and song}, and "distinct forms" for the fact that some parts [*enia*, neut. plur. subst.] are conveyed through metrical speech alone, others [*hetera*, idem] again through song.]

As in 47b24-9, here too "rhythm" and "melody" are identified as media of dramatic poetry – and both of them assume *metron* as the fundamental resource of the spoken parts as well as of the sung parts, in combination with music. The statement that the species (*eide*) of embellishment are distributed in the different "sections" of the tragedy is absolutely relevant: it implies that we can find different portions variously characterised by resources capable of "embellishing" their language, all functional to *mimesis*. Later we will see that this distribution of communicative media represents the central nexus in the Renaissance perception of tragedy inclduing acting and singing, and therefore with different ways of using rhythmic and metric resources, combining them or not with music. But it is worth returning to the definition

[29] The text adopted by Halliwell coincides with that of the Kassel edition (1966) and therefore differs from that of Tarán and Gutas (2012), who do not expunge καὶ μέλος, attested by the whole tradition. I acknowledge that the expunction does not solve the problems raised in this context by the pair "*harmonia* and *melos*", but I do not find fully persuasive Tarán and Gutas' claim that "καὶ is probably explanatory: μέλος specifies or defines ἁρμονία" (2012, 247).

of tragedy, this time in Giorgio Valla's translation – I will segment it for clarity's sake:

> Est igitur tragoedia imitatio actionis probae atque co‹n›sum‹m›atae magnitudinem iucunda oratione obti[n]entis citra quamlibet speciem in particulis agentium nec de commissorum pronuntiatu de miseratione et pavore terminans talium disciplinarum purgationem: suavem ac oblectabilem inquam orationem habentem rhythmum et harmoniam et melos quod autem citra species id per metra quaedam dumtaxat perficit sicut porro alia per melos. (r2*v*)
>
> [Tragedy is therefore an imitation | of an honest action fulfilled in greatness | which in delightful language distributes each species in the parts | of persons acting and not by the account of those who have done the deed | which through pity and fear brings to effect the purgation from such *disciplines*. | Sweet and delightful I say the diction that possesses rhythm, harmony, and *melos*, and achieves moreover this [qualities] separately for the various species, one [poetic genre] with the metre, and another in turn with the *melos*.]

This translation offers a similar picture to the one Valla himself presents in his *Laus poeticae*, a treatise included in his extensive encyclopaedia *De expetendis et fugiendis rebus*.[30] When he wrote that *Laus* probably for teaching purposes, he was strongly inspired by Diomedes' *Ars grammatica* (fourth century CE), and sometimes paraphrased it, sometimes reproduced it literally. He did not find in it the theory of catharsis – which does not seem to be of interest to Diomedes – but clear definitions of the mimetic, not diegetic, character of drama, and transferred them almost literally into his text. He also found the origin of the very name *drama* as deriving from acting (EE8*r*):

> Poeticae artis species tres esse perhibentur, activa sive imitativa, quam graeci *dramaticen*, vel *mimiticen* vocant, enarrativa sive enuntiativa quam graeci *exegematicen*, vel *epangelticen* dicunt. Tertia communis uel mixta quam illi *coenen* vel *misten* appellant. *Dramatice* est in qua personae agunt solae citra ullam poetae interlocutionem. *Exegematice* est in qua ipse poeta loquitur.[31]

[30] Valla 1501 (USTC 861868: 12 copies in the UK).

[31] Cf. Diomedes 482 ll. 14-9. Keil: "Poematos genera sunt tria, aut enim activum est vel imitativum, quod Graeci *dramaticon* vel *mimeticon*, aut enarrativum vel enuntiativum, quod Graeci *exegeticon* vel *apangelticon* dicunt [cf. Aristotle's οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας (49b27)] aut commune vel mistum . . . *Dramaticon* est vel activum in quo personae agunt solae sine ullius poetae interlocutione, ut se habent tragicae et comicae fabulae." [Poetry is of three genres: an active or imitative one, which the Greeks call dramatic or mimetic; a narrative or enunciative one, which the Greeks call exegetic or *apangelticon*; a common or mixed one . . . The *dramaticon* is also active, in that the characters act in the first person without the intervention of a poet – such are the tragic and comic dramas.]

> [There are three types of poetics: active or imitative, which the Greeks call dramatic or mimetic; narrative or declarative, which the Greeks call expository or 'report'. The third is common or mixed, which they call koine or mixed. Dramatic is the one where the characters act alone, without any interlocution from the poet. Expositional is the one where the poet speaks in the first person.]

In Diomedes he also found a simple etymology of *drama*:

> Tragedies and comedies are called dramas from *dran*, i. e. 'acting' . . . In fact the fabula is action, not reporting by the actors.[32]

Just δρᾶν, whence δρώντων in the Aristotelian definition (49b26). In brief, Diomedes suggested the adversative coordination "(*mimesis*) of persons acting *and not* by an account by the poet (*sine ullius poetae interlocutione*)" (my emphasis) – which Valla rephrases as "not by the account of those who have done the deed", demonstrating that he was well aware of the diegetic portions of tragedy, such as the prologues and the messenger-speeches.[33] It may be concluded that in the Renaissance the correct segmentation of the Aristotelian definition of tragedy was suggested in the third book of Diomedes' *Ars grammatica*, which circulated much more widely than Valla's translation of the *Poetics* and *Laus*.[34] The interpretative problem represented by the 'parts/sections' *moria* would have been easy to solve not by matching them as 'parts' played by the dramatic characters (δρῶντες, *drontes*), a reading that was to become normative ("in partibus agentibus"), but by resorting to the second, and last, part of the definition of tragedy, and its distinction between some parts (*enia*) conveyed through metrical speech alone, and others (*hetera*) through song.

[32] "Dramata autem tragica aut comica παρὰ τὸ δρᾶν, id est agere . . . ; nam et agi fabula, non referri ab actoribus dicitur" (490 l. 21-4 K.).

[33] *Pace* Tigerstedt (1968, 18), Valla did not cite the Aristotelian definition of tragedy in his *Laus* only because he did not find it in Diomedes, and not "because . . . in his translation [of the *Poetics*] the katharsis clause makes no sense". With regard to the latter point, Valla actually translated the Greek erroneous word μαθημάτων ("disciplines"), but this reading can also be found in the Aldine, and will be replaced by the more reliable παθημάτων ("affectiones") only later.

[34] Diomedes' 1475 *editio princeps* (Venice: Jenson) was followed by many others: Vicenza (Henricus de Sancto Urso: 1486), Lyon (Sacon: 1498), Venice (Pensi: 1491). In the sixteenth century (non-exhaustive list): Paris (Jean Petit: 1507), Venice (Rivius, 1511), Paris (Ascensius, 1518), Venice (Rivius: 1519)Cologne 1523 (Quentel) and 1533 (Io. Soter; then again 1536), Leipsic (Bärwald, 1541, 1542), Cologne (Gymnich: 1544), Hannover (Marnius: 1605).

3. The Success of a Mistake

Yet Aldo in 1508 published the *editio princeps* of the *Poetics* in Greek within the *Rhetores* edited by Demetrios Ducas with contributions by Janus Lascaris.[35] The text was derived from MS. Parisinus gr. 2038, the work of the copyist and scholar Andronicos Callistos.[36] Here is the definition of tragedy we can read in the Aldine (Andronicos Callistos' textual interventions are within angle brackets: ‹ ›): ". . . ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ‹,› χωρὶς ἑκάστου τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις δρώντων‹.› καὶ οὐ δι' ἐπαγγελίας, ‹ἀλλὰ› δι' ἐλέου καὶ . . .". The syntax dependent on the comma after λόγῳ, the dot after δρώντων, and the adversative ἀλλὰ, are due to Callistos, as we can see in his manuscript (f. 113*r*). It produces a radical restructuring of the text: the part. δρώντων, dependent on μίμησις and opposed to δι' ἀπαγγελίας (literally "imitation of people acting, and not by narrative"), is thus linked to *moria*, with the result that the language of tragedy looks variously embellished "according to the parts of those who act". That is: ". . . in language embellished, by distinct forms *in the parts of those who act*, and not through narration, *but* through pity and compassion accomplishing the catharsis . . . (emphasis is mine)". Here the Greek *moria* (lit. 'portions, body parts, constituent parts') are understood as the Latin *partes*, that is, 'roles, parts of the actors',[37] and an unreasonable contrast is introduced between the narrative and the emotional factors of catharsis. This juxtaposition implies an interpretative drift towards a moralisation of the narrative component of tragedy in view of the catharsis – but this is a subject for analysis beyond the scope of this article.

Nowadays we read the text as it was finally set by Immanuel Bekker in his monumental 1831 edition of the Aristotelian *corpus*, but the text arranged by Callistos and the Aldine was perpetuated in most editions of the *Poetics* for almost three centuries,[38] up to Thomas Winstanley's 1780 edition, which

[35] Sicherl 1997, 310-11; Tarán and Gutas 2012, 47.

[36] The MS. can be read at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10722795h/f120. item. Callistos (ca. 1400-1475) was a formidable author of conjectures to many Greek texts, and more than a few of his manuscript editions of Greek classics have long been attributed recensional value, later refuted by subsequent research (Centanni 1986 and 1995's last attempts to value this MS. as an independent source have been definitively refuted by Tarán and Gutas 2012); for updated references see Chinellato 2018.

[37] Copious attestations in Terence and Cicero, not to mention Horace *Ars poetica* (*Epist.* 3) 193-4: "actoris partis chorus . . . defendat".

[38] There is just one exception: an anonymous reader in his copy of the 1555 Morel edition of the *Poetics* (USTC 160035; at p. 15) erased the undue ἀλλά. This is the exemplar preserved in the Rome Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale that once belonged to the Roman Jesuit College (digitised copy: https://books.google.it/books?vid=IBNR:CR0003002o5&redir_esc=y).

contained his edition of the Greek text and Goulston's Latin translation (1623).[39] It may be claimed that, almost thirty years after the Aldine edition, *les jeux sont faits*: Trincavelli (1536, 271) republished the Aldine text,[40] and that same year Alessandro Pazzi translated it:

> tragoedia est imitatio actionis . . . sermone suavi, separatim singulis generibus in partibus agentibus (*in the active roles*), non per enarrationem, per misericordiam vero atque terrorem perturbationes huiusmodi purgans (*not by narration, but by pity and terror, purifying this kind of afflictions*).[41] (1536, 9*v*)

In 1548 Francesco Robortello published the first of the major Renaissance commentaries on the *Poetics*;[42] he adopted the Aldine text and Pazzi's translation, and commented:

> "Separatim singulis generibus": quod tum ea de causa [*scil.* Paccius] dixit, tum propter choros, in quibus alia proferebantur ore, alia concinebantur. (1548, 55)
>
> [Pazzi distinguished the individual poetic resources] either for this reason (*scil.* according to the parts of those acting), or because of the choruses, which sometimes recite and sometimes sing in unison.]

Alongside the distinction between the communicative forms that can be used by different characters, Robortello thereby introduced the observation that the chorus can use different metric forms. Yet the most obvious reference is to the communicative modes of the chorus-leader, who mostly recites in the same metre as the characters, i. e. in iambic trimeter. The same observation will be repeated by Maggi in his commentary on Horace's *Ars poetica*, 193: "in tragoedia chorus interdum unius personae munere fungens loquitur, interdum vero canit" [in tragedy the chorus sometimes recites, if it has the

[39] Winstanley (1780, 278) suggests to rewrite δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι' ἀπαγγελίας, δι' ἐλέου καὶ φόβου etc., and appropriately points out that, contrary to what the commentators ("interpretes") of the *Poetics* thought, there was no opposition between φόβον and ἀπαγγελίαν. This indubitable merit is not, however, compromised by his misunderstanding of Dacier's 1692 French translation and Lessing's treatment of this section of the *Poetics* in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. This revision of the text shared by the Renaissance interpreters is undoubtedly prompted by Goulston's paraphrase and commentary, which is discussed below (30-2).

[40] (USTC 810885) But in 49b28 he points out the variant παθημάτων in the margin of μαθημάτων, anticipated by Pazzi in his translation.

[41] A. Pazzi de' Medici (1483-1530 or 1531); the translation came out posthumously. With "perturbationes" he implicitly adopts the Greek παθημάτων, instead of the erroneous μαθημάτων ('disciplinae'), which is still present in the edition accompanying his translation (1536, 5*r*); the same discrepancy also occurs in the Basle 1537 edition.

[42] USTC 852746; 20 out of 76 copies in the UK.

function of an individual character, and sometimes sings] (1550, 350). On the same line – δρώντων as a specification of *moria* and not in opposition to δι' ἐπαγγελίας – will also be the Italian translation by Bernardo Segni (1549):

> È adunche la Tragedia una imitatione d'attione . . . con parlar suave separatamente in ciascheduna sua spetie *nelle parti di coloro, che van negociando*, conducendo l'espurgatione degli affetti, non per via di narratione, ma per via di misericordia, et di timore. (1549, 290)
>
> [Thus tragedy is an imitation of an action . . . with delightful speech separately in each of its species *in the parts of those, who are negotiating*, realising the purification of emotions not through storytelling, but through pity and fear.]

Close to the Aldine text, Maggi and Lombardi (1550, 96-8)[43] would also adopt Pazzi's translation. In their commentary, the interpretations shared by the two co-authors (*communes explanationes*), while understanding the non-narrative nature of the tragedy, barely touch upon the theme of its stylistic media, referring back to 47b24-9 we saw above. Instead, Maggi's own *annotationes* regarding the definition of tragedy would be entirely devoted to a moralistic reading of catharsis. Along the same interpretative line (apart from the moralistic vision), also Pier Vettori (1560) would confirm this misinterpretation:

> Est igitur tragoedia imitatio actionis . . . condita oratione, seorsum unaquaque formarum *in partibus agentibus*: et non per expositionem, *sed* per misericordiam et metum conficiens huiuscemodi perturbationum purgationem. (54; emphasis mine)

Compared to the Aldine text and Pazzi's translation adopted by Robortello and Maggi-Lombardi, Vettori marks punctuation more intensely, both in Greek and in Latin (as also in his 1564 edition of the Greek text alone [USTC 810961], and in the second edition of 1573 [USTC 863124]). Thus, by endorsing this misreading, an undisputed philological authority such as Vettori, on the one hand, cancelled the opposition between mimesis and diegesis, and, on the other hand, definitively obliterated the rhythmic, metric and melodic features of the different parts of drama. In this perspective, *rhythmos* is considered in relation to the movements of the chorus, that is, as the rhythm of the dance ("rhythmus, qui est ratio celeris motus ad tardum"; so in his commentary on 47b24-9, 18), not as "pitch and rhythm [assigned] to the diction", as for example in Plato (*Rep.* 397b: ἐάν τις ἀποδιδῷ πρέπουσαν ἁρμονίαν καὶ ῥυθμὸν τῇ λέξει).

Thus, in the light of his misinterpretation of the essence of the *moria*

[43] USTC 839586. The commentary on Aristotle is followed by Maggi's *Interpretatio* of Horace's *Ars poetica*.

and of the erasure of their distinct formal characteristics, Vettori must have asked himself what *hedysmenos logos* ("embellished language") and *hedysmata* ("embellishments") meant. Unlike all previous translators, who had rendered *hedysmenos* (*logos*) as *suavis* (*oratio*, *sermo*; It. *suave parlar*), he translated *hedysmenos logos* as *condita oratio* (Restani 2015, 85). Therefore, at 50b16, he consistently translated μελοποιία as "cantus, maximus omnium condimentorum". The Latin adjective *condita* applied to *oratio* signifies the ornamentation of speech, and sometimes implies the idea of excess.[44] He interpreted these words with full mastery of Aristotle's *technai*,[45] contextualising this page of the *Poetics* and some stylistic considerations made by Aristotle in the third book of his *Rhetoric*. We should consider that in a style of writing so reluctant to resort to formal refinements, such as the one which transmitted Aristotle's teaching, ἥδυσμα (*hedysma*, plur. ἡδύσματα *hedysmata*) – 'seasoning, dressing, sauce' (Montanari), but also 'spices, aromata' – suggests a pun with the almost homophone ἔδεσμα (*edesma*), 'nourishment, food, victuals' (Montanari) that Aristotle makes in the *Rhetoric*. There he reproaches Alcidamas, a rhetorician contemporary of Isocrates, for the inappropriate use of *epitheta* and states that "he employs them, not as the mere seasoning (οὐ . . . ἥδύσματι χρῆται) but as the actual meat (ἀλλ' ὡς ἐδέσματι)" (3.3 1406a19; translation by Cope 1877). We should keep in mind that in prose the *epitheta* are among the main factors that "vary the customary style and give a foreign air to the language", so as to "make it plain that it is poetry (*poiesis*)" (*Rhet.* 1406a13-5, trans. Cope). It would be imprudent to perceive also in this page of the *Poetics*, just as in that of the *Rhetoric*, an implicit hierarchy between the "pièce de résistance, the substance", i. e. the *lexis*, participating in the common *hedysma*, and the "mere adjunct or the appendage" (Cope again, ibid.), a *hedysma* of a second degree, i. e. the lyric poetry. However, the song produces effects of estrangement in respect to the *lexis* of recitation, however elevated and "embellished" it may be (it should be once again remembered that the tragedy as a whole makes use of ἡδυσμένος λόγος, 49b25 and 28). Thus we could say that tragedy is embellished on two distinct levels: first of all, and in general, as it uses a *logos* embellished by *rhythmos* and *metron* in the varieties appropriate to recitation, and furthermore by the "melody" (ἁρμμονία, *harmonia*), which with *rhythmos* contributes to producing *melopoiia*. This double 'embellishment' constitutes an interpretative nexus that the Renaissance interpreters of the *Poetics* did

[44] "Nimium condita oratio", Quintilianus 11.3,182, and cf. Cicero, *De oratore* 2.56.227; *Brutus* 29.110.

[45] In 1548 he had published his *Commentaries* to the *Rhetoric* (USTC 863102), in the same format that he would later use for those to the *Poetics*: sections of the Greek text followed by translations and commentaries in Latin.

not decode satisfactorily, also because of the textual alteration undergone by the passage containing the definition of tragedy. Thus, in spite of Vettori's attention to the musical component of drama (Restani 2015, 85), a stylistics focused on the structures of drama seems to give way to a stylistics tailored to the characters.

Julius Caesar Scaliger would further reduce the role of music and singing. Shortly after the middle of the sixteenth century, he wrote a *Poetics* which was published posthumously in 1561 and again in 1581. It has an encyclopaedic structure, and is more similar to Diomedes' *Ars grammatica* and Giorgio Valla's *Laus poeticae* than to the contemporary commentaries on Aristotle; indeed, it reveals a peculiar absence of Aristotle's *Poetics*. For example, his cumbersome treatment of the chorus (1561, p. 146d, col. 2) mixes considerations on its "multiplex officium" ("multiple task"), in line with the exegetical vulgate concerning ll. 193-6 of Horace's *Ars* ("interdum consolatur, aliquando luget simul", "sometimes [the chorus] comforts, sometimes he weeps together [with the character]", etc.) with an idiosyncratic vision according to which "chori omnino est ἠθοποιία et πάθος" ("the chorus is fully responsible for the delineation of the characters and the emotional style").[46] Hence the attribution to Aristotle of a statement completely alien to his *Poetics*: "Aristotle denies that tragic authors had antistrophic choruses" ("negat Aristoteles ἀντιστρόφους habuisse Choros tragicos"). Here the term *antistrophos*, that notoriously never occurs in the *Poetics*, is paired with a genre, that of *nomoi*, whose extraneousness from drama Aristotle had declared *in limine*. Not surprisingly Scaliger's precepts concerning the different *harmoniai* and their ethical content are completely foreign to the *Poetics*. His definition of tragedy is also deeply idiosyncratic. The Greek text is, once again, that of Callistos and the Aldine, but the paraphrase is highly reductive and entails a severe liquidation of *melos* (12a-b col. 1):

> Imitatio per actiones illustris fortunae, exitu infelici, oratione gravi metrica. Nam quod harmoniam et melos addunt, non sunt ea, ut philosophi loquuntur, de essentia Tragoediae.
>
> [Imitation of an illustrious case with an inauspicious outcome, by means of action, in solemn language and in verse: Because what harmonia and *melos* add does not belong, as the philosophers say, to the essence of tragedy.]

[46] In the stylistic doctrine of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the *ethopoiia* is eminently an authorial trait and consists in the construction of a character by assigning a language suitable to represent him/her – with reference to the above-mentioned verses of Horace's *Ars poetica*, here Scaliger seems to present the Chorus as the poet's spokesman and supporter, rather than as a character, and therefore to opt for the variant "auctoris" rather than "actoris". On this topic see Bigliazzi' article in this issue (145).

Ludovico Castelvetro would close the season of the great commentataries in 1570, apparently harmonising the syntax of the established interpretation, but in fact definitely upsetting the authentic segmentation of the *Poetics* and producing a translation as vacuous as it is sonorous:

> È adunque tragedia rassomiglianza d'attione magnifica, compiuta, che habbia grandezza, di ciascuna delle spetie *di coloro, che rappresentano* con favella fatta dilettevole separatamente per particelle, et non per narratione, et *oltre a ciò* induca per misericordia e per ispavento purgatione di così fatte passioni. (62*v*)
>
> [Tragedy is therefore the likeness of a magnificent, accomplished action, such that it has grandness, *of the various kinds of those, who represent* with a language made delightful separately in small parts, and not by narration, *and moreover* induces through pity and terror the purification of such passions. (emphasis mine)]

In spite of Castelvetro's syntactic contortions, he too comes to the same conclusion, namely that style characterises the different speakers. The "small parts" (Aristotle's *moria*) are nothing more than the formal, stylistic and figural articulations of the speeches assigned to the characters. In his commentary, he removes all doubt: "poi si dice che ciascuna di queste spetie ha i suoi rappresentatori separati, il che sopra si manifestò in quelle parole διαφέρουσι καὶ ὅτι αἱ μὲν ἅμα πᾶσιν, αἳ δὲ κατὰ μέρος 47b24-9" [there it is said that each of those species has its separate representers. Which was manifested by the words "they differ in that some employ all together, others use them in certain parts" (63*v*)]. Among the acrobatic artifices of his translation, the expression "and moreover" is a masterpiece of creative skill that irons out all exegetical difficulties. Winstanley will notice it: "Castelvetro ἀλλά *oltre a ciò*, insuper, contra omnem linguae Graecae analogiam" (1780 278).

4. In England, at the Beginning of the Seventeenth Century

In 1610 Daniel Heinsius preferred to circumvent any obstacles by simply omitting the word δρώντων in his translation (his Greek text was once again the Aldine one): ". . . ita ut singula genera in singulis partibus habeant locum: utque non enarratione, sed per misericordiam et metum etc." (11)[47] [. . . so that the individual genres find their place in the individual parts, and not through narration, but pity and fear, etc. . . .]. We cannot fail to detect a certain irony in this tactical omission, given that in his *Praefatio*

[47] The enlarged edition of 1643 did not introduce any changes to this passage (247).

amico lectori he criticises those who "verbum quippe verbo reddunt" [those who translate word for word], saying that they "nec a syllabis illius reced[u] nt, cuius mentem non intelligunt" [do not even give up the syllables of the text whose meaning they do not understand] (‹8*v*›). The result is that "quae obscuriora videbantur" [the concepts that appeared more obscure] in the definition of tragedy, as Heinsius defines them in his concluding "Notae" (75), were evidently destined to remain unsolved.

Quite different is the commitment with which Theodore Goulston (1572-1632) produced the first edition of Aristotle's *Poetics* on English soil (1623). His aim was to give the most "analytical" reading possible, even if he did not publish the Greek text – as we have seen this would be added by Thomas Winstanley, together with his own textual and exegetical annotations in the last of the fortunate series of editions of Goulston's work (1780). With declaredly interpretative aims, he added nouns, adjectives, adverbs etc. and went on to print them in italics in view of making explicit what he considered the authentic sense of the Aristotelian text.

One wonders why Goulston, who included the Greek text in his edition of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1619), did not do the same for the *Poetics*, which is considerably shorter and therefore offers fewer editorial difficulties. His reading of the two Aristotelian passages that we have considered fundamental for a correct understanding of the rhythmic, metrical and performative variety of dramatic poetry, namely those relating to the use of "media" in the various poetic genres (47b24-9, cf. above 13-14) and the definition of tragedy (49b24-31, cf. above 18ff.), offers a considerably different perspective from the Renaissance exegetical vulgate. His treatment of the first passage is very peculiar (italics in the original):

> Differunt vero *hae inter se*, quod illae quidem omnibus *istis utantur* simul, hae vero singulis secundum *quasdam suas* partes, *cum ipsis commodum sit* (3)
>
> [The poetic genres *differ from each other* in that some employ *all together*, others use them in certain parts *where it is appropriate for each of them*]

and comments on the passage from "hae" to "sit" as follows: "Tragoedia et comoedia [istis utuntur] in temporibus aut partibus saltem scenae diversis." [Tragedy and comedy use these means in the different situations and parts of each act.]. He is clearly anticipating the definition of tragedy and superimposing the distinction between parts and moments ("tempora") of dramatic compositions ("scaena") on that between poetic genres. This overlapping is undue; and yet the anticipation is revealing of the fact that he is reading this page in the light of the next one, with a clear perception that the parts of drama are characterised by stylistic resources which are

different and differently combined with each other. Turning to the definition of tragedy, he correctly connects δρώντων and οὐ δι᾽ ἀπαγγελίας, although he does not depart from the commonly adopted Greek text, where he reads ἀλλὰ δι᾽ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου:

> Est igitur tragoedia, imitatio actionis studiosae et perfectae, magnitudinem *idoneam* habentis, cum sermone per formas *quasdam* condito, ita ut singulae *illae*, in partibus poëseos *singulis*, separatim, agendo imitentur, et non per enarrationem rei, sed per misericordiam, metumque *factis impressum*, eiusmodi *vehementis animarum* perturbationes undique purgans, *expiansque*. (11-2)

Goulston could hardly have objected to a Greek text that had been accepted even by the most distinguished scholars of the preceding decades, so he continued to translate that catharsis is produced "not through narration but through pity and fear". However, he acknowledged some aspects present in the Greek text that had been obliterated: first of all, that imitation is practised through action, and then the plurality of forms ("formae *quaedam*", "singulae *illae*") and their varied ("separatim") distribution in the parts of the composition ("in partibus poëseos *singulis*") are completely unrelated to the stylistic connotation of the characters on stage. In this part of the definition, it should be noticed that *mimesis* is produced by "formae". As regards the following part, Goulston tries to correct the inappropriate adversative by way of a sort of duplication, where "metum[que] *factis impressum*" recovers δρώντων as the legitimate term to be set against "per enarrationem rei".

By Way of a Provisional Conclusion

The misunderstanding of the Aristotelian interpretation of a particular passage in the definition of tragedy, dating back to Andronicos Callistos and imposed on the later commentators of Aristotle by the *editio princeps* (1508), was very popular until the dawn of the seventeenth century, when, however, thanks to Turnèbe and Canter, progress in the study of the classics made it possible to deduce directly from the tragic texts the stylistic properties of the recited and sung parts. The error is resilient, because Goethe too depends indirectly on the Aldine when he reads the translation of the *Poetics* made by Michael Conrad Curtius (1753),[48] and in his own *Nachlese zu Aristoteles*

[48] "Das Trauerspiel ist nämlich de Nachahmung einer ernsthaften, vollständigen un eine Grösse habenden Handlung, durch einen mit fremden Schmuck versehnen Ausdruck, dessen sämtliche Teile aber besonders wirken: welche ferner, *nicht durch die Erzählung des Dichters, sondern durch die Vorstellung der Handelnden selbst* uns vermittelst der Schreckens und des Mitleidens von den Fehlern der vorgestellten Leidenschaften reiniget." [For the tragedy is the imitation of a serious, complete and

Poetik (1826) translates that troubled page of Aristotle as follows:[49]

> Die Tragödie ist die Nachahmung einer bedeutenden und abgeschlossenen Handlung, die eine gewisse Ausdehnung hat und in anmutiger Sprache vorgetragen wird, und zwar von abgesonderten Gestalten, deren jede ihre eigne Rolle spielt, und nicht erzählungsweise von einem Einzelnen; nach einem Verlauf *aber* von Mitleid und Furcht mit Ausgleichung solcher Leidenschaften ihr Geschäft abschließt.
>
> [Tragedy is the imitation of an important and complete action, which has a certain extension and is performed in graceful language by separate characters, each of whom plays their own part, and not narrated by a single individual; *but* after a course of compassion and fear, with the balancing of such passions, it concludes its business. (emphasis mine)]

It may sound strange to call a philological and, ultimately, historical error fortunate. But it is undeniable that it brought about a fertile experimentation in lyric forms that was neither philological nor academic but based on the "free circulation of generic models, no longer segregated within mutually incommunicable grammatical and methodological fields" (Gallico 1979, 67).

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grandiose action, by means of an expression adorned with foreign ornaments, all parts of which, however, have a special effect: which furthermore, *not through* the narration of the poet, *but through* the imagination of the actors themselves, purifies us by means of horror and pity from the faults of the imagined passions. (emphases mine)]. Schrimpf 1994, 714-5.

[49] Schrimpf 1994, 342-5. For Goethe, as for Curtius, the starting Greek text is obviously not the one printed by Schrimpf on 715.

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