ARISTOTLE'S POETICS

TRANSLATED & WITH A COMMENTARY BY

GEORGE WHALLEY

Aristotle's *Poetics*

Translated and with a commentary by George Whalley
Edited by John Baxter and Patrick Atherton

George Whalley's English translation of the *Poetics* breathes new life into the study of Aristotle's aesthetics by allowing the English-speaking student to experience the dynamic quality characteristic of Aristotle's arguments in the original Greek.

Aristotle's Poetics combines a complete translation of the *Poetics* with a running commentary, printed on facing pages, that keeps the reader in continuous contact with the linguistic and critical subtleties of the original while highlighting crucial issues for students of literature and literary theory. Whalley's unconventional interpretation emphasizes Aristotle's treatment of art as dynamic process rather than finished product. The volume includes two essays by Whalley in which he outlines his method and purpose. He identifies a deep congruence between Aristotle's understanding of *mimesis* and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's view of imagination.

This new translation makes a major contribution to the study of not only the *Poetics* and tragedy but all literature and aesthetics.

The late GEORGE WHALLEY was professor of English, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

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J.B & P.A.
Dalhousie University

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George Whalley on the *Poetics*: A Preface

PROLOGUE

George Whalley worked on Aristotle's *Poetics*, in one way or another, for a period of nearly two decades, but the main portion of his project was completed in the late sixties and early seventies. The central work of translation and commentary was substantially complete by 1970. In June of 1969 he delivered a talk at the meetings of the Learned Societies, "On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*," which was then published in the *University of Toronto Quarterly* (1970). This was followed by the essay on "The Aristotle-Coleridge Axis" (*University of Toronto Quarterly*, 1973).

Why the translation-and-commentary was not published quickly is not finally clear. Robin Strachan, then Director of McGill-Queen's University Press, was very much interested in publishing it, and Whalley himself, in his correspondence from the period, thinks of its appearance in print as imminent. In a general way, it is fairly easy to guess at some of the major reasons for delay. Whalley's standing as a distinguished scholar and a defender of humane studies in the universities, in Canada, and in the rest of the world made for large demands on his time. He continued to work on what was proving to be the monumental task of editing Coleridge's marginalia, and he maintained his interest in the legendary and historical matter of John Hornby by editing the diary of Edgar Christian, published as *Death in the Barren Ground* (1980). In addition, he was not in the best of health in the years leading up to his own death in 1983.

His numerous scholarly and academic interests, however, should not be thought of as merely deflecting him from the task of Aristotle. The freshness of his approach to the *Poetics* is intimately related to the breadth of vision that it embodies, and that in turn, of course, is tied

up with his multitudinous activities as a scholar and critic, biographer and poet. This reciprocity of interests means that his achievements in these various fields cannot be gauged accurately without sounding the depths of his engagement with Aristotle, which is only one of the reasons for publishing his work on the *Poetics* now. Conversely, the originality of his translation is hard to measure in a few well-chosen phrases because it reverberates in such various ways: in his critical discussion of "Jane Austen: Poet," for example, or in his handling of *The Legend of John Hornby*, or in the underlying assumptions of his own lyric poems.[1]

But the present volume is not intended primarily to advance the study of George Whalley, desirable as that may be. It is intended for students of English literature, to invigorate, or reinvigorate, our sense of a critical tradition, to sharpen our awareness of the works we read, to unsettle many of our habitual assumptions and responses. Whalley used his translation-and-commentary with his own students for many years. In fact, the layers of mimeographs and photocopies that resulted are the basis of this edition. It is time for a wider audience to participate in the benefits, stimulating and provoking, and to assess the results.

The essays from the *University of Toronto Quarterly* are included in this edition because they provide the best introduction to the guiding principles and special strategies of the translation-and-commentary. There is much, however, in Whalley's unpublished correspondence that illuminates his immediate purposes and helps to chart the development of his approach, especially the way it was changed and modified over a crucial period of about five or six years (from about 1968 to 1974). That development was breath-taking in its daring and in its creative approach to the problems of re-presenting Aristotle. With the support of that correspondence, the remainder of this preface focuses on the salient questions that assail the project now. In what sense is this a student edition of the *Poetics*? How does the Coleridgean influence operate, and what implications does it have? In what ways is Whalley's translation tied to the work of the great classicist Gerald Else? Can it be that a translation finished in its essentials some twenty years ago has not been superseded by more recent work, is still relevant, still fruitful?

WHALLEY AND THE STUDENTS

The task George Whalley set for himself was in some measure impossible. He wanted to make a translation of the *Poetics* that in several ways declines to be a translation. He wanted students of English literature

who had never studied Greek to be made radically conscious of Greek diction and syntax. He thought this was the best way, perhaps the only way, of enabling students to experience the drama of Aristotle's thinking about poetry and tragedy.

In correspondence with Gerald Else, he explains his leading principles:

> Without some more-than-rudimentary knowledge of Greek, students (and lecturers) find the larger commentaries, like yours, inaccessible in detail and are therefore prone to uncontrolled generalization. I feel very strongly that students of English need to be brought somehow into direct and detailed contact with the Greek – however that can be done. I have therefore not been primarily concerned to make a translation that – like yours, with its admirably trenchant introduction and notes – can stand by itself in place of the Greek, but a rather literal rendering into English with a running commentary that continuously draws attention to the minutiae in the Greek, and particularly the textual cruces. The result is deliberately nagging and irritating rather than 'readable', because I want to engage the student in the activity and substance of the Greek at the radical level, and to remind him (at least by implication) of the state of the text. Consequently I have tried to evolve a style that might conceivably be a dramatic rendering of the assumed nature of the writing – colloquial, overheard, improvised, and 'tufty' rather than formal, elegant, and 'stylish'.[2]

How, one might wonder, could a translation that doesn't stand on its own be thought to be more accessible than one that does? Why should Whalley imagine that a less 'readable' version is to be preferred to any of the existing translations into English?

He had expounded the same strategy earlier, in a letter to Robin Strachan:

> As you notice from the record in *Books in Print* there is no lack of translations of the *Poetics*, and a certain number of the more recent ones have been prepared with students of English literature in mind. A few are very distinguished – Grube's I admire very much and think cannot be surpassed simply as a translation. What I have wanted to do, however, is not simply to prepare a translation and a commentary (of which there is no lack) but a translation-and-commentary that keeps the reader in continuous contact with the Greek even if the reader knows no Greek. The commentary is not so much an elucidation and exposition of the text as a means of keeping the Greek in sight; and the style of translation is meant to work in the same way – so that the translation does not dispense with the Greek but is a counterpart to it.[3]

Is this possible? Can a reader who knows no Greek be put in even sporadic, much less continuous, contact with the Greek?

And even if it were possible, is it desirable? Who would want to submit to a text that is deliberately nagging and irritating? The benefits aren't exactly self-evident, but the risks certainly are. To begin with, a student who comes through the experience with merely a smattering of Greek, a few tags for exotic display, is likely to sound pedantic, precious, or affected rather than learned or meditative. Whalley himself, by his habit of transliterating instead of translating – by saying *poietry*, for example, instead of poetry – doesn't always escape this risk. More serious is the risk that a translation-and-commentary will make the student more, rather than less, dependent on someone else's view of Aristotle. Wouldn't it be preferable just to acknowledge that you are dealing with a translation, with a mediated view, and then make the best of that?

The situation, however, is more complex. The existing English translations repeatedly run into the problem of having at once too much authority and too little. As Whalley explains, again in correspondence with Else, "There has already grown up – among students and many instructors – from the use of the Butcher translation a sort of sub-Aristotelean jargon, impregnable because canonical (it is claimed); and this fails both to clarify Aristotle and to release the lines of thought that the *Poetics* can invigorate."[4] Students of English commonly regard the *Poetics* as one of the things you need to be able to claim to have read but don't need to spend much time on. This little treatise may apply to Greek drama but is it really all that relevant to English literature? The philosopher's diagrams or classifications (if that's what they are) are of probably limited use, even if they are reasonably accurate. Everyone, anyway, now knows about the central concepts: the quasi-technical ones, *praxis*, 'pity and fear', *catharsis*, and *hamartia*; and the ordinary ones, plot, character, thought, and so on; imitation and unified action; recognitions, reversals, and sufferings. These things are widely understood, aren't they – part of the canon of critical terminology?

In such a context, Whalley's purpose is not so much to make Aristotle more familiar to us as to make him strange, to defamiliarize us, to startle us into new perceptions of the vigour of Aristotle's thought about poetry, to make us see how heuristic, how exploratory, the *Poetics* really is, how far it is from the merely classificatory. His strategy, as he demonstrates throughout the commentary, is to draw attention to the particularly active qualities of Greek syntax and inflections, and especially to the drive and freshness of Aristotle's own prose. The strat-

egy of transliterating such terms as *mimesis*, *pathos*, or *poiesis* is not intended to promote a technical vocabulary or to give us a readily labelled meaning, but to remind us that we don't know, and will likely always have trouble grasping, the full implications of such words.

In preparing to publish "On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*," Whalley confided to the editor of the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, William Blissett, that he was "primarily concerned with the question: how can we best present Aristotle's *Poetics* as a living document to the students of English." He says to Blissett, as he had said to Strachan and Else, that he intends to prepare "a working version of the *Poetics* rather than a self-contained translation."[5] In the phrase "working version," I think, lies the clue as to how he hopes to keep the Greek-less student in continuous touch with the Greek. It means, in effect, that he tries to keep the student in touch with his own touch. He invites the student into the translator's laboratory while the work is still going on. In other words, he admits that this is very much one person's perspective, one man's interpretation, but so far as possible shows how it happens, indeed, shows it happening.

This does not mean that Whalley thought his commentary should rival the treatise for attention. Even though he conceives of commentary and text printed on facing pages, he does this to keep visible the translator's hesitations, dilemmas, and the processes of his decisions. The upshot is very much a personal presentation of the *Poetics*. If the work is acroamatic, a work for listening to, we should hope to catch echoes of Aristotle talking – to his students in the Lyceum, or the Academy, and perhaps on occasion even to himself – and that, for those of us with no Greek, is possible only through the translator's courage in acting out his own participation as auditor and as transmitter. A further concomitant to Whalley's personal approach to the *Poetics* is that what we get is very decidedly a Coleridgean Aristotle.

ARISTOTLE AND COLERIDGE

The collocation of Aristotle and Coleridge in Whalley's thinking was at first something of a lucky accident, and it took him several years to sort out how much was a matter of good luck and how little merely accidental. It is doubtful that he ever truly completed that sorting process.

Admittedly, he did consider that his credentials for coming to grips with Aristotle included the way his own efforts as a poet fed into a sustained practical interest in Coleridge. But, in the beginning, he does not spell out why he thinks that development particularly important. He writes to Else:

An early interest in poetics, guided more by my own experience of making poetry and playing music than by a formal study of what had been written on the subject, led me into work on Samuel Taylor Coleridge. For the past twenty years or more I have had a hand in the edition (by Miss Kathleen Coburn) of the Coleridge Notebooks and am now completing an edition of Coleridge's marginalia to be published in the *Collected Coleridge*.[6]

To begin with, he seems to regard his work on Coleridge as important primarily because it required him to keep his Greek in "reasonable working order." He doesn't set out, in other words, to produce a Coleridgean Aristotle, and there is no evidence to suggest that he started with a specific sort of interpretation in mind.

Even as late as 1970, in "On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*," though he is aware of how unorthodox his position has become, he is still a bit hesitant about pursuing its implications. "I should be prepared ... to challenge R.S. Crane's statement that there is a 'Coleridgean method' of criticism distinct from and diametrically opposed to Aristotle's; I begin to sense an Aristotle-Coleridge axis in criticism and poetics but am not yet prepared to speak about it" (28). This suggests that, though he must have felt the strong and continuous influence of Coleridge on himself, the possibility of a critical alignment with Aristotle grew upon him only slowly.

"The Aristotle-Coleridge Axis" was published three years later, with a noticeable increase in confidence marked by his calling attention to "the unrepentant use of the definite article – *The* Aristotle-Coleridge Axis." This essay is crucial to any attempt to understand the originality of Whalley's approach to Aristotle (to say nothing of Coleridge), but it is admittedly brief, even sketchy, considering its implicit claim to dismantle one of the largest and most long-standing assumptions of criticism, the opposition of classic and romantic. And even if his summary of the major tenets of the two critical positions is correct, the effort to align the two surely comes up against a serious impediment in its concluding paragraph: the problem of finding a shared terminology. "Imagination, which Aristotle had scarcely considered except as our ability to present to the mind 'pictures' of things not physically present, assumed in Coleridge's mind a role that Aristotle would probably have approved – as the supreme realizing function, a dynamic state of wholeness accessible to all men, and overflowing into things-made so that they have a life of their own, not being the image of the person who made them" (176). Given the magnitude of the critical stakes here, Aristotle's *probable* approval is probably not good enough. And can even that much be proved?

Many more objections come crowding in. Isn't Coleridge, Shelley's "subtle-souled psychologist," notoriously more interested in character and psychology than in plot? Doesn't he inaugurate a line of Shakespearean criticism that focuses on character especially, a line that reaches its apogee in the work of A.C. Bradley, and which is likely not yet played out? And if his approach does not apply Aristotle to Shakespeare, then to whom is it applied? To the Greek dramatists themselves? Whalley concedes in "Coleridge on the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus" that whatever Coleridge was doing in his remarks before the Royal Society, he was not looking at Aeschylus through the lens of the *Poetics*.[7] And he concedes further that in general Coleridge thought of himself as a Platonist rather than an Aristotelean.

In the face of such objections, however, there are strong reasons for holding to Whalley's intuition. There is something to his suggestion that Aristotle's *mimesis* and Coleridge's "imagination" are put to the same, or similar, uses – and that these uses lie near the heart of critical practice in each case. As many commentators have suggested, one important function of the *Poetics* is to present Aristotle's response to Plato's objections to poets and to the claims of poetry to be an art. The response does not, however, take the form of a direct rebuttal or reply to Plato; instead, much of the weight of the case rests on a much more complex use of the concept of *mimesis*. But Aristotle never really defines this term, he simply uses it in a variety of ways, some of them similar to Plato's uses, many of them not. And if it is anachronistic to apply the term "imagination" to him in a Coleridgean sense, it is still very evident that he thinks of *mimesis* as requiring some sort of creative initiative, some sort of active re-making and re-ordering of the poet's materials – requiring, in other words, something fundamentally akin to the sort of exhilarating and energizing activity Coleridge was trying to describe. Whalley therefore transliterates *mimesis*, rather than translating it, precisely to circumvent the static connotations of "imitation."

Coleridge's definition of "imagination" may, on the other hand, prove no less elusive, for all the air of doctrinal lucidity in the famous formulation at the end of *Biographia Literaria* XIII, with its distinctions between primary and secondary imagination and between imagination and fancy. Whalley quotes from one of Coleridge's Notebooks (from a passage discussing the *making* activity that is poetry):

> The sensitive faculty is the power of being affected and modified by *Things*, so as to receive impressions from them. The Quality of these impressions is determined partly by the nature of the sensitive faculty itself and its organs, and partly by the nature of the Things. These impressions are in the first instant

immediate Sensations: as soon as the attention is directed to them, and they are taken up into the *Consciousness*, they become *Perceptions*. The repetition of past Perceptions in the Consciousness is Imagination. The Object of the Attention *during* Perception may be aptly termed a *Presentation*, during Imagination a Representation. All Sensations and their correspondent Objects have doubtless something in common; but it is impossible to abstract it, that is, to discover what that is in Sensation <in general> which causes it to produce perception, or what it is in any given sensation which causes it to produce a certain particular perception. Equally impossible is it with regard to the Objects of past or present perception – i.e. the presentations or representations of Things, to distinguish by determinate boundaries, what part proceeds from the sensitive faculty itself, and what from the outward Causes or the Things acting on the faculty ... The cause of this impossibility is that we become conscious both of the one and of the other in one & the same way; namely, as modifications of our own Being. What precedes the modification as its cause, we can never know; because our consciousness originates in the modification.[8]

This, in short, is one of the problems of *mimesis*: does it stem from a reference to the external world ("outward Causes") or from the creative ordering of the perceiver ("the sensitive faculty") or both – and if that, in what order or proportion?

Without purporting to resolve the problem, Whalley is now more sure than ever of an Aristotle-Coleridge alignment. *Poietic*, he says, is a

making activity of mind that flows seamlessly from perception if it is instantly being worded in rhythmic and sonic forms, complex, subtle, and stable enough. One of Coleridge's axioms for imagination is thoroughly Aristotelian – *nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu*. Another set of axioms for the relation between the whole and parts in poetry is no less Aristotelian: the whole is logically prior to the parts, the whole inheres in every part, a poem is unity in multeity.[9]

These remarks, published in 1974, show a growing firmness and a widening exploration of the Aristotle-Coleridge axis. That exploration is not concerned to establish fixed conclusions but to open up a fruitful field of enquiry. It does suggest, however, that the allusions to Coleridge in the commentary on the *Poetics* are not merely incidental, nor are they the casual associations of a man who just happened to be working on both figures; they are part of a more comprehensive vision. And the influx of the Coleridgean perspective is what distinguishes most sharply the work of George Whalley from that of Gerald Else.

WHALLEY AND ELSE

By a curious twist, an account of Whalley's indebtedness to the work of Gerald Else is also the most efficient way to indicate his independence and originality.

When he first wrote to Else, in August of 1968, he seems to have thought of his own undertaking as fundamentally an extension of *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument*: "so much of this depends upon – and indeed simply is – your work, that I could not think of doing it other than with your consent and cooperation, and preferably with your collaboration." His early drafts carry the rather cumbersome title, *Aristotle's Poetics Englished from the Greek text and commentary of Gerald F. Else.* "My work being merely an offshoot of what you have already done, I want to prepare an English version that you could approve."[10]

Else, however, had freshly prepared his own translation, with notes, and he wrote back suggesting that Whalley look it over carefully "before we engage in any further discussion."[11] Undeterred, Whalley revised his plan somewhat, and pressed ahead. By the following summer, he could say to Robin Strachan: "I intend to go and see Gerald Else as soon as he has had a chance to read my draft translation, but I now see his place in this as much less central. At first I thought I would be virtually re-presenting his work; but what has now come about is genuinely my own."[12]

Some light is cast on what is genuinely his own when he writes to Else in the fall of 1969, explaining that he had been ruminating on the project "for eight or ten years":

> But it was working carefully through your *Argument* three years ago that convinced me of the value of making such an attempt; convinced me too of the vitality of the issues raised by a close study of the text; and it was your working version in the *Argument* (refined now by your translation) that gave me a hint of the stylistic 'tune' I was looking for. Fortunately Kassel's text had already been published and D.W. Lucas's commentary came soon after. Understandably I owe a heavy debt to your work and to Lucas's; and the tensions between the two have forced me to make up my own mind for myself on a number of points.[13]

It's true that Whalley exploits the tension between Lucas and Else in a wide variety of ways (though his sympathy and judgment remain heavily weighted on the side of Else). But something not mentioned in the letter, and of greater interest, is also happening. He begins to exploit the tensions, or at least the differences which in his handling tend to become tensions, between Else's *Argument* and Else's translation, and

to discover in this way more and more of his own impetus and momentum – his own voice.

Whalley appears to have travelled to Ann Arbor in January of 1970 to meet with Else. One of the later drafts of his translation-and-commentary has a pencilled note on the title page in Whalley's handwriting that reads, "Gerald Else's Corrigenda." These suggestions for revision, however, are nowhere written out. The traces that remain on the typescript are a series of pencil markings: underlined words or phrases, vertical lines in the margins, an occasional arrow or question mark. There are some fifty-three such markings. Presumably, the two men discussed the matter in detail. Succeeding drafts show significant alterations at precisely these points in thirty cases.

What Else thought of the overall project is not revealed, at least not in the written record among Whalley's papers. It seems fair to suppose that his willingness to take the time and trouble to make fairly detailed recommendations indicates some level of interest and encouragement. He was also in possession of a typescript of "On Translating Aristotle's *Poetics*," which may indicate some degree of approval for the general principles, format, and strategy. On the other hand, there are at least one or two significant queries that are, perhaps even more significantly, resisted. At $1447^{a}20$, for example, Else has underlined the word "imaginatively." Whalley concedes in the commentary that the word is "anachronistic, but I cannot think of a better" – and he does not change it.

Moreover, the draft that Else had scrutinized seems to have consisted of only the first half, or approximately twelve or thirteen chapters. It breaks off shortly before a section crucial for illustrating both Whalley's indebtedness and his independence. Having discussed simple and complex plots, reversals and recognitions, Aristotle injects a quick summary and a potent addition ($1452^{b}10$). Else's translation reads as follows:

> These then are two elements of plot: peripety and recognition; third is the *pathos*. Of these, peripety and recognition have been discussed; a *pathos* is a destructive or painful act, such as deaths on stage, paroxysms of pain, woundings, and all that sort of thing.[14]

Among several interpretive questions embedded in this passage is the question of how best to deal with the phrase *en tōi phanerōi*, "in the visible [sphere]," according to Whalley's gloss. Most twentieth-century translators, up to and including Grube and Else, render this as "on stage."[15] More recent translators, it seems, fudge the issue – or perhaps

it's just that finding Aristotle himself to have fudged it, they quite properly leave it fudged. Janko has deaths "in full view"; Halliwell, "visible" deaths.[16] But in whose view? In what way visible?

Whalley's translation takes a different tack, with some remarkable implications.

> These then – *peripeteia* and recognition – are two elements of the [complex] plot; a third element is *pathos*. [Two] of these – *peripeteia* and recognition – have [already] been discussed. A *pathos* is a murderous or cruel transaction, such as killings – [taken as] real – and atrocious pain and woundings and all that sort of thing. (91)

The last sentence here, in particular, contains several daring strokes as a translation, including its rendering of *en tōi phanerōi* as "[taken as] real." Whalley explains the force, as he sees it, behind these three words.

> The root *phainein* (cause to appear, bring to light, reveal, disclose) naturally claims the notion of presentation to the sense of sight. Else in the *Argument* states convincingly that "The real function of the pathos is not to shock the audience by its physical occurrence. It is a *premiss* on which the plot is built," and translates the phrase "in the visible realm"; but in his 1967 translation he returns to the traditional phrase "on stage" – which Lucas considers "the obvious meaning." Lucas's argument that "on stage" is correct because there are several instances of a *pathos* rendered on stage is less than compelling since he admits that "such horrors are rarely shown on the Greek stage." Aristotle is here giving a brief definition; it is unlikely, then, that he could include in his definition an element of rare occurrence unless he drew attention to it as essential though rare. Else, I think, was on the right track in the *Argument*. *Phaneros* is used in the phrase for '*real* property' and '*hard* cash', i.e. property or money that can be shown to be substantial. I have used the phrase "[taken as] real" – 'real' as distinct from 'actual' – to imply that the killing etc. is held in a direct physical and perceptual sense, or as Whitehead would say "in the perceptual mode." The issue does not turn upon whether the pathos is actually witnessed or not: however the *pathos* is presented, whether on stage or reported, it must be substantial enough to act as functional centre for "the moral and mental events which transpire as peripety and recognition" (Else). Whatever is held "in the perceptual mode" is – if only momentarily – 'real', whether or not it is actual. The phrase *en tōi phanerōi* points not to the method of presentation but to the quality of apprehension secured in the presentation: in Coleridgean terms it points to the "illusion of reality" that it is the function of imagination to secure (90–2).

I have quoted this passage at such length because it illustrates so fully not only Whalley judging between the views of Else and Lucas, and then between Else's first and second thoughts, but also because it displays Whalley's Coleridgean independence to best advantage. Where he is most deeply indebted to Else he is also most firmly his own man.

Whether he is also right is another matter. Classicists may wish to rule out "imagination" as sheer anachronism. But if we deprive ourselves of this term, we may make it virtually impossible to come to grips with just how profound an interest Aristotle has in the way vivid representations act upon the soul of the individual, whether poet, character, or member of the audience. The implications, of course, are not restricted to this small passage in the *Poetics*. If the process Whalley decribes is anything close to being accurate, it will affect our understanding of several other points. For one thing, Aristotle's claim that the tragic effect may be experienced without the benefit of stage performance would then turn out to be something more positive than the anti-theatrical prejudice it is sometimes taken to be. He would appear to count on a certain vividness of apprehension in the mind of the auditor or reader. For the poet in the act of composing it gives, as Whalley remarks, "additional depth to the injunction ... that in putting plots together and fitting them to language 'you must above all keep things before your eyes'" (92).

And at least two other important points are also implicated. Aristotle remarks in a paradoxical way on events that are somehow outside the drama but not outside the plot. These are often events which are said to occur before the time of the play's opening but that have sufficient force to generate or motivate the action: one thinks of the report of the sacrifice of Iphigenia in the *Agamemnon* or the murder of Hamlet's father in *Hamlet*. Neither event takes place "on stage" though both have a vivid and intense effect on certain characters (and presumably then on members of an audience). In such cases, the "quality of apprehension" is surely the important thing.

The other point has to do with the question of what makes for the best kind of recognition. Aristotle comes at this question more than once, and it's not clear that his answers remain consistent. Most curious is the claim, in chapter 14, that the best sort of recognition may be illustrated by the *Iphigenia in Tauris*, in which the recognitions of brother and sister precede and thus avert the actuality of disastrous killing. This seems to mean that the vivid apprehension of the threat of death – the imagined reality – may be of sufficient intensity to elicit tragic effects without death actually occurring. Again, making sense of such claims would seem to involve some recourse to the sort of vocabulary Whalley invokes.

Like the phrase *en tōi phanerōi*, the word *pathos* in the short passage above has given translators trouble. The main English equivalents, 'suffering' or 'painful acts', pull the meaning either towards an emotion or towards an action. To avoid a reductive meaning, Whalley chooses transliteration rather than translation ("a *pathos* is a murderous or cruel transaction"), and comments on what he sees as the advantages:

> *Pathos* (from *paschein*, 'suffer') primarily means something 'suffered', something that happens to a person – the complement to something done. Yet Aristotle says that a *pathos* is a *praxis*, an 'act'. I find it difficult to agree with Lucas that *pathos* in this short section is not a special term comparable to *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*. The paradoxical term *pathos*-as-*praxis* seems to imply that the crucial event is to be seen both as suffered and as inflicted. Aristotle's choice of the word *praxis* – which he regularly uses elsewhere for the single overarching tragic action as distinct from the separate *pragmata* (events) of which the *praxis* is composed – suggests further that the *pathos* as an event is both pregnant and determinate, the beginning of a process. *Peripeteia* and 'recognition' heighten and concentrate emotional force: *pathos* is the key event/act that provides substantial foundation and focus for the *peripeteia* and recognition ... I have therefore rendered *praxis* here as a 'transaction' to indicate the pathos-action paradox and to preserve the processive potential of the word *praxis* (90).

Again, much of the thinking here grows directly out of the work of Gerald Else, who says: "The *pathos* is the foundation stone of the tragic structure ... In fact it appears that the happening *or threatened happening* ... of a *pathos* is the *sine qua non* of all tragedy."[17] On this occasion, Whalley does not have to choose between early and later Else, which here remain constant; but he pushes the implications much harder. Both the word 'transaction' and the term *pathos*-as-*praxis* insist on seeing the tragic action less in terms of isolated individuals, or heroes, and more in terms of relationship. Whalley says elsewhere that 'hero' is not Aristotle's word but a later coinage, and it is clear in this instance that he is thinking not simply of such *pathos*-centred tragedies as *Ajax* or *Samson Agonistes*, but of the way that all tragedies – from *Oedipus* to *Othello* – turn crucially on relationships.

Pathos-as-*praxis* is a bold formulation that incites a radical rethinking of just what is meant by the standard account of a tragic action. Whalley's originality once again shows up most clearly in the context of his connections to Else. But the more clearly the originality is established, the more we may begin to wonder whether it veers off into eccentricity. Has he achieved his independence at the expense of his Aris-

totelianism? Has he been left behind by the last two decades of *Poetics* study?

WHALLEY AND RECENT STUDY OF THE POETICS

The last twenty years have seen an amazing amount of work on the *Poetics*, and it will be possible to do no more than touch on a few salient points here. Something of the range of work is indicated by the twenty contributors to *Essays on Aristotle's Poetics*, edited by Amélie Oksenberg Rorty. In addition, two of those contributors, Richard Janko and Stephen Halliwell, published translations of their own in 1987. I make no attempt to summarize this work (much of it is very distinguished), but a brief consideration of it with reference to three crucial terms – *mimesis*, *catharsis*, and *praxis* – together with a few reflections on the whole question of genre criticism will serve to highlight Whalley's perspective and the ongoing need to have it available.

A great deal hinges on *mimesis*. Janko declines for the most part to use the traditional option, "imitation," but depends instead on "representation" as the nearest English equivalent.[18] Halliwell, like Whalley, opts for transliteration – and for similar reasons, focussing especially on the dynamism or activity inherent in the term as Aristotle uses it. "A useful habit," Whalley says, "is to read *mimesis* as 'a process – *mimesis*'"; for Halliwell, "Aristotle's guiding notion of mimesis is implicitly that of *enactment*" (my italics).[19] But this parallel thinking may come to an abrupt halt at the point of considering exactly what sort of activity is involved. Halliwell, who offers a masterly survey of the word's history, is nothing if not suspicious of a Coleridgean angle, and he castigates L.J. Potts' *Aristotle and the Art of Fiction* for its "thoroughly confused assimilation of mimesis ... to 'creative imagination'."[20]

The objection here, however, may turn on "creative" rather than on "imagination". As Gerald Else suggests, in work published posthumously in 1986, *mimesis*, in Aristotle's way of using it "becomes the closest neighbor to creation: not out of nothing – no Greek ever believed in creation *ex nihilo* – but out of carefully observed 'universal' human tendencies to thought and action."[21] And Paul Woodruff pursues a similar sort of argument:

> Mimesis in Aristotle is something like make-believe. Walton has shown how useful a model there is in child's play for understanding the various arts Aristotle considers mimetic ... Still, mimesis is not the same as make-believe, though it does aim to make us believe certain things. Our response to mimesis may involve make-believe, in so far as we are in cahoots with the artist – like adults joining a child's game of make-believe. But what the Aristotelian artist