The Text of Aristotle’s *Poetics* and its Arabic Translation

*Two Thorny Case Studies*

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**Abstract**

This contribution highlights the importance of the Arabic version of the *Poetics* in establishing the text of this work. This is a well-known fact, expressly considered in the most recent *editio maior* of the *Poetics*. Nonetheless, the latter edition does not discuss all the evidence relating to the Arabic translation. This article examines two much-discussed passages of the *Poetics* (1454b30-32, 1448a25-28). In the first case, the Arabic testimony, despite not transmitting the text that should be edited, helps to elucidate which variant is preferred. In the second case, the text of the Arabic translation raises the question of whether its variant reading should replace the text accepted in all the editions published over the last two centuries.

**Keywords**

Aristotle – *Poetics* – textual tradition – Arabic transmission of Greek texts – textual criticism
The four primary testimonies on which the text of the Aristotelian *Poetics* relies are two Greek manuscripts (A: *Parisinus Graecus* 1741, ca. 950; B: *Riccardianus* 46, ca. 1150) and two medieval translations of the treatise, into Arabic (Ar) and Latin (Lat) respectively. Abu-Bishr Matta composed the former, before 934, based on a Syriac version (Syr), almost completely lost. William of Moerbeke dated his Latin translation in 1278. The following stemma synthetizes the genealogical relations which connect these four testimonies:  

This stemma shows the textual importance of the two testimonies not preserved in Greek. The Arabic version, prepared in the tenth century, is the only testimony of hyparchetype \( \Sigma \), which represents an ancient and independent branch of the textual tradition. Moerbeke's translation proceeds from \( \Phi \),

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1 I would like to thank Professors Galván and Gintsburg (University of Navarra) for the information about the Arabic tradition of the *Poetics* which, appearing in this contribution, does not proceed from the commentary to the *Poetics* written by Gutas (cf. Tarán and Gutas 2012, 307-473) or the previous works by Margoliouth (1887; 1911) and Tkatsch (1928-1932). I must thank Professor Galván also for the attention which he dedicated to previous versions of this text. My gratitude, likewise, to the anonymous referees who read and discussed my article. Any errors or imprecisions it may contain are mine alone.


3 Cf. Tarán and Gutas 2012, 144-148.
a conjectural derivative of Π; Lat plays a decisive role in the reconstruction of the text of Φ and, by comparison with A, Π.

The Arabic version has a special relevance in comparison with the Latin translation because it is much older and, as already noted, independent of the other testimonies. It can be said, moreover, that Ar is, with very little difference with respect to A (before 934 and around 950), the oldest testimony to the Poetics. To show the value of Ar, an excerpt from the beginning of the treatise is reviewed; the correct version of its text, already conjectured by scholars without knowledge of the Arabic testimony, is preserved only in Ar:

1) ἡ δὲ ... μόνον τοῖς λόγοις ψιλοῖς ἢ τοῖς μέτροις ... ἀνώνυμος τυχάνει οὖσα μέχρι τοῦ νῦν ('It happens that the ⟨art⟩ ... ⟨which only employs⟩ the nude words or the meters ... has no name until now'; 47a28-b9).

A and Lat (= Π) attest a defective text, which can be completed with the testimony of Ar (bi-lā tasmiyatīn, ‘which is/are without appellation’). The existence of a lacuna at this point had been noticed by Bernays, who inserted ἀνώνυμος. This form appears in the subsequent editions of Vahlen and Bywater; both already knew the Arabic testimony thanks to Sachau and Margoliouth. However, which emendation should be introduced, ἀνώνυμος or ἀνώνυμοι, as Lobel proposed and Kassel edited, was still a matter of discussion. Based on the Arabic and Syriac grammar, Tarán and Gutas explain why Abu-Bishr must have translated the Syriac version of ἀνώνυμος using a form understandable as singular or neutral plural; the ambiguity existed only in Ar, not in Syr, which

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On the characteristics and chronology of Ar, cf. Tarán and Gutas 2012, 101-103, 144-145; on the characteristics and chronology of A, cf. Tarán and Gutas 2012, 129-135. Ar is preserved in a single manuscript from the first half of the 11th century (Parisinus Arabus 2346, ff. 131a-146b); cf. Tarán and Gutas 2012, 101-103.

The text of the Poetics is cited according to Tarán and Gutas 2012; the word or words discussed are written in bold. Translations from the Greek have been prepared by the author. References to the Poetics are abbreviated in the following form: ‘47b16-17’ means ‘1447b16-17’.

In this case, the transliterations from the Arabic are by Gutas; cf. Tarán and Gutas 2012. In the other cases, which were not addressed by Gutas, the transliterations have been prepared by Professors Galván and Gintsburg; cf. n. 1.

The text of the Poetics begins in B at 48a29; cf. n. 41.


Cf. Bernays 1857, 186.


must have had a singular form for the reasons outlined by those scholars.\textsuperscript{12}

Therefore, the Greek model of the Syriac version must have presented the adjective in the singular, not in the plural.\textsuperscript{13}

This instance illustrates something which was to be expected: as Ar is the translation of a translation, it must be handled with special care when trying to reconstruct Σ: this is simultaneously our oldest testimony and the most problematic one. On the other hand, Hellenists tend not to refer directly to the text of Ar, as it is not common for them to know both Ancient Greek and Arabic, not to mention Syriac.

Notwithstanding this, scholars working on the textual tradition of the \textit{Poetics} have at their disposal instruments provided by philologists with direct knowledge of the above-mentioned languages. The works of Margoliouth and Tkatsch are more removed in time and open to question for different reasons.\textsuperscript{14}

More recently, Gutas collaborated on the edition of the \textit{Poetics} published in 2012 by Tarán.\textsuperscript{15} The former, a Hellenist and an Arabist, is an experienced editor of texts transmitted through Greek and Arabic testimonies, as is the case with Aristotle and Theophrastus;\textsuperscript{16} his “Graeco-Arabic critical apparatus and commentary” of the \textit{Poetics} is one of the most outstanding contributions of an edition that lays some claim, as one of its reviewers remarked, to being definitive.\textsuperscript{17}

Another scholar, well-acquainted with the \textit{Poetics}, said in his review that the Arabic testimony could be exploited more extensively.\textsuperscript{18} It should be noted that the work developed by Gutas on the tradition of Σ in the Syriac and Arabic tradition is subsidiary to Tarán’s work, the main author of the volume, as asserted in the preface.\textsuperscript{19} This may explain why Gutas’s contribution does not mention several cases in which variant readings are found only in the tradition proceeding from Σ.\textsuperscript{20} These omitted cases are of mixed importance. However, it seems that they should be taken into consideration in an \textit{editio maior} of the \textit{Poetics}, and, moreover, some may be relevant to our understanding of the Aristotelian text.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Cf. Tarán and Gutas 2012, 230, 312-313.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} On the content reasons which make \textgrm{ἀνώνυμος} preferable to \textgrm{ἀνώνυμοι}, cf. Tarán and Gutas 2012, 227-228.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} For an evaluation and criticism of the works of Margoliouth 1887; 1911; and Tkatsch 1928-1932, cf. Tarán and Gutas 2012, 64-65, 67-69, 115-119.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Cf. Tarán and Gutas 2012, and the reviews by McOsker 2012, Janko 2013, and Destrée 2015.
  \item \textsuperscript{16} Cf. Gutas 2010; Tarán and Gutas 2012.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Cf. Tarán and Gutas 2012, 307-473; McOsker 2012.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} Cf. Janko 2013, 254 n. 10.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Cf. Tarán and Gutas 2012, IX.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Cf. the observations of Tarán and Gutas 2012, 77-78.
\end{itemize}
Two passages which present peculiarities in the Arabic tradition are discussed below. It is important to note that these are not the only cases of this phenomenon to be found in the textual tradition of the Poetics.21 Despite their thorny nature, they have been selected because of their importance as testimonies that could eventually modify the text as usually edited. Two different situations are illustrated by them. The first case shows that the text reconstructed for Σ, although not correct, indicates which variant is to be preferred. The second example prompts a discussion of whether the variant reading present in Ar, and perhaps in Σ, should replace the text accepted in all editions published in the last two centuries.

2) δεύτεραι δὲ αἱ πεποιημέναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ, διὸ ἀτεχνοὶ. οἶνον Ὀρέστης ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ ἄνεγνώρισεν ὃτι Ὀρέστης (‘The second (recognitions) are those made up by the poet, which have therefore no art. For example, Orestes, in the Iphigenia, made known that he was Orestes’; 54b30-32).

3) Ὀρέστης Π: om. ΣΒ || 32 ἀνεγνώρισεν Ξ: ἀνεγνώρισεν Ἰφιγένεια Σ (fort.; ʿistadallat ʿAbāġānya Ar)

Having spoken about recognition and peripeteia in 52a22-b8, Aristotle returns to the first topic in 54b19-55a21. In this section, he distinguishes between four kinds of recognition and discusses their relative value. Aristotle regards the recognitions invented ad hoc by the poet as the second worst kind (54b30-37). He exemplifies this type with the recognition of Orestes by his sister in Iphigenia among the Taurians (vv. 727-826): ἐκείνη μὲν γὰρ διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, ἐκεῖνος δὲ αὐτὸς λέγει ἃ βούλεται ὁ ποιητὴς ἀλλ᾽ οὐχ ὁ μῦθος (‘while she (was recognized) by means of the letter, he says, on his side, what the poet wants, but not the plot’, 54b32-35).22 The text presented above (54b30-32), which precedes the instance of recognition cited here, introduces the example. It contains two textual problems as noted in the critical apparatus. The first concerns Ὀρέστης, the subject of ἄνεγνώρισεν in Π; this text requires that the verb not mean ‘recognize’ here, its usual meaning in Greek, but ‘make known’;23 Σ and B, on the other side, omit Ὀρέστης. The second problem is attested in the Arabic version and perhaps in Σ; instead of ἄνεγνώρισεν (Ξ), Ar presents ʿistadallat ʿAbāġānya, which

21 Cf., e.g., 50b14-15, ἐπὶ τῶν ἐμέτρων καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν λόγων (λόγων Σ: ἐμέτρων λόγων Σ [vid.; hiya tafsiru-l-kalāmi-l-mawzūni wa-ʿeyri-l-mawzūni Ar]), ‘in the verse and in the (prose) speeches’; cf. Gudeman 1934, 40, 189.


23 Cf. Bonitz 1873, 43; Wartelle 1985, 22. Cf. also LSJ, s.v.; DGE, s.v.; GE, s.v.
corresponds to ἀνεγνώρισεν Ἰφιγένεια, ‘Iphigenia recognized’. Therefore, the textual evidence evinces three versions of the sentence:

a) οἷον Ὀρέστης ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ ἀνεγνώρισεν ὅτι Ὀρέστης (Π: ‘for example, Orestes made known in the Iphigenia that he was Orestes’).

b) οἷον ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ ἀνεγνώρισεν Ἰφιγένεια ὅτι Ὀρέστης (Σ [fort.] ex Ar: ‘for example, Iphigenia recognized in the Iphigenia that he was Orestes’).

c) οἷον ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ ἀνεγνώρισεν ὅτι Ὀρέστης (B: ‘for example, she / he (?) recognized / made known (?) in the Iphigenia that he was Orestes’).

There is no obvious choice among these versions on the basis of their content, because all three reflect the situation in Iphigenia among the Taurians. Orestes lets Iphigenia know who he is through his words; the situation may be described as: a) Orestes made known that he was Orestes (Π); b) Iphigenia recognized that he was Orestes (Σ [fort.]); c) she (or he) recognized (or made known) that he was Orestes (B).

To establish the text on the basis of other arguments, it should first be acknowledged that Π may pose one or two linguistic problems. It implies, as signalled, that ἀναγνωρίζω has a causative meaning, attested only here, in two other places in the Poetics (55b8-9, 21-23) whose text is doubtful, and in Diodorus Siculus (4.59.6), in a post-Classical chronology (first century BC), with a different meaning and syntactic construction (cf. infra).

The scholarly bibliography contains passionate defences of both positions: the verb has a causative sense in 54b32 and the text of Π is correct, or the verb cannot mean ‘make known’, the evidence in favour of this is not conclusive, and the sentence must be emended. It could be even argued that the exceptionality of a causative ἀναγνωρίζω speaks in favour of this reading, which would then be the lectio difficilior. Were this the text of Ω, it would present an obvious linguistic difficulty, which B and the Σ tradition tried to resolve.


25 According to the lexica (cf. n. 23) and commentaries (cf. n. 26).

differently, understanding in both cases that ἀνεγνώρισεν means, as usual, 'recognized': B does not specify who the subject is, Σ (or its derivatives, the Syriac or the Arabic translation) offers as subject Ἰφιγένεια.

That II includes a second peculiarity should not be overlooked: the proper noun Ὀρέστης is repeated in the main case in the space of only seven words, first as the subject of the main sentence, afterwards as the subject of the ὅτι clause. While this might be correct Greek, it sounds somewhat strange. It is also the only instance of such a usage in the Poetics, as its possible parallels underline the singularity of the example. In the case of οἷον ὁ τοῦ Μίτυος ἐν Ἀργείᾳ ἀπέκτεινεν τὸν αἴτιον τοῦ θανάτου τῷ Μίτυι, ἰδέωντες ἐμπεσών (‘for example, how the statue of Mitys killed in Argos the man who was guilty of the death of Mitys, falling on him while he was contemplating it’ [or ‘while he was attending a festival’], 52a7-9), the repeated proper noun appears in distinct cases and as the complement of two different elements in the sentence. In οἷον ἐν τῷ Οἰδίποδι ἐλθὼν ὡς εὐφρανῶν τὸν Οἰδίπου (‘for example, in the Oedipus, after coming with the intention to rejoice Oedipus’, 52a24-25), the proper noun appears in distinct cases and, above all, it refers to different entities, the title of the tragedy and the name of its protagonist; the text of Ar and, perhaps, Σ (οἷον ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγένειᾳ ἀνεγνώρισεν Ἰφιγένεια ὅτι Ὀρέστης), is similar to this second example.

These considerations do not mean that the text of II is definitively impossible. But it is at least suspicious. Therefore, it was emended in the textual transmission, and, as a result, the sentence appeared in this regularized form in the editio princeps: οἷον Ὀρέστης ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγένειᾳ ἀνεγνώρισεν τὴν ἀδελφήν, ἀναγνωρισθεὶς ὑπ᾽ ἐκείνης (‘for example, Orestes, in the Iphigenia, recognized his sister after having been recognized by her’).

The text of A and its apographs could be emended only per divinationem for centuries. Nowadays, four primary testimonies of the Poetics are known; the
comparison among them, and the relative position of each manuscript within the stemma, suggest, as the best solution, that archetype Ω did not include the subject of ἀνεγνώρισεν:

a) The text of Ω must have been, as in B, οἷον ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ ἄνεγνώρισεν ὅτι Ὀρέστης, where Iphigenia is the implicit subject the text did not mention explicitly because her name was easy to recover from the previous mention of the tragedy bearing her name. ἄνεγνώρισεν does not then need to acquire an unusual meaning. This reading has a further advantage, as the passage is not disturbed by proper nouns repeated so close to one another as in II (Ὀρέστης ... Ὀρέστης) or Σ (fort.; Ἰφιγενείᾳ ... Ἰφιγένεια).

b) The textual tradition identified the missing subject variously as follows:
   a. Σ (or its Syriac or Arabic derivatives, in order to make their translations more intelligible) specifies Iphigenia as the subject.
   b. II understood that Orestes accomplished this function, which was also possible according to the content; II did not change the construction of the sentence and gave ἄνεγνώρισεν an awkward sense.
   c. Only B preserved the text of the archetype, still attested in Ξ. Whether or not the instances of ἄναγγελλω in 55b9, 21, and D.S. 4.59.6 (cf. supra), supposedly meaning ‘make known’, speak against the proposed conjecture remains to be clarified.

Lucas argued that the text of B, with ἄνεγνώρισεν indicating ‘recognize’ and Iphigenia as the implicit subject, would be the best option if those other passages (55b9, 21) did not exist. The question centres on whether the same meaning can be imposed on all instances of ἄναγγελλω in the Poetics. Surely, nobody would affirm that the verb always means ‘make known’ in the treatise. Thus, it is not necessary to recognize this meaning, taken from 55b9 and 21, in 54b32, in a form of the text (Ὀρέστης ... ἄνεγνώρισεν ὅτι Ὀρέστης) preserved only in one branch of its transmission. On the other hand, Rostagni and Sykoutris published the text as in B and Ar, understanding that the sentence means ‘(Iphigenia) recognized that’; at the same time, both accepted that the

32 Based on a deficient knowledge of the stemma of the work and presupposing a direct relation between B and Σ, Gudeman (1934, 52, 468; cf. also Gudeman in Tkatsch 1928-1932, vol. 2, 223, 227) assumed that the hyparchetype of B included, as Σ does, Ἰφιγενεία, lost afterwards by chance.

33 Cf. Lucas 1968, 168-169. Lucas 1968, 169 comments that the verb might mean ‘to have an anagnorisis’, without specifying the agent; he refers also to Gomperz 1896, 17 and the possibility of ἄναγγελλω implying mutual recognition.

verb means ‘to make known’ in 55b9; this was also Rostagni’s opinion in relation to 55b21, whereas Sykoutris preferred to emend it.\textsuperscript{35}

Moreover, it should be recalled that the text of 55b9 and 21 is problematic:

a) In 55b9, Ar seems to translate \( \text{ἀνεγνώρισεν τὴν ἀδελφήν (ἀνεγνώρισεν Ξ)} \), ‘he recognized his sister’, a variant reading which, in contrast to \( \text{ἀνεγνώρισεν Ἰφιγένεια (54b32; cf. n. 24)} \), was included by Tarán in his critical apparatus and discussed by Gutas.\textsuperscript{36}

b) In 55b21-22 (\( \text{ἀναγνωρίσας (εἰς) τινὰς ἐπιθέμενος} \ldots \), ‘he [sc. Odysseus], having revealed to some (who he is) and having attacked’), the text is more uncertain.\textsuperscript{37} It must have been \( \text{ἀναγνωρίσας τινὰς} \) in \( \Sigma \) (\( \text{ta’arrafa ṭunās(an)} \) \( mā \) Ar, ‘he made himself known to some people’) and \( \Pi \) (\( \text{ἀναγνωρίσας τινὰς Λ: recognoscens quosdam} \) Lat); it is certainly \( \text{ἀναγνωρισθεὶς} \) in B. Because of the linguistic problems of the transmitted text, Bywater proposed emending it and writing \( \text{ἀναγνωρίσας ὅτι} \) instead of \( \text{ἀναγνωρίσας τινὰς} \);\textsuperscript{38} on the other hand, the above cited text (\( \text{ἀναγνωρίσας (εἰς) τινὰς} \)) is a conjecture on Tarán’s part (cf. n. 37).

The obscurities of 55b9 and, above all, 21-22, are manifest; therefore, if the value of \( \text{ἀνεγνώρισεν} \) in 54b32 is explained in the light of that evidence, the proposed solution would be an explanation of the \textit{obscura per obscuriora} type.

It must be underlined that, although the proposed reading, \( \text{ὁ οὖν ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ ἀνεγνώρισεν ὅτι Ὀρέστης} \), is not attested as such in Ar or \( \Σ \) (fort. \( \text{ὁ οὖν ἐν τῇ Ἰφιγενείᾳ ἀνεγνώρισεν Ἰφιγένεια ὅτι Ὀρέστης} \)), the evidence of Ar helps in a decisive way, as indicated above, to elucidate what appeared in the archetype by comparison with B (absence of Orestes as the subject of \( \text{ἀνεγνώρισεν} \)) and \( \Pi \) (later and different identification of the missing subject).

Moreover, this reading enables the retention of the common meaning of \( \text{ἀναγνωρίζω} \) (‘recognize’) without introducing a causative sense which is perhaps only attested in Diodorus Siculus (4.59.6), with a different nuance and syntactic construction (‘make oneself known to somebody’). This might be the only attested case in the whole corpus of Greek literature in which \( \text{ἀναγνωρίζω} \) takes an accusative form of the person to whom the subject makes known who he/she is (⟨Θησεύς⟩ τὸν Αἰγέα διὰ τῶν συμβόλων ἀνεγνώρισε, ‘⟨Theseus⟩ revealed

\textsuperscript{35} Cf. Rostagni 1945, 101, 103; Sykoutris 1937, 148, 151 (\( \text{ἀναγνωρίσας τινὰς (μετ’) ἀναγνωρίσεις τινὰς} \) Sykoutris).


\textsuperscript{37} Cf. Vahlen 1898, 266-269; Bywater 1909, 247; Vahlen 1914, 276; Tkatsch 1928-1932, vol. 2, 201-207; Gudeman 1934, 55, 313; Lucas 1968, 181-182; Tarán and Gutas 2012, 194, 277; Hose 2022, 306.

\textsuperscript{38} Cf. Bywater 1909, 50, 247.
himself / made himself known to Aegeus through the tokens'). The idiosyncratic character of this parallel must be underlined when discussing the uncertain examples of a causative ἀναγνωρίζω in the Poetics and in ancient Greek in general.

3) τῇ μὲν ὁ αὐτὸς ἀνείη μιμητής Ὅμηρῳ Σοφοκλῆς, μιμοῦνται γὰρ ἄμφω σπουδαίους, τῇ δὲ Ἀριστοφάνει, πράττοντας γὰρ μιμοῦνται καὶ δρῶντας ἄμφω. 'In a sense Sophocles would be the same imitator as Homer because both imitate good people and, on another, the same as Aristophanes because both imitate (them) doing and acting'; 48a25-28.

27-28 πράττοντας ... δρῶντας A: πράττοντες ... δρῶντες fort. Σ (sic vert. Ar [ya'malūna wa-yaf'alūna]; iam ci. Casaubonus); Φ non liq. (agentes ... actitantes Lat): B nondum inc.

At this point in the text, Aristotle has almost completed his account of the different kinds of imitation. Now he signals how the authors regarded as models of the three basic genres considered in the Poetics (epic, tragedy, comedy) relate to each other as imitators. In relation to the object of imitation (good people), Homer and Sophocles are similar; on the other hand, and in relation to the mode (dramatic representation), Sophocles and Aristophanes are the same kind of imitator because both imitate people ‘doing and acting’. This translation is intentionally ambiguous and valid for the two attested versions of the text: the dramatists imitate people who do and act (πράττοντας ... δρῶντας A), or they imitate their figures by doing and acting (πράττοντες ... δρῶντες vert. Ar). The editio princeps published the first reading, the only one known at that time, proceeding from A through Parisinus Graecus 2038.40

Casaubon challenged the vulgate text and proposed πράττοντες ... δρῶντες.41 This emendation aimed to clarify the specific mode (ὡς: 48a25) in which dramatic authors imitate, because Casaubon held that the question about the mode of imitation was not satisfactorily answered in the existing text. Casaubon pointed out that it is a common feature of all kinds of imitation to represent people who do and act.42 The sentence would really allude to a peculiarity of the dramatic imitations if πράττω and δράω concord with the subject, πράττοντες ... δρῶντες, ‘by doing and acting (the authors themselves)’.43

40 Cf. Manutius 1508, 270, and n. 30.
41 Cf. Casaubon 1605, 109-110. In Casaubon’s time (1559-1614) the testimonies of Ar, Lat (ambiguous: agentes ... actitantes) or B were not known; on the other hand, B cannot attest this passage because it begins (cf. n. 7) a sentence later, in 48a29 (τινες ...).
43 Cf. Casaubon 1605, 106.
Casaubon translates the text, \(\pi\rho\alpha\tau\omicron\nu\omicron\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ \gamma\acute{\alpha} \mu\mu\omicron\omicron\upsilon\nu\tau\iota\alpha\iota\iota\varsigma \kappa\alpha\iota \delta\rho\omicron\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ \acute{\alpha}\mu\phi\omega\), as “ambo enim agendo faciendoque imitantur” (‘both imitate indeed by doing and acting’).\(^{44}\) Therefore, according to Casaubon, the sentence does not say that those who ‘do and act’ are the actors or the characters in the drama but its authors. In relation to this, he refers to a previous commentary:\(^{45}\)

Licet, inquit philosophus, etiam hoc modo imitari, ut sic omnia imitatione sua exprimant poetae, quasi ipsi agerent, et in rerum ipsarum actu versarentur, non otiosi in cellula scriberent.

It is also possible, the philosopher says, to imitate in this form: the poets express everything in a way, by their own imitation, as if they would act themselves and were involved in the representation of the actual events, not writing at leisure in a small room.

Nowadays scholars have more primary textual evidence of the \textit{Poetics} than in the 16th or 17th centuries. As noted in the critical apparatus, neither B nor Lat provide information about the text to be edited on this point. The situation is different in Ar, whose translation of the discussed group (\(\text{ya‘malûna wa-yaf‘alûna Ar, ‘do and act’}\)) suggests, albeit not conclusively, that \(\Sigma\) could coincide with Casaubon’s conjecture: \(\pi\rho\alpha\tau\omicron\nu\omicron\tau\epsilon\varsigma\ ... \delta\rho\omicron\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma.\(^{46}\)

It is exciting for a scholar when an emendation he has divined appears in a new testimony. Casaubon, who died many years before Ar was discovered and interpreted, would not experience this joy. Still, it is striking that in 1609 a scholar conjectured a Greek text nowhere else attested at that time, already contained in a translation into Arabic written before 934.

Of course, this fact does not prove that the reading in question is correct. Casaubon may have been wrong and the coincidence could be simply a shared

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\(^{44}\) Cf. Casaubon 1605, 110.

\(^{45}\) Cf. Casaubon 1635, 105-106. It should be noted that, in the \textit{Poetics}, the agent of \(\mu\mu\omicron\epsilon\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma\) or \(\mu\iota\mu\iota\varsigma\sigma\iota\varsigma\) may be the author or the performer, the imitative art or, more generally, the human being; in relation to this, besides the discussed passage, cf. 47a13-28, b13, 15, 48a1, 7-9, 19-24, 26, 28-29, b5-9, 20-21, 25-26, 35-36, 49b24-25, 26-27, 31, 36-37, 50a16-17, 20-21, b24-25, 51b28-29, 54b12-13, 59a15-16, b24-25, 32-34, 60a8-9, 60b8-11, 61b28-29, 30-31, 62a10-1.

\(^{46}\) Cf. Margoliouth 1911, 235; Tkatsch 1928-1932, vol. 1, 225, vol. 2, 2, Gudeman 1934, 33, 109, who accepts many of the readings attested in Ar, says nothing in this case about the Arabic testimony or Casaubon’s conjecture, despite knowing another emendation by him to these lines; cf. Gudeman 1934, 33. On the other hand, Gudeman 1934, 108 included a figure which represents the different kinds of imitation; in this figure he employs the nominative \(\pi\rho\alpha\tau\omicron\nu\omicron\tau\epsilon\varsigma\) as the best way to refer to the dramatic mode of imitation; cf. Galván forthcoming.
mistake, not reflecting what Aristotle wrote, if the reading tentatively reconstructed for Σ proceeds from a textual corruption in the Greek transmission (πράττοντας ... δρῶντας → πράττοντες ... δρῶντες), or from a misinterpretation of the text translated from Greek into Syriac or from Syriac into Arabic, as often happens in this version. Theoretically, a Greek, a Syriac, or an Arabic copist or translator might even have altered a text they found suspicious because they thought, like Casaubon, that it did not properly explain the specific character of the dramatic imitation under discussion.

It is doubtful that a copyist or translator changed a comprehensible text (πράττοντας γὰρ μιμοῦνται καὶ δρῶντας ἀμφῶ) because of the speculative reason adduced by Casaubon. On the other hand, the change of -α(ς) into -ε(ς) is not a common palaeographic mistake in the different Greek alphabets, neither in majuscule nor in minuscule or in abbreviation. Both reasons would support the antiquity of the variant πράττοντες ... δρῶντες, supposing that the Syriac and Arabic translators reproduce what was in Σ and have not misinterpreted its text. Therefore, the editor should cautiously write in his/her critical apparatus: πράττοντες ... δρῶντες fort. Σ (sic vert. Ar [ya’malīna wa-yaf’alīna]; iam ci. Casaubonus). The discussion should then consider which of the two possibilities is to be preferred, -ες ... -ες or -ας ... -ας, because of its meaning, its adequacy to the reality of the poetic activity, and the points of view articulated in the Poetics.

The idea that the dramatists imitate with their own acts may seem strange at first sight, not only in the Poetics but also to our common understanding of dramatic activity; the notion of the actors imitating through their acts is more comprehensible and congruent with our expectations. Poetic creativity is not discussed as such in Aristotle’s treatise. But, reading between lines, different hints suggest what the philosopher thought about this matter. For example, Aristotle considers that the poet must have a mental representation of the events which he wants to bring to stage, as the Poetics says in 55a22-26. This is different from declaring that the dramatists imitate πράττοντες καὶ δρῶντες. But the text goes on to say that the poet should, ‘so far as possible, complete his plots with gestures’ (διὰ δὲ δυνατὸν καὶ τοῖς σχήμασιν συναπεργαλζόμενον,

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47 One of my reviewers reminded me that, in 48b16, θεωροῦντας was misunderstood in the Syriac version and translated as if it were θεωροῦντες. Neither Margoliouth 1887, 51: 191, 237 nor Tkatsch 1928-1932, vol. 1, 225, vol. 2, 3 mention this fact.


which renders his work similar to the activity of an actor.\footnote{Cf. Lucas 1968, 175-176; Hose 2022, 311-312.}

Moreover, the following lines (55a30-34) describe how it is fitting that the author identify himself with his characters: ριθανώτατοι γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως οἱ ἐν τοῖς πάθεσι ἐίσιν (‘it happens that, given the same nature, those who experiment the (represented) emotions are most credible’, 55a30-31). As Lucas points out, the Aristotelian tendency to identify the roles of author and actor, who may be referred to interchangeably, depending on the situation, as οἱ μιμούμενοι, ‘those who imitate’ (cf. n. 45),\footnote{Cf. Lucas 1968, 62, 63, 102; Hose 2022, 312. As Lucas 1968, 62 notes, the reason for this tendency to identify author and actor may be that, until well into the fifth century BC, the main actor was the author himself.} should be recalled in this regard.

Thus, the implications of the text (πράττοντες ... δρῶντες) may not be as awkward as it seemed at first sight; the discussion at least shows that this variant reading is not a lectio impossibilis. However, Casaubon proposed his emendation because he thought that the vulgate text, proceeding from A, did not respond to the question about the mode of imitation. At the same time, it is worth noting that his conjecture, though not impossible, may be unnecessary, as the text of A explains, in my opinion, the mode according to which Sophocles and Aristophanes imitate.

The issue is that the inclusion of δρῶντας in the group πράττοντας ... καὶ δρῶν-τας may fulfill the requisite Casaubon felt was missing from the sentence: the reference to the mode of imitation. The second participle, δρῶντας, specifies the first, πράττοντας, i.e., a general concept is combined with a more specific one.\footnote{Cf. Gudeman 1934, 106-107; cf. also 247-248. Rostagni 1945, 15 says that the two participles are synonyms: the second (δρώντας) is introduced in order to establish an etymological relation with δράμα (cf. infra). Cf. also Sykoutris 1937, 22-23.} The mode of dramatic imitation is specified in this way: the imitated figures of tragedy and comedy do not act only in the general sense implied by πράττοντας, a verb in Greek which does not mean to ‘act’ in a dramatic sense as Lucas notes;\footnote{Cf. Lucas 1968, 63. Cf. also LSJ, s.v., GE, s.v.} the dramatic character of the works or acting of those figures is indicated by δρῶντας. The first meaning of δράω is, according to the lexica, ‘do, accomplish’.\footnote{Cf. LSJ, s.v., GE, s.v. (‘do, fulfil, execute’). Cf. also Wartelle 1985, 47.} LSJ does not mention this possibility, but the verb can also mean ‘act’ in a dramatic or ritual (cf. Paus. 1.43.2) situation, as different examples attest as far back as Plato at least.\footnote{Cf. DGE, s.v.: Pl. Tht. 169b2-3, Plu. Alc. 19, Max. Tyr. 22.4, Paus. 1.43.2. Cf. also GE, s.v.} In the Poetics, δράω must also refer to the ‘activity’, i.e., ‘acting’ of the actors when tragedy is defined as an
imitation δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι᾿ ἀπαγγελίας, ‘by people who act and not by narration’ (49b26-27).57

The sentence following the discussed text (48a25-28) establishes a relation between δράω and δρᾶμα: ὅθεν καὶ δράματα καλεῖσθαί τινες αὐτά φασιν, διὶ μιμοῦνται δρώντας (‘Because of this, some say that these (works) are called ‘dramas’ [dramata] because they imitate them “acting” [drōntas], 48a28-29).58 It should be noted that Casaubon emended this second δρώντας, which he also changed to δρώντες.59 The Arabic version does not support Casaubon’s conjecture at this point. δρώντας must have been the reading of the archetype Ω, despite not being definitively clear, on the basis of the Latin translation (actitantes; cf. n. 41), which was the reading in Φ.

That is to say, both readings (-ες ... -ες / -ας ... -ας) may be possible in 48a27-28. In the last two centuries no editor has published πράττοντες ... δρώντες, very few have included this reading in the apparatus,60 and the majority do not even mention it.61 In the 17th and 18th centuries the situation was different: after Casaubon published his emendation, Heinsius adopted it, at least partially, and different editions in the following centuries did something similar.62

If a decision is to be taken, as is the duty of an editor, it may be concluded that πράττοντας ... δρώντας is preferable because of two evident, textual reasons:63

57 Cf. Bywater 1909, 121, 158; Lucas 1968, 97; Hose 2022, 240. The subject of δρώντων are, according to my interpretation, the figures of tragedy or the actors; the interpretation of Lucas (1968, 97: “an imitation performed by men acting”) and Bywater is the same; Hose 2022, 240 translates “in verkörpernder Darstellung”. Cf. all instances of δράω in the Poetics in 48a28, 29, b1, 49b26, 53a25, b22, 59a30.

58 Cf. Bywater 1909, 122; Lucas 1968, 69; Hose 2022, 214. The Poetics comes back to the terminological question in 48b1-2 and recalls that Dorians use δράν to say ποιεῖν, ‘to do’, and Athenians πράττειν. This comment is introduced in relation to the possible Dorian origin of drama; cf. Bywater 1909, 124-125.

59 Cf. Casaubon 1635, 110.

60 Cf. Susemihl 1865, 59; Kassel 1965, 5; Hose 2022, 106.

61 Cf. Vahlen 1885, 8; Bywater 1909, 8; Hardy 1932, 32; Gudeman 1934, 33; Sykoutris 1937, 23; Rostagni 1945, 15; Gallavotti 1974, 8; Dupont-Roc and Lallot 1980, 38; Fuhrmann 1987, 8; Tarán and Gutas 2012, 168, 324; Riu 2017, 128. The case of Tarán and Gutas 2012 is noticeable as Gutas knows the variant and refers to it in Endress and Gutas 1992, 705; I thank Professor Galván for this information.

62 Cf. Galván forthcoming. Heinsius 1611, 4-5 published πράττοντας ... δρώντες in 48a27-28 and δρώντες in 29. In my opinion, despite the comments of one of my reviewers, the fact that the conjecture has virtually disappeared from editions in the last two centuries does not abrogate it per se; it should be recalled that πράττοντας was deemed appropriate by Gudeman 1934, 108 and Else 1957, 105; cf. nn. 42, 57. On this whole question, cf. Galván forthcoming.

63 This conclusion is opposed to the one proposed by Galván forthcoming.
a) πράττοντας ... δρῶντας is best attested, as it is the reading of at least A; on the other hand, it is not absolutely clear if Σ coincided with Casaubon’s conjecture.

b) πράττοντες ... δρῶντες leads the editor to change the text in a second place (48a29), in this case without textual support as δρῶντας, not δρῶντες, is the word attested in this second sentence in A, B, and Σ.64

Bibliography


64 On the case of Φ, cf. supra and n. 41.


