MARK AS DRAMA:

A Prolegomenon to Reading the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian Tragedy

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ABSTRACT

Recently, a number of scholars (Bilezikian, 1977; Hooker, 1991; Botha, 1993; Shiner, 2003; Dewey, 2004; Fast, 2005; Byrskog, 2006; Holland, 2007) have alluded to, or highlighted, the dramatic nature of, and the performative possibilities in, the Gospel of Mark. Their comments and explorations are appropriated as the basis for engaging in a theoretical work that seeks to establish both why and how the Gospel of Mark may be read as a dramatic text, and, consequently, to suggest a manner in which to dramatize this account of the Gospel of Mark. The task is undertaken with Michel Foucault and Aristotle as the guides, and, significantly, with Foucault as the interpretive guide to the processes of forming Aristotle's treatise on drama. It endeavours, first, to emphasise the physically inscriptive power of texts (why the Gospel of Mark may be performative); second, to demonstrate the diverse and complex processes which form the specific discourse of the *Poetics* by Aristotle, and to foreground some of its central interpretive protocols (how the Gospel of Mark may be read as a drama); and, finally, informed by the body-power of texts and employing certain of the Aristotelian protocols, to venture an approach to the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy, and one that may possess a contemporary relevance.

KEY TERMS

text, body, inscription, discursive formation, discourse, πρᾶξις, μῦθος, ἁμαρτία, ἀναγνώρισις, περιπέτεια, κάθαρσις, tragedy

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

TRAGEDY AND ITS POSSIBILITIES

It is a time of the end of all endings, and also the end of all beginnings. Definitive stories of the human endeavour, determinate narratives of the human journey, denotative mappings of the human route from nativities, from *fontes et origines*, toward final destinations, places of rest and repose, the *termini ad quos* of the human itinerary are transgressed by both the modern and the post-modern interrogation of the boundary, the limitation, the margin. For the modernists, the "melancholy, long, withdrawing roar ... [of the] ... Sea of Faith ... retreating" (Arnold, *Dover Beach*) alone is heard and no 'beyond' awaits; for the post-modernists, the 'beyond' is constituted by textual inscriptions always already – *toujours déjà* – questioning and subverting, deconstructing and disseminating the centre, itself constituted of textual inscriptions, which comprise a "plurality of meaning, an irreducible plurality" (Barthes, 1979: 76), and which themselves, perennially, are under erasure – *sous rature*. Whilst a doleful sadness and a disconsolate loneliness intermittently may afflict the modernist project, the conflictual disarray and aberrant discord of post-modernity terminates linearity, inexorable progress, and the constructions of political kingdoms on earth or eternal kingdoms in the heavens. It is an end to the insertion of the "documents" of the present into the inexorable serialization of the human epic, "les équilibres stables et difficiles à rompre, les processus irréversibles, les régulations constantes" (Foucault, 1969: 9), which have, until now, formed the recorded account of the unfolding of history. "Le modèle enigmatique de la *ligne* est ... le refoulement

de la pensée symbolique pluri-dimensionelle" (Derrida, 1967b: 128), a repression, or even expulsion, that upholds "la formation de l'idéologie par la classe de ceux qui écrivent ou plutôt qui disposent des scribes" (Derrida, 1967b: 129). But "la fin de l'écriture linéaire" rebels against the writers, or, more exactly, against those who instruct and order the scribes, and as "nous commençons ... à écrire autrement," so also, and more pertinently, "nous devons relire autrement" (Derrida, 1967b: 130). And whilst "different kinds of text call for different kinds of reading," Lash's (1986: 38 & 45) assertion "that the fundamental form of the Christian interpretation of scripture is the life, activity and organization of the Christian community, constructed as performance of the biblical text," is proximate to our task.

Shiner's (2003) insightful and long overdue book on the "Performance of Mark," draws more readily on Aristotle's *Rhetoric* than on his *Poetics*, and on the first or second-century manuscript attributed to Longinus, *De sublimitate*, Quintilian's (c. 35 – 95 CE) *Institutio oratoria*, and the works of Cicero (106 – 43 BCE) and Lucian (c. 115 – 200 CE), in order to display the performative quality of the Gospel of Mark. His approach, examples, and conclusions are illuminating, and he demonstrates more than adequately that reading the Gospel of Mark in a wider, and yet defined, literary context is rewarding. In Shiner's (2003) literary arena, the Gospel of Mark indeed performs, but perhaps his performative reading is too readily informed by the protocols of rhetoric, and the text itself, quite probably, demands various excisions, in order to transform it into a dramatic work.

The task here is less ambitious, more introductory. First, it is to observe the performative and inscriptive nature of texts, and of New Testament texts in particular.

This is undertaken in Chapter Two, with the assistance of Michel Foucault's (1967; 1973; 1975; 1978; 1985) perspicacious observations concerning the rhetorization of bodies, and the constitution of acceptable and apposite behavioural norms of conduct and social interaction through codified and physically inscriptive protocols. Texts write bodies: bodies dramatize textuality. This is the performance of the body-text, or, more exactly, the textualized body, and, with a certain depth and gravity, religious texts score and engrave their adherents intimately, and generate a religious anatomy, and, more specifically, a confessional disposition, which is ostended in its verbal, gestural, and interactive comportment.

Second, it is this performative δύναμις of texts, and of religious texts in particular, that invokes the narrower focus of Chapter Three. The plethora of multiple readings of the New Testament texts undertaken by scholars seems to create a disjunction between their textual positivity and their physical serration; and their epigraphic nature is restricted either to prescriptive liturgical information or ethical injunctions, rather than their more ubiquitous and embracing textual branding. But the dramatic quality of the gospels in particular, in which their instructive 'writing' materializes corporeally in and on the lives of the Christian faithful, and, indeed, both positively and adversely upon the unfaithful, engenders a more deliberate and concentrated endeavour, namely, to foreground certain features of a gospel construed as a dramatic work. But never far from desire are the obstacles to its fulfilment. And here, the desire to read a New Testament text as a drama is confronted by the problem of how to proceed. Which protocols? What poetic structures? Which principles of playwriting? Which theorist? Which theory?

For a student of both the Theory of Literature and of the New Testament, two classics present themselves without being asked. The first is the *Poetics* by Aristotle, the 'inaugural' text of Literary Theory; the second is the Gospel of Mark, the 'foundational' gospel, and one that immediately is dramatically captivating. The Gospel of Mark is without genealogies or reflective philosophy. It is concise in action, short in duration, and, arguably, tragic. But the *Poetics* occupies centre stage in Chapter Three, that is, in as far as it is able to present itself. For once on the ὀρχήστρα, Aristotle's *Poetics* dances, as indeed it should, and its 'lines' and 'actions' reside in the agonistic milieu of discursive 'production,' of the formation of a discursive regularity, and one almost as fractured in its inspissation as it is, for the interpreter, perhaps even for its inaugurator, in its formulation. Thus, the task is a hermeneutic one, and, once again, Michel Foucault (1969) provides the possibility of viewing the *Poetics* as a discourse formed from various emergent surfaces, with the subsequent endeavours of reification through the attendant rites and rituals of hegemony. But the *Poetics* retains its own dramatic quality and continues to 'mask' itself, leading, at best, to momentary στάσις – indeed, both as a discursive 'site' and as a 'revolt' – at worst, to ossification; but, more often, to unbounded analytical scrutiny in the lives of revolving interpreters. Here, closure is denied, even when momentary and corrigible protocols of reading a tragic drama are adopted; and hence, this text almost invokes a fidelity to it of a reader, who returns again and again, only to find it speaking new words. Notwithstanding its semantic abundance, the siting of the *Poetics* as a discursive formation does, at least, permit the generation of 'a reading' of this treatise, and the consequent suggestion of 'faithfully unfaithful' postulates of the elements of a tragic drama.

Thus, by appropriating specific elements within the uncertain hermeneutic of the *Poetics*, this selection of particular features, which are suggested to be central to an Aristotelian dramatic work of the tragic genre, subsequently in Chapter Four, become the βάσανος of the presence of tragic dramatic features in a *toujours déjà* overdetermined Gospel of Mark. Edward Norman (2007: 24) has observed that

> [i]t is now generally assumed, as part of modern intellectual culture, that the Bible was always interpreted literally until scientific knowledge and historical relativism began to dispel its authority. Then people of reason, and Biblical scholars themselves, began to subject the sacred texts to the same kind of critical analysis as other repositories of traditional knowledge received in the Age of Enlightenment. In fact, a 'fundamentalist' reading of the Bible, and the concept of verbal inerrancy, are largely modern: a fruit, indeed, of mass literacy and populist choice ... [since] ... the Bible texts were interpreted allegorically, not only by Philo and Origen and the Alexandrian school of the second and third centuries, but by probably a significant majority of Jewish and Christian scholars until the end of the Middle Ages. Allegory is now so out of fashion as an interpretative tool that it has virtually passed from the scene ... but it is as well to remember that such a method accepted the diversity inseparable from human agency in the composition of texts, and allowed a single verbal construction to convey multiple meanings – a correct pointer to the complexity of things.

Whilst this work similarly rejects closure upon conclusive interpretations and, more emphatically, upon a single definitive account, and concurs with Turner (1995: 24)

that "[t]heological adequacy ... requires the maximization of our discourses about God," perhaps it endeavours less to add a 'meaning' to the "multiple meanings" of a sacred story, than to sketch – a suitable dramatic image – an approach to the Gospel of Mark as a performative work of an Aristotelian and tragic nature. It does so, however, at considerable historical distance from its target text, and even further from its theoretical lens. Thus, accompanying this essay, in its reading of the assigned tragic lineaments in this sacred text, are the innovative academic gestures in the thought of Michel Foucault,[1] primarily those about the body and the formation of discourses. Foucault's corpus, it is suggested, renders the distant and the archaic, and, somewhat paradoxically with regard to the perennially recited biblical stories, the distantly and archaically *familiar*, now contemporary. The manner in which words and bodies are entwined through an etched and embedded procedure, and the way in which discourses structure themselves, define their boundaries, and 'voice' their participants, contribute to generate, inform, and construct – to sub*ject* as a *sub*ject – the subsequent enactive processes of the formation and compaction of the activity of being human. Through appropriating aspects of Foucault's work, not only may human physicality and its verbally informed gestures be read as scripted drama, but also the protocols of tragedy, as conceived by Aristotle, may be sited in their own agonistic environment. Whilst the latter inquiry generates *a* reading of the *Poetics* – always corrigible, always partial – it does, at least, license the foregrounding for our purpose of a πρᾶξις, a μῦθος observed through that human ἁμαρτία, which engenders an ἀναγνώρισις and περιπέτεια, and leads to an exploration of the function of κάθαρσις. Moreover, and not without import, it is suggested that if a κάθαρσις succeeds effectively, then *a* πρᾶξις is conceived – even if that is simply to

[1] Foucault was appointed to the Chair of the History of Systems of Thought at the Collège de France in 1970.

accept the meaningless of meaning – and the emotional serration of perceiving a πρᾶξις through the experience of κάθαρσις writes that tragic meaning upon the human self. But Foucault's observations exceed their boundaries. Indeed, the borders of discourses, of specialities, of areas of expertise, are discursive constructions which are defended with rigour, perhaps in no more an unseemly fashion than in the academy, perhaps in no more a violent manner than when the limits of sacred creeds are challenged. Although

> les systèmes punitifs sont à replacer dans une certain 'économie politique' du corps: même s'ils ne font pas appel à des châtiments violents ou sanglants, même losqu'ils utilisent les méthodes 'douces' qui enferment ou corrigent (Foucault, 1975: 30),

the formation of politically, socially, economically ordered and circumscribed subjects is undertaken by the prevailing codes of discipline and conformity in the wider societal arena, because "le corps ne devient force utile que s'il est à la fois corps productif et corps assujetti" (Foucault, 1975: 30 – 31).

Tragedy, it is proposed, emerges as that resistance to the dominant discourses, the inherited inscriptions, the body formed. Tragedy is present where there is conflict. Tragedy employs, arguably, those unique human categories of possibility, of alternative, and of hope by employing the language capacities of the subjunctive and optative moods, as well as their conditional facility, and, perhaps definitively, of the future tense, in order to create dreams of unrealized scenes and other worlds. These visions exert their pressure upon current worlds and worldviews, and they challenge

the eternal and temporal powers – their presence, their absence, their rule, their methods. Ironically, the companionship of Foucault evokes a sadness, a sense that those dreamed of visions remain dreamed of. The powerful, the respected and revered – both sacred and secular – resist agitation and disturbance. Tragedy, as plot, as μῦθος, evinces a human spirit which questions, dissents, and defies. But, simultaneously, tragedy, as action, as πρᾶξις, resists these interrogative and defiant challenges, and, generates a self-defeating κάθαρσις, which, nevertheless, impels and revisits ethical and intellectual questions, and documents a perennially dissent. This tragic disposition may witness, or, more boldly, constitute the beingness of being contemporarily human.

In Goldhill's (1986: 222 – 243) useful demonstration of the congruities between the sophist and the tragedian in fifth-century Athens, his comments may be appropriated to emphasize the promise in revisioning a text such as the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy, since both sophist and tragedian are "parallel investigators of the position of man [sic] in language and in society" (Goldhill, 1986: 229). And tragedy, as one suggests in the case of the Gospel of Mark, which probes the adequacy both of sacred and secular words and also of extant religious and political constructs and systems, exemplifies the skill of brinkpersonship in pursuing these pressing matters, but returns, through 'pity' and 'fear,' to kathartic equilibrium. "Tragic drama," (Goldhill, 1986: 242) asserts,

> again and again dramatizes the social world of the city at risk from the force of man's [sic] behaviour as it approaches the extremes of wild transgression and desire for law and order; again and again, tragic texts ... return to the

> vocabulary of civic relations, to the terminology of norm, error, punishment; again and again ... the tragedians depict concern with the definition of a human and his behaviour,

and the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy extends these tragic tensions and, as will be suggested, and in conformity with the tragic *dénouement*, both plays, and refuses to play, the endgame.

CHAPTER TWO

EMBODIED TEXTS AND TEXTUAL BODIES

INTRODUCTION

Classic texts invite readers.[2] Far from being passive cultural artefacts of a dim and dusky tradition, they call out to auditors. These texts, which both have claimed the status of 'classic,' and upon which the status of 'classic' has been bestowed, constitute a corpus of literature by no means static or closed. Nor are they read, but rather they read and write us with an authenticity that portrays a perennial, perhaps often only a sensed, veracity about the human condition. Thus, classic texts always are contemporary. They are active participants in the various socio-political, economic, cultural, and religious milieux within nation states, and many succeed in overarching communal localities with their epics, which demarcate national actualities, and, indeed, some transcend national boundaries. In their presence at intra-national, national, and international levels, they inform human lives and infuse public affairs with the 'truths' of human existence. In speaking our condition, they

[2] For the same diligent reader and inquirer of the classics, these upostatic works invoke an 'eternal return;' and a perennial journey to them is undertaken through different lenses and theories, since they constitute one's constant informative companions. Following upon research which read the *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus within both the Aristotelian and Semiotic frame (M.A. UNISA, 2006), the present project returns to some of those texts and arguments, both in order to revisit them and refine them; but also, and more significantly in the present case, to expand the limits of inquiry and, in particular, to understand the *Poetics* as it emerges from a burgeoning and contested classification of the τέχνη of dramatic art, and to perceive its 'formation' as a 'discourse' in a rigorously Foucauldian sense. Here one does not simply join "[m]odern occidental philosophy, [which] for all its historical turns, is still working through Aristotelian linguistic categories and distinctions" (Goldhill, 1986: 1), but, as is emphasized in this study, one enjoins post-modern and post-structuralist perspectives of the dynamic shifts in, and slides and slippage of, textual semantic promise.

speak to our condition. Distance and time seldom sequesters their accurate recording of the human state.

But that accuracy is part of their secret: they possess a precision that eludes us. For, classic texts reveal a light that is angled and refractive, that deflects and glancingly reflects and, therefore, consistently challenges our vision. Thus, these narratives of human truths defy definitive renditions. Such sagas and epics, such *upostatic* stories

> are open-ended in that they provoke inexhaustible multiplicities and potentialities of interpretation. They keep the human spirit off-balance. They elide our paraphrase and understanding even as we seem to grasp them … The hunger of the soul, of the intellect, for meaning, compels the disciple (ourselves) to come back, over and again to these texts (Steiner, 2003: 35 – 36).[3]

In the endeavour to gain new insights into these foundational narratives, to tease out their interpretive knots, to provide answers to their *aporiai*, to make visible their palimpsests, and to extract and elucidate their messages anew, classic texts are subjected to multiple readings from behind, alongside, and in front of themselves. Thus, MacIntyre's (1990) Gifford Lectures trace Aquinas's thought to a dialogue between Aristotle and St. Augustine, viewing Thomas's systematization as a sequel to the fusion of the ethics and theology of these two primary thinkers. Those who have cited the classics as "monuments," rather than as "documents," in their own "spaces

[3] Coetzee (2007: 190), in his (quite possibly) autobiographical palimpsest, *Diary of a Bad Year*, includes the following entry: "Another meaning of 'the classic:' to be on the shelf waiting to be taken down for the thousandth, the millionth time. The classic: the perduring. No wonder publishers are so eager to claim classic status for their authors!"

of dispersion" (Foucault, 1969), include Robbins (1984; 1992), whose socio-rhetorical reading of Mark draws on comparative examples, in order to foreground the rhetorical strategies adopted in the social interaction between Jesus and his followers.[4] But, whilst there may be a minority of dissenting voices, the heirs of the Enlightenment, with their unremitting faith in human progress, remain convinced of the validity of current hermeneutical *reseaux*. Thus, it is fashionable to appropriate more recent theoretical models, and to impose their frameworks upon the ancient, and yet ever-concurrent, classics – whether structuralist (Patte, 1976; 1990), post-structuralist (Moore, 1994), and deconstructive mappings (Derrida, 1967a; 1967b; 1972a; 1972b) or Marxist (Gutiérrez, 1973), feminist (Fiorenza, 1983), and queer[5] (Bozorth, 2001) excavations.

But it is, at once, both an historical and a post-modern strategy of reading to investigate a classic text from behind by employing yet another classic, of which, like those later programmes, the target classic itself is unaware. Ironically, the ignorance of the classic subjected to such a meditation, paradoxically, contains both our knowledge and its own, since it declares our actuality from out of its own encyclopaedic wisdom.

To examine a classic text as a discursive regularity is not dissimilar from applying to it the most neoteric of hermeneutic plans. Like all strategic attempts at disclosure and comprehension of the classic, the view partially is obscured by the interpretive

[4] Snyman (2006) provides an important reminder that the imposition of external theoretical models and frameworks ought not to deny the generation of sophisticated and apposite rhetorical strategies which are internal to the structure and argument of a text.

[5] Although Bozorth's (2001) scholarly examination of the poetry of Auden, undoubtedly, is aided by the declared sexual orientation of the poet, the possibility of undertaking a serious 'queer reading' of the Gospels ought not to be dismissed. In fact, since this issue currently threatens to cause schism within the Anglican Communion, such an academic inquiry may be somewhat urgent.

pillars that have been constructed in the succeeding centuries,[6] and partially hidden by the archaeological fragments that have contributed to its initial accretion as a representative discourse (see Foucault, 1969: *passim*). In this wider context, the return to a classic unveils a reading that simultaneously is opaque and transparent, analogous to standing before stained-glass as magnificent as that of the thirteenth century north-transept rose window in Chartres Cathedral, both seen – as "presence" – and also seen through – as "absent-presence." And the dappled light offered by this opaque transparency, or transparent opacity, refuses to yield "une présence pleine," but "c'est ce qu'on peut appeler *espacement*, devenir-espace du temps ou devenir-temps de l'espace (*temporalisation*)" (Derrida, 1972a: 14).

Merely a trace of meaning is proffered as "différance," meaning which is momentary, because it differs from, and defers to, its surroundings, all of which, *toujours déjà*, constitute *signifiants* (Derrida, 1972a: 1 – 29).[7] But *la trace* is neither a past, nor a future as a modified present,[8] but, of its own provenance, an ἴχνος, a track to follow,

[6] As Calvino (1999: 5) notes: "The Classics are those books which come to us bearing the aura of previous interpretations, and trailing behind them the traces they have left in the culture or cultures (or just in the languages and customs) through which they have passed."

[7] The choice of stained glass and of that in Chartres Cathedral is not without purpose: "Stained glass by its nature does not benefit from surface light – light shining directly upon its face – which makes the glass appear flat and dull. Stained glass needs lighting from behind so that it can transmit the light, or be illumined by it, allowing maximum visual impact of the glass. In Chartres Cathedral the internal illumination was, and still is, potentially quite low ... The ability of the human eye to focus on a given colour at low light levels is defined as the colour's acuity rating ... At the lower end of the acuity scale are the colours of blue-greens, deep reds and blues, with the blues having the lowest acuity rating of all ... As a result of the use of these colours in the cathedral's glass, combined with the intentionally dim lighting environment, our eyes enter into a mildly myopic state and are unable to focus clearly on the coloured glass. The eye continues to seek the correct focal length by shifting it back and forth in the dim surroundings. As a result the images appear to float off the plane of the glass, seemingly stepping off the window and hovering in front of the observer's eyes. This is a conscious twelfth-century trick of colour and lighting which has had a profound mystical impact on tens of thousands of visitors to the cathedral over the last eight hundred years" (Brady, 2006: 64 – 65).

[8] Derrida (1972a: 13): "La différance, c'est qui fait que le mouvement de la signification n'est possible que si chaque élément dit 'présent,' apparaissant sur la scène de la présence, se rapporte à autre chose que lui-même, gardant en lui la marque de l'élément passé et se laissant déjà creuser par la marque de son rapport à l'élément futur, la trace ne se rapportant pas moins à ce qu'on appelle le futur qu'à ce qu'on appelle le passé, et constituant ce qu'on appelle le présent par ce rapport même à ce qui n'est pas lui: absolument pas lui, c'est-à-dire pas même un passé ou un futur comme présents modifiés."

or, metaphorically, a clue of meaning. This converts the perspective of the viewer from 'seeing' into 'seeming,' in a vision that, unattainably, reaches both behind and before, and that may proffer semantic import, but "sans aucun centre d'ancrage absolu" (Derrida, 1972a: 381). The experience of the viewer is one of participatory agitation, of movement. In an industrious and purposeful application, the beholder is "solicited,"[9] and negotiates a view, which, perennially, is transformative, and that alters, and then, alters again. As Thiselton (2006: 346) notes:

> If an active engagement between the horizons of the interpreter and those of the text takes place, this process will become *formative* in terms of the reshaping [of] the interpreter's horizons of understanding. The interpreter's understanding of the text will undergo re-formation, but in the very process of expansion and enlargement the interpreter's horizons of understanding will also become re-configured or transformed in terms of understanding his or her own conceptual world afresh and more deeply. The interpreter acquires an enlarged understanding of his or her own world.

But the 'eternal return' to classic texts, in the repeated readings and re-readings by their suppliants, does more than express and change, in a creative and innovative manner, the human experience of individuals and societies within countries or regions, or even globally. Nostalgic journeys to the past are also journeys to the future, and not simply with respect to the modification of consciousness and intellect. Rather, the contours, which facilitate the migration of the preterite into the preterite-

[9] Scholes (1989) identifies "solicitation" as one of Derrida's "protocols of reading."

present, are serrated tracks, ἴχνη, that score, or even lacerate, the terrain. And here, the 'terrain' is corporeal.

BODILY INSCRIPTIONS

Classic texts embed themselves in human form and, then, 'body forth' human activity. Their δύναμις empowers them to pierce the bodies of human persons, and reveal themselves in the somatic gestural actions of their hosts. In this sense, they are performative texts. The *Poetics* by Aristotle is one such text; the Gospel of Mark is another.

Therefore, the *Poetics* is not only a treatise about the superiority of tragic drama over epic, or merely an endeavour to establish the principles and protocols of writing a fine tragedy. It also informs the tradition of playwriting down through the centuries, with more or less influence, and writes its text upon the Euripidean / Freudian text of Racine's *Phèdre* (1677) (see Goodkin, 1991: 153ff.), Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953), or, as an adversative other, of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1601). But, as intimated above, the influence of the *Poetics* extends beyond that of writing practice. Its presence in the construction of the speeches and the dialogue in the script of a play, and in the imaginative actions of the textual characters in the creative act of writing, is, concomitantly, 'lived' in performance, in the ostensive act of μίμησις, of representation.

Likewise, and yet more acutely, the Gospel of Mark, arguably, is less about the Incarnation, than itself incarnational. Sections from it are not simply read as part of

the lectionary cycle of the Church. Rather, the Gospel of Mark is enacted in the liturgy, where it is somatically instructive, as it informs the communal actions of the sacred rites of the Church, and not only when, as a tangible text, it is raised aloft in the Gospel Procession, and then, kissed and venerated, but, more specifically, in the representation, the ἀνάμνησις, of the Last Supper in the central Eucharistic rite of the Church.

Here, the distant body – both in its singular and in its communal form – is embedded in the current body – both as the individual celebrant and adherent, and also as the gathered assembly. Thus, the old actions are remembered, and, simultaneously, become 'member-ed' actions, physically ostended actions. This sacred text is an iterative ecclesiastical drama, repeatedly performed with vestimentary accretions, and sonic and scenic codifications. Through its daily dramatic enactment, the Gospel of Mark names, defines, orders, and produces subjects, who, having subscribed to the attendant rites of entry, subsequently adopt the prevailing discourse, and themselves are enabled to name, define and refine, order and control, the discourse to which they have committed their intellects and their bodies.[10]

[10] Shapiro (2005: 170 – 171), writing of *1599. A Year in the Life of William Shakespeare*, suggests the manner in which theatre replaced the enactment of liturgical rituals: "While the Elizabethans didn't suffer the bloody religious wars that wracked much of the Continent, its reformations meant, among other things, a stripping away of altars, paintings, ceremonies, vestments, sacramental rituals and beloved holidays … In such a climate, new cultural forms – especially those that offered 'goodly sights' – prospered, including public theatre. In retrospect, it seems natural enough for the stage to fill a need once met by Catholic ritual, for English theatre emerged out of the liturgical plays of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and, in the three hundred years of mystery, miracle and morality drama that followed, continued to be deeply suffused with religious ritual and subject matter."
In somewhat more amusing fashion, Pieter-Dirk Uys (*Time Magazine*, 5th March, 2007), speaking of his theatre, *Evita se Perron*, in Darling, in the Western Cape, stated: "I live next to the Dutch Reformed Church dominee … He always embraces Evita [Bezuidenhout, Uys's alter ego,] whenever she meets him. We respect each other's theatres."

When Foucault (2000a: 326) stated that "the goal of my work during the last twenty years … has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects," he was referring to the production of the self through bodily inscriptions by means of discursive taxonomies. Foucault (1975) analysed the disciplinary techniques that were employed in prisons, military institutions, factories, and schools, in order to subjugate the body, and inscribe upon it normative and socially prescribed modes of action and ways of behaviour. These procedures of rigorous training, the infliction of penalties, and the determination of acceptable, normalized conduct through interrogation and examination, are a product of the prevailing political and ideological hegemony, which purposefully assists in servicing and maintaining these strategies, and are 'embodiments' of "action-orientated" ideologies, which "extend from an elaborated system of thought to the minutiae of everyday life, from a scholarly treatise to a shout in the street" (Eagleton, 1991: 48). Thus, systems of governing, that is, of the physical enactment of government, are not merely documented in statute books: laws are not noetic and conceptual; rather, their pervasive power is accomplished through their inscription upon the bodies of their subjects, and

> Cet assujetissement n'est pas obtenu par les seuls instruments soit de la violence soit de l'idéologie; il peut très bien être direct, physique, jouer de la force contra la force, porter sur de éléments matériels, et pourtant ne pas être violent; il peut être calculé, organisé, techniquement réfléchi, il peut être subtil, ne faire usage ni des armes ni de la terreur, et pourtant rester de l'ordre physique (Foucault, 1975: 31).

This is a process of writing the body and, consequently, of producing a physically seared political anatomy, so that "it is compelled to adopt a position within hierarchies, the structures and loci of powers that are already present in a community" (Vorster, 2000: 11). And this compelled participation in the existing socio-economic and political network which frames a society is assumed by appropriating a position as an "enunciative modality" (Foucault, 1969: 68 – 74), by becoming a subject and adopting a modal existence within the defined and constituted arena of a particular structural sphere. By means of this process, the "body becomes 'enlanguaged' and language becomes embodied" (Vorster, 1997: 397) as a specifically defined "text," informed and inscribed by, and dependent upon, the existing rhetorical strategies of hierarchical prescription, and of order, domination, and control, and, subsequently, itself, informing, inscribing, hierarchizing, and controlling the discursive formation of which it is a subject.[11]

Thus, rhetorized bodies initially are disciplined and docile bodies, and religious discourse and practice somatically brands its members in a rarefied ritual atmosphere, in the same manner in which juridical or medical discourse and practice engraves its subscribers with its own conventions of domestication, obedience, and duty. Brown (1988: 31) highlights the place of the body, and the different conceptions thereof, amongst Christians and non-Christians in the second century of the Common Era, when he maintains that

[11] The assertion that the 'modern individual' possesses a freedom that overcomes such prescriptivism is problematic, as noted by Derrida (1995: 36): "The individualism of technological civilization relies precisely on a misunderstanding of the unique self. It is an individualism relating to a *role* and not a *person*. In other words it might be called the individualism of a masque or *persona*, a character [*personage*] and not a person … modern individualism, as it has developed since the Renaissance, concerns itself with the *role that is played* rather than with this unique person whose secret remains hidden behind the social mask."

> [w]here second-century pagans differed most profoundly from the views that had already begun to circulate in Christian circles was in their estimate of the possibility for the body itself. Potentially formless and eternal matter, the body was barely held together, for a short lifetime, by the vivid soul of the well-bred man. Its solid matter could change as little as the crystalline marble of a sharply cut and exquisitely polished statue might blossom magically in its depths, into a more refined and malleable substance. Like society, the body was there to be administered, not to be changed. Others had begun to disagree with this view. Writing at the end of the second century, Clement of Alexandria, a Christian who knew his pagan authors well, summed up with admirable clarity and fairness the essence of the expectations of the body that we have described. Pagan philosophers, he knew, subscribed to an austere image of the person:
>
> > The human ideal of continence, I mean that which is set forth by the Greek philosophers, teaches one to resist passion, so as not to be made subservient to it, and to train the instincts to pursue rational goals.

But, even the "administration" of bodies requires training, in accordance with the extant social, economic, cultural, political, and religious ἐπιστῆμαι. Thus, the παιδαγωγεῖον, the γυμνάσιον, the βουλή, and the ναός are studios and locations of iterative rehearsal, where the physical ostension, which is congruent with the acceptable rituals and norms, may be practised. And a compliant body, commensurate with a suitably restrained and ordered disposition, serves both to confirm membership, and also, repeatedly, to call to mind acceptable bodily behaviour. But temperate dispositions, which adhere to the rules of comportment and

demeanour, engender a somatic dispersion that extends far beyond the formal and institutional locations and the sacred precincts where the political and cultural rituals and holy rites are enacted and celebrated.

Brown's (1988: xvii) generous words, so unfamiliar in the academy, at once draw us back to Foucault's "humbling serenity and unaffected craftsmanship,"[12] but this time to his exploration of regimens of interpersonal sexual relations and conduct amongst the ancient Greeks. The body as the locus of engagement may be compared to a sacrament in the teaching of the Church. Whilst, traditionally, the sacraments are "outward signs or sacred actions, instituted by Christ, through which grace is channelled or communicated for inward sanctification of the soul" (Lang, 1989: 561), somatic deictics reveal outward and visible evidence of the body inscribed by the codes and norms of a prevailing morality. As Foucault (1985: 27 – 28) asserts, "an action is not only moral in itself, in its singularity; it is also moral in its circumstantial integration and by virtue of the place it occupies in a pattern of conduct."

Such subjective coherence and objective conformity is engendered by an informative ascetics, an assiduous and practised rigour in the construction of the self, through the shaping of character. Interpersonal, social, and political relationships and allegiances are possible if the self is mastered through an intra-personal ἄσκησις. Without deliberately writing the body with the codes of the prevailing and accepted moral behavioural indices, that is, without codifying the body with the prescribed rules of social, political, and cultural engagement, the subject is excluded from participation in, and membership of, the various discourses of human selfhood. And the

[12] Perhaps, however, as Pericles (Thucydides, *Historiae* II. 45) notes: τὸν γὰρ οὐκ ὄντα ἅπας εἴωθεν ἐπαινεῖν.

measurement, the μέτρησις, of belonging to, participation in, and conversation possibilities of, a formative discourse is evident in a wounded body, one etched and branded with the marks of subjectivity. Returning to the New Testament, Brown (1988: 51) notes that

> In the communities that Paul had founded, the body – and most especially the body of the young male – was to enjoy none of the carefree moments of indeterminacy allowed to it by pagans. The body was not a neutral thing, placed between nature and the city. Paul set it firmly in place as a 'temple of the Holy Spirit.' It was a clearly visible locus of order, subject to limits that it was sacrilegious to overstep.

The penalties for ignoring or refusing the subjecthood offered to neophytes ranges from forms of discipline and punishment that include verbal persuasion or constrictive re-education to physical banishment or mortal exclusion. Here, from the standpoint of Paul's adversaries, and in its obvious extremity, the image of crucifixion is appropriate, where the refusal to wound the self, to "care for the self," ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, by educating it according to the rules of human selfhood pertaining to the accepted norms, results in society inflicting the fatal wounds of the threshold and, thereby, neutralizing the malcontent.

At a visible level, the architectural and cultural artefacts of an associative, communal, societal, national, or international aggregation, whether of wider or narrower constitution, are the monuments that witness to the architectonics of its adherents, and constitute the "fabric" that services the continual exercise of the prevailing

conventions. They also permit, inform, and sanction both the ritualized formalities in the political, social, or religious arenae, and also the quotidian exchanges practised in the domestic and extended οἰκονομίαι.

But, the calibration and evaluation of human comportment on the spectrum of conformity and deviation, the evolving assessment of the liminal possibilities, as well as the agonistic demarcation, of the frontiers of social conduct, are not merely documented in texts. Rather, texts themselves both codify and prescribe the forms, and circumscribe the boundaries, of interpersonal manners by denoting the indices for the self-inscription of permission and restraint, enactment and restriction. No more authoritative, empowering, and instructive instruments exist than the classics.

The classic is sanctioned by time. Its enduring presence induces commitment, a ceding of the body, a yielding of an inchoate and undefined separateness, for a degree of conformity, and, paradoxically, an individuality, for, without such participation, there is neither a concept nor a quantification of the individual self. Apprehending the classic (the present participle is used advisedly) is not exclusively an intellectual assent, but rather, a betrothal, a whole person assent to the existing 'truths.'

The interpersonal, physical evidence of such an espousal is evident in the relationships with other persons, in the iterated actions of social intercourse and exchange. But, this dedication also is an intra-personal undertaking, and involves a relationship with the self, who assents to the classic intellectually, and practises its prescriptions physically. Thus, the body is en-textualized, and the extent of the

authority of the classic over an individual or a society is evident in the depths of its marks of inscription, which is evident in intra-personal and interpersonal conduct. But here, appropriately, this exploration deepens. Ideological texts differ in their inscriptive weight from, for example, a classic novel, which upholds, rather than inaugurates, socio-political and cultural mores. An ideological text, like a religious text, presents a total mapping of the spatio-temporal co-ordinates of the human journey in its utmost context. Such "a worldview has this comprehensive, totalizing capacity to organize every aspect of human belief, action, and experience in terms of a system of symbolic classification and a sense of symbolic orientation" (Chidester, 1988: 48). It defines and delimits the borders of permissible thought and action, and intellectually and physically impresses its protocols upon its subscribers, who endeavour to incarnate a performance adequacy.

Thus, classic texts are performative texts, ostended by their 'readers,' who return to them, in order that they may declare the readers' own condition and status, which, in turn, they write somatically, behaviourally, in their own enactive existence. The burden of impress of the classic varies according to its position as a contributor and participant in the subsequent ontological and epistemological traditions that map the human experiment.

Therefore, those classics which are recognized and appropriated as secular or sacred 'theologies' impact as much upon the beingness, the οὐσία, of being, as upon the meaning, the ἐπιστήμη, of being. Karl Marx's tomes are as physically prescriptive as the liberation theologians find the impetus in the Gospels for revolutionary action, Plato's dualism is as corporeally instructive as the ascetic teaching of the Jains is

displayed graphically upon their bodies, and Aristotle's cultivation of a disposition of virtuous living in the *Nicomachean Ethics* is as materially extended as are the moral injunctions enacted by the People of the Book.

And it is this performative aspect that is evident in a classic text such as the Gospel of Mark. Thus, the Gospel of Mark proffers meaning in the face of anomie. It maps human lives, establishes intellectual grids, prescribes and proscribes human behaviour, and defines and locates the self and the other – sub-human, human, and divine – in a total and ultimate sphere. It extends roles to human persons as actors in a script already written. The recital of its stories, the performance of its narrative in ritualized and ethical conduct – through its own inherent justice and rationality – are appropriated and enacted in a dramatic design and structure by its adherents, or, perhaps better, by its cast. Here, indeed, an essential aspect of the major instructive texts is exhibited.

As a consequence, these more general observations about the nature of the classic and its corporeal impress and seal, extend to the reader a second, a 'meta-,' invitation. If the classic is of such expressive significance that the impact of its weight is visible in human activity, and, moreover, tangible on human bodies, then, arguably, its dramatic qualities demand closer scrutiny. Amongst the paths of inquiry that the above review recommends is to observe the dramatic power of classic texts, texts as lasting as Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, but, *a fortiori*, their intellectual and physical 'writing,' because the classic is ontologically and epistemologically constructive so as to change lives. Whilst this essay is premised upon the above reflection on the somatic and, thus, palpable impact of formative texts, it is engendered, more narrowly, by the conviction

that the performative nature of classic writings more than suggests the fertile possibility of examining them as dramatic works. And, as indeed is appropriate to the theatre, the present writer is aware that this is an imaginative undertaking, a creative production, with the caveat that finally

> … these our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
> Are melted into air, into thin air;

and yet, as Prospero reminds us, the "real world" and the "dramatic world" are not so different, because

> … like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And like this insubstantial pageant faded
> Leave not a rack behind.

Thus, perhaps, the ensuing poetic and fictional fantasy may be permitted, since

> … We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on; and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep (Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, IV. 1).

Human beliefs, and the veracity of human convictions, those verities that inform, shape, and direct the lives of men and women both rationally and materially, are expectant and anticipatory explorations of "foundational truths," which, it is suggested, perennially retain their dreamlike elusiveness. In this corrigible proposal, the cue of the prompter is heard, proffering a dramatic licence to foreground some tragic lineaments of a text, by whose notional "foundational truths" men and women live.

MARK AS DRAMA: RETURNING TO THE *POETICS*

As noted above, one of the central texts in this work is the Gospel of Mark. Rather than read this gospel as a somewhat distanced work of non-fiction, as a sequential saga of once 'real' historical people speaking their inner thoughts and conveying their beliefs in substantive actions, this creative pilgrimage seeks to appropriate the Gospel of Mark as a dramatic text, and, quite specifically, as a tragedy, which is "serious" enough so as to engender "pity and fear" in the audience, and cause a "kathartic" experience.

Perceptible in the use of such terminology, is the other central text in this work, namely, the *Poetics* by Aristotle. For, if dramatic features may be observed in the Gospel of Mark, and they are to generate a beneficial and productive reading, the presence of the principles upon which a dramatic work is structured must be demonstrated and articulated. Ironically, in this age of the explosion of theoretical inquiry, the search for these poetic protocols appears to point more readily to Aristotle's *Poetics* than to any other treatise. Thus, Carlson's (1984; 1993: 15)

capacious survey of the theories that inform the theatre from the ancients until the present day begins unequivocally:

> The primacy of Aristotle's *Poetics* in theatrical theory as well as in literary theory is unchallenged. Not only is the *Poetics* the first significant work in the tradition, but its major concepts and lines of argument have continually influenced the development of theory throughout the centuries.

Although the authoritative status of the *Poetics* primarily resides in its availability as the earliest extant work exclusively devoted to literary criticism; nevertheless, it is possible that Aristotle's text is adumbrated in the theatrical works of the Roman period. Scholars disagree as to whether the tenth-century version of *Tractatus coislinianus* is of classical origin, and, in fact, some suggest that its provenance may reside in Aristotle's missing treatise on comedy (for alternative views, see Bywater (1909) & Janko (1984)). Furthermore, whilst no evidence may be established of Horace's (68 – 65 BCE) direct cognizance of the *Poetics* in the *Ars Poetica*, "there is evidence to suggest that Horace was reworking the writing of one Neoptolemus, a Hellenistic critic who was in turn working under the influence of the Aristotelian tradition" (Carlson, 1984; 1993: 24), and who, Halliwell (1986: 288) suggests, conveyed Aristotelian ideas on poetry. But Horace almost was alone in his concentrated focus on drama during this period. During the Hellenistic period, the art of rhetoric dominated literary concerns (Halliwell, 1986: 289). For Cicero (106 – 43 BCE), Quintilian (c. 40 – 118 CE), and Plutarch (c. 50 – 125 CE), poetry was less a defined area of study and practice, than it was a means of developing oratorical skills.

It was incorporated into the formal grammatical section of the mediaeval trivium, as a τέχνη that would contribute to writing correctly and speaking persuasively.
Those texts that did deal with drama, and with tragic drama in particular, display their indebtedness to, development and, perhaps, criticism of, Aristotle's thought.
Evanthius, in the *De Fabula* of the fourth century CE, distinguished comedy from tragedy in forthright terms. Comedy is presented as the mirror image of tragedy, although, arguably, the distinction between the two genres appears less nuanced than that which Aristotle may have raised. Nevertheless, this stark disjunction between tragedy and comedy informed the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance periods:

> In comedy the fortunes of men are middle-class, the dangers are slight, and the ends of the action are happy; but in tragedy everything is the opposite – the characters are great men, the fears are intense, and the ends disastrous. In comedy the beginning is troubled, the end tranquil; in tragedy the events follow the reverse order. And in tragedy the kind of life is shown that is to be shunned; while in comedy the kind is shown that is to be sought after. Finally, in comedy the story is always fictitious; while tragedy is often based on historical truth (cited in Carlson, 1984; 1993: 26).

Matters such as the nature of representation, the constituent parts of a dramatic work, or the emotional effects of plays, witness to an Aristotelian tradition, even when these matters are present only as appended remarks or commentary, such as in the writings of Proclus (c. 410 – 485), Aelius Donatus (4th Century), or in the third or fourth century *De mysteriis*, which, possibly, was written by Iamblichus (Carlson, 1984; 1993: 26 – 27). Even the conflict between the theorists and the practitioners of

drama, on the one hand, and the Neoplatonists, on the other hand, during the early centuries of the common era, appears to rehearse the earlier, and oft-noted, Platonic / Aristotelian divide over the effects of μίμησις. Either the deleterious impact of poetry was highlighted and condemned, or the issues of genre demarcation, structural aspects, and compositional techniques were examined.

During the Christian centuries, the Church Fathers quickly appropriate the condemnation by the Neoplatonists of the emotional impact of the theatre. The opinions of the Roman literary theorists were in conflict with those of the Church Fathers who, from Tertullian (c.160 – 250 CE) onward, condemned the pagan imaginings of the Classical poets – their myths, their display or verbal imaging of sensual expression on the stage, and their encouragement of an emotional response from the audience. Chrysostom stated that "to go to the theatres ... introduces into our life an infinite host of miseries. For spending time in the theatres produces fornication, intemperance, and every kind of impurity" (Homily XV).

Brown (1988: 374) ameliorates too harsh a judgement on John Chrysostom in this matter, by emphasizing both his oratorical τέχνη and his purpose: "With his unfailing *rhetor's* talent for finding an adversary, John sensed in the theatre the perfect rival to the sense of community that he himself propounded so frequently in the Great Church [of Antioch]."

But the parallels were closer for Gregory of Nazianzus, since the life and actions, the words and cries of Jesus were "like a drama whose plot was devised on our behalf" (*Fourth Theological Oration*, VII); and Gregory of Nyssa, when praising virginity,

deflects the gaze from "those old stories which have furnished subjects to dramatic poets" and are ostended in "shocking extravagance," to the "tragedies that are being enacted on this life's stage" (*On Virginity*, III).[13]

The division of the empire resulted in the Greek East returning to the classical tradition, with observations, like those of John Tzetzes (c. 1100 – 1180 CE), on the differences between comedy and tragedy; whilst, in the Latin West, Christian writings demanded attention, and drama seldom was scrutinized. The commentary that did emerge during the Carolingian period, such as the *Scholia Vindobonensia*, usually was devoid of an appreciation of performance. Even when interest returned to poetic theory during the twelfth century CE, it concentrated on stylistic issues and the devices that would embellish works, thus, once again, foregrounding its contribution to oratorical flourish.

During the thirteenth century, and just prior to Dante's *Epistle to Can Grande della Scala* (c. 1315 CE), which reverted to the frequently examined differences between tragedy and comedy (Reynolds, 2006: 336),[14] a translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* emerged from Arabic texts and commentaries. Instrumental in the reappearance of the *Poetics* was the commentary by Averroës (1126 – 1198 CE), but its sources are the subject of conjecture:

[13] Thus Pelikan's (1993: 23 – 24), at least, alludes to the appropriation of Classical theatre and dramatic forms by the Church Fathers, and, in particular, the Cappadocian Theologians, for rhetorical effect and evangelical purpose, although he states that this "should not be permitted to obscure their attacks on the dramatic posts of Classical literature for retelling the shocking stories of ancient Greek mythology."

[14] Dante, in explaining why he called his magisterial poem, *Commedia*, "begins by explaining the title of the whole work. Relying on a dictionary of etymology in use at the time, he derives the word *comoedia* from *comus*, a village, and *oda*, a song: 'whence comedy is, as it were, a rustic song.' The word *tragoedia* is derived, he says, from *tragos*, a goat, and *oda*, a song, and is therefore fetid, like a goat, 'as may be seen in the tragedies of Seneca.' A tragedy begins tranquilly but its end is foul and terrible; a comedy begins with adverse conditions but ends happily" (Reynolds, 2006: 336). Scott (2004: 171), after citing this passage from the *Epistle to Can Grande* (13.10.28) does note that the authenticity of the letter is questioned by some scholars.

> Probably toward the end of the ninth century a translation was made into Syriac, a small portion of which remains, and from the Syriac Abú Bišer (d. 940) made an Arabic version which we have almost complete … On the basis of the Arabic version, the great commentator Averroës produced in Cordova in AD 1174 a commentary on the *Poetics*, which was known in Latin translations down to the Renaissance (Hutton, 1982: 27).

Some knowledge of the commentary by Averroës appears evident in Roger Bacon's thirteenth-century edition of the Latin translation by Hermannus Alemannus, which was made in 1256 CE. In an unfortunate quirk of history, William of Moerbeke, who added a Latin edition of the *Poetics* to his Aristotelian corpus in 1278, and which was translated "from the Greek by one of the very few Europeans with knowledge of the language" (Halliwell, 1986: 291), was only discovered by Père Lacombe in 1930 (see Hutton, 1982: 28). In his preface, Alemannus, who initially repeated many of the weakness of the translation by Averroës, which were compounded in the 1481 and sixteenth century versions (Halliwell, 1986: 291), noted that Aristotle's approach to poetry was philosophical, in contrast to the rhetorical reading by Cicero, or the concentration on grammar and style in Horace.

Since this re-emergence, more recently Carson (1997) has averred that "Aristotle's *Poetics*, the first major text of Western drama theory, defined the terms of much subsequent discussion," and, more especially, in the centuries immediately following this rediscovery. The *Poetics* achieved its canonical interpretive status during the 16th Century, when, following upon the initial commentary by Robertello in 1548 (Too, 1998: 95 – 96, n. 28), Italian scholars appropriated its teaching, and insisted

upon the employment of its principles in the construction of dramatic works (Halliwell, 1995 [1999]: 4). Thus, the theatre criticism that was practised during the Italian Renaissance was now related directly to the *Poetics*, and issues of *katharsis*, appropriate characters for specific genres and their characterization, and the instructive nature of dramatic works, were investigated and pronounced upon. Deviations from Aristotle were evident, and, often deliberately, were undertaken as a critique of the *Poetics*. As Coetzee (2001: 19) notes, "rather than being the foe of the classic, criticism, and indeed criticism of the most sceptical kind, may be what the classic uses to define itself and ensure its survival."

However, as stated above, the quest for clarity in the review and criticism of the classic results in a contumaciously impeded view, and the desire for direct access, *toujours déjà*, is denied. Thus, on occasions, a degree of editorial licence of some magnitude, erroneously attributed to Aristotle some unlikely principles; perhaps, initially, less by the scholars than by the commentators and critics, but, subsequently, some of these became firmly established in the minds of journalists and theatre-goers as Aristotelian protocols. In fact, the number of critics who actually read the *Poetics* during the Renaissance and beyond is questionable. Todorov (1981: xxiv) states that when

> Aristotle's *Poetics* is exhumed … [it is] … made to play a role comparable to that of holy writ: works of poetics will now be nothing more, so to speak, than commentaries on the *Poetics*! But in truth this book is rather betrayed by its glory, which functions as no more than a screen between itself and its readers: the text is so celebrated that no one dares contest or even, finally, read it at all.

> Instead it is reduced to a few formulas quickly transformed into clichés that, removed from their context, betray their author's thought altogether.

Notorious amongst these solicitations was the concept of "the three unities," which was taught by Scaliger (c. 1484 – 1558 CE) and Castelvetro (1505 – 1571 CE) in Italy, where the latter went "even further by actually subordinating unity of action to the others" (Halliwell, 1986: 298), and by Chapelain (1595 – 1674 CE) and Boileau (Bilezikian, 1977: 103) in France, where, for example, the Académie Française, instead of altering the classical, or, more exactly, the neo-classical rules, rather criticized Corneille (1606 – 1684 CE) for penning works with too much activity to incorporate into the "twenty-four hours" prescribed by the principle of the "unity of time." Corneille, in his *Trois Discours*, which were published in 1660, accepted the primacy of Aristotle and, indeed, many of his proposals, but differed with respect to the character of the πρωταγωνιστής, and, more importantly, proposed the expansion of time and the multiplication of locations,[15] whilst Racine "was probably the only major dramatist of the 16th or 17th centuries who read the *Poetics* with a view to assimilating its ideas ... [but] ... the pervasive moralism" (Halliwell, 1986: 308; on the problematics of dramatic art and morals, see Goodkin, 1991) remained an influence upon him.

The concentration upon the *Poetics* in the immediate aftermath of its more general dissemination, and, under an "anxiety of influence" (Bloom, 1973: 5 – 16; 1994: 7 - 12), the subsequent attempt to pursue its teaching more literally, inevitably waned as

[15] Corneille's observations on the Unity of Action are not without import when attempting to translate and interpret Aristotle's concept of πρᾶξις.

its principles were discussed and digested.[16] Not only did the centrality and otherness of Shakespeare, "who ignores the 'unities' as described by Aristotle and other classical sources, in favour of a 'mixed' or 'mungrell' mode inherited directly from the medieval drama" (Ackroyd, 2002: 226),[17] result in a somewhat different path being pursued in the development of theatre in England, in spite of Lessing's view that "the *Oresteia* and *Hamlet* belonged together, in the same sphere of tragedy" (Steiner, 1961: 189); on the Continent, the significance and influence of Aristotle's principles, some of dubious attribution, were disputed. In England,

> Literary theorists of the time urged strict adherence to the rules of decorum that derived from Aristotle: they vehemently opposed what Sir Philip Sidney called the mingling of kings and clowns … The stage, they argued, should always represent but one place; the time represented should at most be a single day; and exalted emotions aroused by tragedy should never be tainted with the 'scornful tickling' and lewd laughter of comedy. These are strictures, derived from Aristotle, that Shakespeare, along with his fellow professional playwrights, routinely flouted (Greenblatt, 2004: 297).

In France, the contributors to "the project that occupied one of the chief places in the eighteenth century's progress of mind, the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot and D'Alembert" (Grayling, 2003: 115) were less restrictive in their approach to theatre than their predecessors, and the ensuing responses to these thinkers expanded the debate. Thus,

[16] Bloom's (1994: 8) concept is worth noting: "The anxiety of influence is not an anxiety about the father, real or literary, but an anxiety achieved by and in the poem, novel, or play. Any strong literary work creatively misreads and therefore misrepresents a precursor text or texts. An authentic canonical writer may or may not internalize his or her work's anxiety, but that scarcely matters: the strongly achieved work *is* the anxiety."

[17] As Hodgson (1992: 213) notes: "Polonius's words about Players expert in 'tragical, comical, historical, pastoral' drama point ironically to Shakespeare's own procedures."

"Diderot's famous treatise on the *genre sérieux* ... pleads for a form of play which shall not set out to be either funny or sad, but just to illustrate truly and interestingly the serious facts of life" (Murray, 1927: 72), allowing Mercier (1740 – 1814 CE) to extend Diderot's pronouncements and approve of both Shakespeare and Aristotle: the former, in respect of his innovative uniqueness; the latter, in his emphasis on the unfolding of a single and united action.

But the focus on the genius of the artist, the inspirational and creative capacity of writers, engendered the rise of Romanticism, and the rules and principles of poetic composition were relegated to a secondary status. Although Halliwell (1995 [1999]: 4) notes that the influence of the *Poetics* declined in the late 18th Century, nevertheless, he states that it remains "a valuable point of reference," and Jones (1962: 21), in his detailed and forthright study of Aristotle's treatise, avers: "The *Poetics* is a textbook for dramatists and aspiring dramatists, designed to teach them how to write good tragedies; and it is also a work of high theory, a Defence of Poetry," a claim appropriated by Halliwell (1986: 1) in the opening to his careful quarrying of the *Poetics*; whilst Barthes (1972: 37), writing of the advent of the theatre of Brecht, and in the context of a somewhat questionable distinction between Brecht's "Epic Theatre," which estranges, causes reflection, and inspires action in the spectator – a matter to which we shall return – as against Aristotle's "Dramatic Theatre," which absorbs and immobilizes the spectator in the stage action (Williams, [1952] 1968: 277 – 278; Hodgson, 1992: 194), asserts, with respect to this dichotomy, that "for twenty-four centuries, in Europe, the theatre has been Aristotelian."

Appropriating the remarks of Jones (1962) and Halliwell (1986) noted above, it is suggested that the *Poetics* remains foundational for, if not definitive to, any inquiry into the structures that inform the creation and production of dramatic works, that inner ordering of the parts that contribute to the complete drama, which is an emphasis of the Chicago critics (Corman, 1997; Halliwell, 1986: 317); even if, in contrast, Ford (2002: 266) states that Aristotle's treatise "is for readers and critics rather than for writers of poems." But, for an abrupt and transient instant in Prague in the 1930s (see Perron, 1997; Carlson, 1997; Elam, 1980; 2002), a passing moment which Barthes and Eco then rejuvenated in the late 1960s (see Carlson, 1997), the communicative patterns in, and the employment and power of the significatory functions of, dramatic works became a more enduring subject of dramatic inquiry.

But, whilst an approach that analysed the semiotics of dramatic works and theatre performance initially attracted theorists, this extruded upon the wider, and implicatory, functions of signification, and scholars began to transfer their academic pursuits to these attendant areas, such as the productive licence of dramatic works (Pavis, 1982), and reversing the social influence upon dramatic creation, to examine their power and influence in the social arena (Alter, 1981), or, more agonistically, the privileging of theatre as a phenomenon (States, 1985). The semiotic perspective, which foregrounded the sophisticated codes of communication employed in communicating performance and performance interaction, arguably, received the more profound attention of the academy (see Serpieri et al 1981; Elam 1980; 2002), but Carlson (1990: xii – xiii) emphasized those disregarded aspects:

> … I gradually became more and more troubled by important aspects of the theatre experience that it largely neglected … first … the contribution of the audience … [secondly] … the semiotics of the entire theatre experience … [and] … the third area … looks to one of the most ancient concerns of theatrical theory, but one that has not so far inspired extended speculation among theatre semioticians, and that is the relation of theatre to the life of which it is an imitation … the relationship between the signs and the codes of theatre and those of everyday life.

Carlson's (1990) concerns endeavour to intrude upon the problematic area of the impact of dramatic works upon individuals and society (see Bennett, 1997), concerns that are engendered by the influence and impress of a dramatic work that is structured in such a way so as to cause φόβος καὶ ἔλεος, and the resultant κάθαρσις. Indeed, over the shoulder of these later theorists, peers the ghost of Aristotle.

The successful impact of drama, and one that will respond to the issues raised by Carlson (1990) and Bennett (1997) – not simply of surplus meaning, but of the appropriation and practical use of that surplus meaning – nevertheless, cannot resist the necessity of employing structural principles in the creative act of writing, of constructing a dramatic work. Thus, the able dramatist, whose work endeavours to relate to an audience both intellectually and emotionally, employs the architectonics of dramatic composition, the tried and tested protocols, such as those to which that the tradition of dramatic theory has deferred, and from which it has differed, in an unceasing ἴχνος of *différance*, in respect to Aristotle's treatise. In this regard, like all classics, the *Poetics* chooses itself as the source text of inquiry, as it 'reads' its way

through the tradition of dramatic writing, in times of both felicity and adversity, inscribing its body-text upon the textual bodies of its successors.

But a return to the *Poetics*, as the foremost extant text of dramatic theory, is not without its difficulties. Situating the *Poetics* in its own historical location is both problematical and useful. It is problematical because of the scarcity of the attendant resources, the paucity of assistance from the results of archaeological excavations in a dusty landscape of scattered fragments, the absence of many of the originals of works that are cited by the ancient authors, and the lacunae within existing texts. But siting the *Poetics* as a textual interlocutor with the texts of its own period is useful in the corrigible practice of drawing closer to the meanings of the meaning, or, perhaps more accurately, in the effort to disclose and interpret the central concepts. Thus, even though the results of such an undertaking are provisional and tentative, the task is itself necessary with respect to disclosing the interpretative possibilities of the *Poetics*, and it also adumbrates the manner in which both this text and, indeed, others, like the Gospel of Mark, accrete into discourses through processes of selection and delimitation.

More specifically, the student of the *Poetics* is confronted by seemingly insurmountable difficulties of interpretive accuracy. First, the *Poetics* exhibits the features of an unedited work, and, most probably, comprises the lecture notes on Poetry, which were employed by Aristotle between about 337 – 322 BCE.[18] In its draft form, McLeish (1998: vii) states that "[i]t is repetitive, stylistically inconsistent and veers between passages which are fully written out and others where complex

[18] Halliwell (1986: 330) suggest that "as it stands, [the *Poetics*] represent[s] the first book of a treatise used for instruction … during the last decade and a half of Aristotle's life."

arguments are compressed into single sentences or phrases," but its incompleteness does not imply that Aristotle's concepts of what constitutes a good tragedy, nor his understanding of tragedy in relation to epic (and, also, to a degree, to comedy), were not clearly conceived. Noticeable are

> features [that] make it almost certain that it represents a part of Aristotle's programme of instruction, and [it] is in fact a major portion of his lectures on poetry, which doubling as a treatise would also probably be available for consultation by his students (Hutton 1982: 5 – 6).

And if the original work is a set of "lectures or lecture notes or records of discussion ... not intended for general reading ... [in a] ... style [that] is plain, practical, compact" (Hamilton Fyfe, 1940: xii), the text that the student employs today is separated from the students of the Lyceum by some fourteen-hundred years, since

> from the tenth or eleventh centuries comes the best and by far the oldest manuscript we have (Parisinus 1741) … [whilst] … the second-best and second-oldest manuscript (Riccardianus 46, in Florence) is from [the fourteenth century] (Hutton, 1982: 27).

Second, even if the *Poetics* is established as a monumental, rather than a documentary, work, and is scrutinized in its distal locus, the interpretive angle is not obvious. Whether the *Poetics* is to be examined exclusively within the tradition of literary criticism, that is, as a technical treatise endeavouring both to foreground the 'literariness' of poetry, and, consequently, to seal it from contamination; or whether

this work is an application of Aristotle's existing philosophical concepts to a specific area of aesthetics, is debatable. Was Aristotle, like the Russian Formalists in the twentieth century, demarcating a particular sphere of specialization, and proposing protocols that were *sui generis* to poetry, or not?[19] Third, in our late and dusky hour, the central terms of the *Poetics*, and, in particular, that of πρᾶξις and μῦθος, terms, one suggests, that are focal to the comprehension of Aristotle's understanding of the successful tragedy, are not uniformly apprehended by scholars.[20] Fourth, the notion of ὄψις, whilst misunderstood by Averroës,[21] may be employed by Aristotle in diverse ways, one of which may be germane to the very act of composition. Fifth, the importance of song (τὸ μέλος; τὰ μέλη), the various kinds, the diverse metres employed, and its function of reinforcing communal solidarity appears to have flourished in the period immediately prior to the rise of Attic tragedy and comedy (Kurke, 2000: 40, 42, 67), and is a role, perhaps, appropriated by the χορός, but most of the information with respect to their songs and dances – the "Molpê" (Murray, 1927: 28ff.) – is lost to us. Sixth, κάθαρσις, one of the central *crux interpretationis* of the *Poetics*, or, more boldly, in Halliwell's (1995 [1999]: 17) words, the "most

[19] Todorov (1981: xxvi) notes that theorists who have endeavoured to examine literature on its own terms are the heirs of Aristotle: "Academic literary theory is born, then, only with the twentieth century, in several countries, one after the other. In the first two decades of this century, the country of renewal is Russia, where a current of ideas known as Formalism is constituted … In the thirties and forties, various currents of formal criticism and literary theory develop in England and the United States, of which the most celebrated is the so-called New Criticism. All these groups have their common point of departure in romantic aesthetics, which leads them to assert the autonomy of literature and consequently of its theory; but unlike the romantics, these theoreticians concern themselves with an analysis of the literary work, thereby linking up with the Aristotelian tradition which … was concerned to distinguish the pertinent levels and segments of works."

[20] Jones (1962) and Halliwell (1986; 1995 [1999]) translate and interpret these terms in different ways, a matter which will be examined in Chapter Three, and will impact significantly upon the analysis of the Gospel of Mark in Chapter Four.

[21] Eco (2003: 85 – 86) adverts to the limitations that the context, education, and cultural practices of the translator/ reader impose upon a text: "One of the most blatant examples of cultural misunderstanding, which has produced for at least some centuries a chain of further misconceptions, is that of Averroës' translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Averroës did not know Greek and hardly knew Syriac, and therefore read Aristotle through a tenth-century Arabic translation of a Syriac translation of the Greek original … The real drama comes with the fifth component [of a tragedy], *ópsis*. Averroës cannot think of staged actions and defines *ópsis* … as an argument which demonstrates the moral validity of the represented beliefs."

vexed term in the whole work," requests a contextual examination, at once vital, in order to re-imagine Aristotle's concept of the term, but a request that Aristotle himself denies us, and so the term remains, in its inherent vitality, elusive and, *toujours déjà*, conjectural.[22]

The theoretical rigour of the *Poetics*, and its foundational status in the tradition of tragedy,[23] commands the attention of the student who wishes to test the effectiveness of dramatic writing, and, *a fortiori*, who endeavours to detect tragic dramatic features in a text more widely perceived as non-dramatic. The lapidary concision of the *Poetics* spotlights the τέχνη involved in the construction of a dramatic work, and the principles of this art or craft are themselves the standards employed in assessing the quality of a drama. Its influence, perhaps somewhat attenuated, nevertheless refuses to recede and, comparatively recently, Umberto Eco (2004: 238) highlighted the impact of the *Poetics* upon his own writing, when he recalled its presence in the work of Poe:

> … I underwent my most decisive Aristotelian experience reading Edgar Allan Poe's *Philosophy of Composition*, where he analyses, word by word, structure by structure, the birth, technique, and *raison d'être* of his poem "The Raven." In this text Aristotle is never named, but his model is ever present, even in the use of some key terms.

[22] De Kock and Cilliers (1991: 124) state that "die woord in die vierde eeu v.C. 'n wye spektrum van betekenisse gehad het … en dat daar nie met sekerheid vasgestel kan word watter konnotasie Aristoteles aan die woord geheg het nie. *Geen dogmatiese uitspraak kan dus oor die interpretasie van katarsis gemaak word nie*" (emphasis added).

[23] Hutton (1982: 7): "… we can be fairly sure that the *Poetics* had no important predecessor as a systematic study of the art." In the light of Halliwell (1986), and, indeed, Harriot (1969) before him, perhaps Hutton (1982) is rather too bold in this assertion.

> Poe's project consisted in showing how the effect of "an intense and pure elevation of soul" (Beauty) is achieved by careful organization of structures, and in showing how "the work proceeded step by step, to its completion with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem," while still keeping track of a unity of impression … of place, and of emotional tone. The extraordinary thing about this text is that its author explains the rule whereby he managed to convey the impression of spontaneity, and this message, which goes against any aesthetics of ineffability, is the same as that transmitted by the *Poetics*.

Amongst the theoretical impositions upon the gospels in the New Testament, perhaps – and here is our suggestion – this work of enduring consequence and solicitation ought not to be overlooked. By reading the Gospel of Mark through the vision of the contemporary-ancient perspicacity of Aristotle's lecture notes, a πρᾶξις of the Gospel of Mark may be foregrounded, and one that may contain a contemporary relevance, and, by means of necessary excisions to this εὐαγγέλιον, an unfolding μῦθος, via an ἀναγνώρισις and περιπέτεια, may engender an Aristotelian κάθαρσις for the participants and audience alike, ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ (Mark 16: 8).

Although the greater conviction amongst scholars of the twentieth century has been that the Gospels were written for, about, and, perhaps, by particular communities, this is an hypothesis which is beginning to receive new criticism. Commenting on the Gospel of Mark, Bird (2006: 477), questions the postulation of a Markan Community, emphasising both the lack of any compelling internal evidence, as well as the need of scholars, who support such a proposal, to demonstrate its relevance and significance

to the structure and intention of, and response to, the message of the life and death of Jesus, which is portrayed in the text. In fact, casting a modicum of doubt upon either the authorial or receptive existence of a Markan Community, Bird (2006: 486) provides some impetus to this marginal note, since he avers that it "may pave the way for future studies on the Gospels, especially Mark, with a view to it being written as an exhortation for Christians in the Greco-Roman world, as *Missionsschrift*, or even as a composite of both," or, indeed, as a drama, or a series of dramatic re-enactments, of the ἀγών of the life and death of Jesus, both as the demonstration of its continuing significance, and also as exhortation and proclamation. The controversial notion that this is *tragic* drama is suggested by the presence of conflict throughout the work, the one over-arching category identified by Burian (1997: 181), paradoxically, as constant and stable in the variety of tragic μῦθοι; conflict that is, at once, severe and extreme, controlled and determined, socially and politically pungent, and ostended within the limitations of a fateful arena.

In the Gospel of Mark, the oral tradition which *lies* (the word is used advisedly) behind the canonical text, arguably, extrudes and permits a theatricality that is lacking in the other Synoptic Gospels. Not only are the lengthy genealogies omitted here, but even the birth narrative itself as well as any reference to the adolescence of Jesus are also absent. Rather, immediately after, what one suggests is, a condensed παράβασις, and which, one proposes, ironizes the πρᾶξις, theatre irrupts in the image of a liminal figure transporting the baptized across the threshold to a place of freedom, to an arena of dramatic ostension, where events continue εὐθύς, in a succession of rapidly unfolding episodes of healing and teaching, which conclude

with a pilgrimage in φόβος καὶ ἔλεος to the death of the central character, and a κάθαρσις for the spectators.

In fact, the performative possibilities of the Gospel of Mark highlight the physical impact of events at which ἐξέστησαν … ἐκστάσει μεγάλῃ (Mark 5: 42). The possibility that core clusters of oral material were dramatically enacted, and also extended through processes of improvisation, is attractive. Somatic participation in the generation of physical theatre, in the material embellishment of central *mythoic* units and images, is itself transformative, and excludes

> an automatic response … because they [physical images] 'defamiliarize' or make strange the world so that one has to stop and think about what one saw, thus shifting the creativity off the stage and into the audience as they are forced to make an active and individual interpretation of what they experienced (Francis, 2006: 115).

This participatory extension aligns itself with Byrskog's (2006) recent emphasis upon the manner in which oral traditions establish and confirm the identities of their respective communities and the individuals of which they are comprised, who remember and act out the past, in order to understand and locate themselves with a sense of coherence and order in the present. The common memory of key sayings and the events that constitute identity formation constitute a mnemonic reservoir, which may be drawn upon during circumstances of danger, identity confirmation, or communal celebration. Citing the work of Shiner (2003), referred to earlier, Byrskog (2006: 329) states that "[a]lthough it is difficult to estimate the possibility that the

Gospel of Mark is itself based on repeated oral performances, it seems likely that after its textualization it developed by being performed from memory again and again."

This alludes to the more structured nature of a suggested Markan dramatic text, and, whilst such a project neither denies nor rejects the improvisory scope in the performance of the Gospel of Mark, but welcomes it, it does propose, as does this marginal adjunct, the fecundity of foregrounding some of the key dramatic features in this Gospel, as provided by the inaugural work on the theory of drama. As a performative work of a πρᾶξις, a πρᾶξις of socio-political import, it lends meaning to those participating in it as actors, as it does to those viewing it in performance; or, at least, in its initial instauration, the first actors are viewing themselves in their portrayal of a proximate memory of events close to themselves and their communities. The words and gestures of these ostensions are inscriptive: they are generating, in these iterative dramatic actions, "une anatomie politique" (Foucault, 1975: 33). And in repeated instaurative acts, of diverse manner and interpretation, in ritual, in ethics, in social intercourse, at personal, familial, political, and socio-economic levels, they draw their contours on human minds and bodies with increasing pressure, they gain traction, that 'grip' of being human in a particular way; and an inscriptive tradition is inaugurated, one that claims to be faithful to the original performance.

The initial historical performance of the gospel events may have constituted resistance to the prevailing concepts of God and to the existing manners, the patterns, of human living in one locative environment, and, consequently, resulted in a 'disciplined and punished' body. Thus, the governing forces employed their power, which "can

flagrantly and without reserve disfigure the fragility of the body, lacerating, marking, and branding it as a publicly legible object" (Schuld, 2003: 68), but, here, it became an object off which has been read a performative tradition, and some would want to assert, a resistant tradition. Therefore, it may be argued that whilst it is the conviction of those in authority that "mangled bodies are essential elements in a social and political ritual that needs the vanquished to instantiate visibly the overwhelming power and majesty of the victor" (Schuld, 2003: 188), it is the marks of the Crucified that subsequently appropriated power. But this is a confessional assertion, and one that may be contested both in its degree of 'faithfulness' to that *lisible corps*, and in the possibility of attendant and multivalent readings. As Marcan drama, however, the resistant body finally is crushed, and the deception in the προοίμιον is disclosed. As the μῦθος ends, so reflection on the πρᾶξις returns. For Aristotle, a well-constructed and successful tragedy also repeated the common tradition of the stories of the πόλις, and engendered a participatory response which confirmed that tradition. It sought players who physically endowed their characters with an appropriate intentionality, so as to affect the audience by dramatic performances which reached out to them and reached after them, constructing, informing, and re-creating their community, and reconstituting their individual places within it. When the Gospel of Mark is perceived both as a Foucauldian body inscribed by the marks of the powerful, and also as exhibiting Aristotelian dramatic features, which replay and uphold the corpus of stories that confirm an existing tradition, then that πρᾶξις of the Gospel of Mark may be kathartic in its prosaic, resigned, and contemporary realism.

CHAPTER THREE

ὁ ἀγὼν τῆς ποιήσεως

INTRODUCTION

There are no longer any inaugural texts. Every text is a woven texture of inter-textual citations and of variously discordant authorial voices which compete in an agonistic environment for the power to persuade and convince, an endeavour that itself requires adversarial textual presences. Even palimpsests, which attempt, more deliberately, to occlude their predecessors, first, by erasing the past in a *sortie* to destroy and eradicate, and then, by writing the past anew in a biblical act of inauguration, of *creatio ex nihilo*, are self-beguiling. For that which is erased is the 'other' without which, paradoxically, 'newness' is not new. Even innovation invites comparison. Thus, the deliberate and wilful attempts by authors to delineate and define with precision, to demarcate the boundaries of meaning and impose semantic limits, in any and every act of writing, fails in the endeavour at *stasis*, in the bid to express a definitive position, since στάσις, like φάρμακον,[24] enacts its own revolution, both as the static position marked by the sentry post at the border, and as the party of faction, sedition, and discord already advancing and in view on the horizon.

[24] Derrida (1972b: 111): "Quand un mot s'inscrit comme la citation d'un autre sens de ce même mot, quand l'avant-scène textuelle du mot *pharmakon*, tout en signifiant *remède*, cite, ré-cite et donne à lire ce qui *dans le même mot* signifie, en un autre lieu et à une autre profondeur de la scène, *poison* … le choix d'un seul de ces mots français par le traducteur a pour premier effet de neutraliser le jeu citationnel, l' 'anagramme,' et à la limite tout simplement la textualité du texte traduit."

Therefore, closure is an honorary member of the subjunctive mood. For whilst the *Poetics* is proclaimed as the first text exclusively dedicated to the theory of literature, its borders are porous, and its fortunate status is based upon its survival. Within it reside various antecedent attitudes to poetry, many of which uphold poetry as an inspirational practice, as a window into the divine mysteries. Here, poetry was perceived as the purveyor of truth, and its claim to an accurate orthodoxy rested upon the assumption that its intermediaries were able to articulate the factuality of existence, both human and divine, and, if not influence, then, at least, specify the relationship between the gods and human beings. In the Homeric tradition, poets were not commentators, since, for both speaker and auditor "poetry conveys truths whose meanings require no interpretation to grasp. Receiving truth and understanding it are one and the same process" (Ledbetter, 2003: 77). As the consequence of their insight into the divine realm, the poets were empowered to pronounce on moral affairs (Nettleship, 1897: 20 – 21; 82). Thus, the vestiges of the unity of truth and knowledge, and the sacred status of the bard, remain evident at the beginning of the *Republic*, when Polemarchus invokes Simonides on justice with a saying about which, although Socrates says, ἐγὼ δὲ ἀγνοῶ, (*Republic*, 331e7 – 8), he also states that Simonides, as a poet, is οὐ ῥᾴδιον ἀπιστεῖν – σοφὸς γὰρ καὶ θεῖος ἀνήρ, (*Republic*, 331e5 – 6)

In fact, an observation of Simonides' that painting and poetry are contrasted by their voiced or unvoiced quality is held to be "one of the earliest self-conscious poetic statements and one conventionally described as literary criticism, [since it] treats voice as the defining feature of poetry by its presence, and by corollary, of painting by its absence" (Too, 1998: 22), which is not dissimilar to the comparison that Pindar

(518 – 438 BCE) draws between the disseminating quality of speech, and the rigid and immobile quality of material constructions like statues:

> Οὐκ ἀνδριαντοποιός εἰμ', ὥστ' ἐλινύσοντα ἐργά–
> ζεσθαι ἀγαλματ' ἐπ' αὐτᾶς βαθμίδος
> ἑσταότ' ἀλλ' ἐπὶ πάσας
> ὁλκάδος ἔν τ' ἀκάτῳ, γλυκεῖ' ἀοιδά,
> στεῖχ' ἀπ' Αἰγίνας, διαγγέλλοισ' ὅτι
> Λάμπωνος υἱος Πυθέας εὐρυσθενὴς
> νίκη Νεμείοις παγκρατίου στέφανον,
> οὔπω γένυσι φαίνων τερείνας
> ματέρ' οἰνάνθας ὀπώραν (*Nemea V*: For Pytheas of Aigina, winner, youths' pancratium).

It is this "sweet song that goes from Aigina in proclamation" to "Speak the speech ... trippingly on the tongue" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III. 2); this voiced story-telling and articulation of a narrative, that, for Gorgias, possesses an hallucinatory power comparable to that of the effects of drug-taking:

> τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ λόγον ἔχει ἥ τε τοῦ λόγου δύναμις πρὸς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς τάξιν ἥ τε τῶν φαρμάκων τάξις πρὸς τὴν τῶν σωμάτων φύσιν. ὥσπερ γὰρ τῶν φαρμάκων ἄλλους ἄλλα χυμοὺς ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ἐξάγει, καὶ τὰ μὲν νόσου τὰ δὲ βίου παύει, οὕτω καὶ τῶν λόγων οἱ μὲν ἐλύπησαν, οἱ δὲ ἔτερψαν, οἱ δὲ ἐφόβησαν, οἱ δὲ εἰς θάρσος κατέστησαν

τοὺς ἀκούοντας, οἱ δὲ πειθοῖ τινι κακῇι τὴν ψυχὴν ἐφαρμάκευσαν καὶ εξεγοήτευσαν (D.-K. Gorgias: *Encomium to Helen*, 82.11.14).

Possibly, perceptible here is Aristotle's belief in the compelling and charged ability of language to cause pity and fear, and to engender a κάθαρσις.[25] But as effective as these words were upon the emotional lives of their auditors, and, perhaps, resulted in action, action which, in the case of Helen, Gorgias defends, reservations about the exalted and oracular status of poetic utterances were in evidence somewhat earlier. Thus, Solon (640 – 560 BCE) states:

Πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί (PLG II. fr. 29).

The mantic ability of the poets was further, and more acutely, qualified by the Sophists during the fifth century BCE. The latter sought both to theorize about, and to teach, the art of oratorical proficiency, "the practical techniques of persuasive speech and intellectual exercises in 'praising and blaming'" (Dover, 1980: 125), exercising their "great understanding of what words would entertain or impress or persuade an audience" (Denyer, 2008: 1), and it in this practice, one suspects, that Aristotle, the literary theorist, follows as an ἐπίγονος, but "as well as teaching and demonstrating the arts of political science, [they] also took an active part in the affairs of state and not only as advisers to leaders such as Pericles (Goldhill, 1986: 229). However, for the unknown sophistic author of the fifth-century text, the *Dissoi Logoi*, efforts at truth were not to be found within the remit of the poets:

[25] Harriott (1969: 120) is forthright: "His [Gorgias'] remarks about panic, pity and longing are plainly a source of Aristotelian 'pity and fear,'" but Ford (2002: 175) is more hesitant since Gorgias writes of λόγος rather than ποίησις.

> καὶ τοὶ ποιηταὶ οὐ [το] ποτὶ ἀλάθειαν, ἀλλὰ ποτὶ τὰς ἁδονὰς τῶν ἀνθρώπων τὰ ποιήματα ποιέοντι (D.-K. 90.3.17),

and these pleasures often were viewed with suspicion, but were also enjoyed by a dramatically attuned public and, for Aristotle, engendered an identification that was agreeable.

Harriott (1969: 139 – 140) cites the growth of an adjectival literary lexicon of critical terms during the fifth century, terms such as ὀρθός, ἀστεῖος, κομψός, στρογγύλος, and γλαφυρός, and also suggests that "some quasi-technical terms must have been needed for arranging a performance or commissioning a particular type of song …" The reference here to "song" is deliberate, because the dramatic tradition seems to have evolved from an embedded culture of song performance, which, during the developmental period of the Athenian πόλις between the eighth and sixth centuries BCE, was also an innovative period in the experiment of various song-forms (Kurke, 2000: 43). Ford (2002: 13 & 19) finds the recurring denotation of songs as "appropriate," πρέπει, and "timely" or "opportune," καιρός, as early as the seventh century BCE, terms which were gradually transferred to a technical index, rather than merely remain within the general public remit:

> The pattern in which evaluative terms that had had a moral and social force took on additional technical meanings in the fifth century was extensive. *Kairos*, for example, continued to be praised by poets as the ultimate, if elusive, standard for all forms of excellence, and this commonplace can be found among sophistically influenced writers who speak of the importance of

> *kairos* in speech. The concept was secularized under the influence of fifth century science, especially Hippocratic medicine, which adopted the term for the critical turning-point in the progress of a disease. As a critical "right place" or "right time" for action, *kairos* would be used by the end of the century among rhetoricians for the "opportune" or effective moment in which to deploy a certain style or topos in speech. Fifth century uses of *prepon* vary similarly … (Ford 2002: 19).

But "for the Greeks, the emotions generated by, and reflected in, musical media were intimately related to matters moral and political" (Wilson, 2005: 187 – 188), and, inevitably, both political and educational change, more particularly during the fifth century, engendered questions concerning the divine and unmediated status of art and the moral worth of peremptory pronouncements. Therefore, from the musical accompaniment to words, words of inspiration appropriate to various occasions – whether elegiac, humorous, or religious – to a more critical and positive sophistic climate, when the words themselves demanded attention, words and music began to part,[26] because the "sophists and other philosophers and teachers of eloquence

[26] Unsurprisingly, John Betjeman puts this poetically, when a BBC radio interview with his wife, Penelope, was imminent owing to the publication of her book on her journeying in Andalusia in September, 1963. One evening, just prior to the interview, John and Penelope conducted a practice session in the company of some friends at the home of Bart and Jessie Sharley, which, knowingly, was recorded. One of the Sharley daughters, Diana, inquires of Betjeman his manner of composing a poem, and then asks:

> Do you read it to yourself, do you read it out aloud?
> JB: I recite it out to myself, out loud … I'm sure that poetry is meant to be read out loud and I think its words out loud, on their own, without music. I think it's probably a later development than music. I think that obviously what first started must have been the bards saying things to these airs, and then the airs departed and the words were left (Hillier, 2004: 18 – 19).

One could also conjecture that the expense of employing musicians contributed to the paring down of musical accompaniment, which would not be without its modern examples.

increasingly focused attention on the formal, measurable properties of speech" (Ford, 2002: 18).

The music that accompanied the ancient tragedies is "utterly gone" (Murray, 1927: 80), and, more exactly, with respect to its "melodic structures, timbre, performance styles, and even rhythms, the music of tragedy is largely a lost world" (Wilson, 2005: 186),[27] although it is evident that it "was provided by a flute player (*auletes*) on a sort of double flute with reeds, the *aulos*" (Baldock, 1989: 8), or, perhaps more accurately, on an instrument somewhat closer to a "double oboe ... [with] ... a great range of sound and ... hugely expressive (unlike the modern flute)" (Goldhill, 2007: 46).[28] Nevertheless, what does remain is metre (Kitto, 1951: 250). Extending Murray's (1927: 80) eloquent statement that the words in performance were tied to actions, and thus measured in the stepping actions of the chorus – "the words themselves were supposed to dance" (Murray 1927: 80) – David (2006: 8 – 9) traces the metrical dance to the Homeric genre:

> The hexameter line, or a lyric period, are, literally, 'feet,' or steps whose rhythm can be properly actualized by the movement of human legs. The distinctive isochrony of the dactyl itself – the time equality of the strong and weak elements of the foot, as against the typically contrastive pulses of speech rhythms – as well as the isometry of hexameter lines, together recall the isometry and isochrony of dance patterns.

[27] Wilson (2005: 186) notes that the modes which were employed in ancient music could be viewed as close to musical scales, that they were known by ethnic names, and carried moral associations.
[28] This clarification is necessary, since, too often, the *aulos* summarily is equated with a flute, although Lucas (1968: 55) states that the *aulos* is "something akin to the clarinet."

During the latter part of the fifth century BCE, innovative musical forms and improvisation in song was evident (Kurke, 2000: 68), and poetic creation increasingly was viewed through the metaphors of the crafts, the consequences of disenchantment and sophistic influence. The metaphorical use of terms from the various trades was employed by writers both in the shaping of their work and in the articulation of that process. Poets, as Aristophanes evinces in *Frogs*, were subjected to a critique if their works revealed that they were less than attentive to their craft, since their plays reflected their ability as ποιηταί; in the same way in which the quality of a cabinet was a reflection of the careful, intensive, and concentrated labour of a carpenter, as a ποιητής, as a craftsman. Thus, even if, or perhaps because, Old Comedy used these terms in a wry and derisive fashion (Harriott, 1969: 96), it might be suggested that a lexicon of critical literary terms already was identifiable, and, probably, widely known and evident to the critic and the public alike by the latter half of the fifth century BCE. Halliwell (1986: 10) cautiously considers it "likely that the craft-conception of poetry did gain ground in the 5th century, under the influence of the general increase in systematic theorizing, particularly by the sophists."

However, unsurprisingly, since the southern Greek mainland and the Peloponnesus was an arena of war, the purpose of poetry and its cultural function within the πόλις also received attention as the fifth century progresses. Thus, Thucydides (c. 460 – 400 BCE), in Book I of his *Historiae* of the Peloponnesian War, draws a distinction between his own presentation of the past, and those of the poet or chronicler. Stating his own methodological premises, Thucydides (I. 22) seeks a fidelity to the actual historical events:

> τὰ δ' ἔργα τῶν πραχθέντων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος πυνθανόμενος ἠξίωσα γράφειν, οὐδ' ὡς ἐμοὶ ἐδόκει, ἀλλ' οἵς τε αὐτὸς παρῆν καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσον δυνατὸν ἀκριβείᾳ περὶ ἑκάστου ἐπεξελθών.

Thucydides proceeds to contrast his own rigour with common opinion and with the practice of the bard, who embellishes a past that is lost in mythical time, and he avers that the poet's attachment to facts and events is tenuous. Thus, the poet, unlike the historian, is less than reliable:

> … καὶ οὔτε ὡς ποιηταὶ ὑμνήκασι περὶ αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὸ μεῖζον κοσμοῦντες μᾶλλον πιστεύων, οὔτε ὡς λογογράφοι ξυνέθεσιν ἐπὶ τὸ προσαγωγότερον τῇ ἀκροάσει ἢ ἀληθέστερον (II. 21).

Later in the *Historiae*, Pericles, in his Funeral Oration, during the winter of 431 BCE, compares the durability of the lasting deeds of the Athenian warriors to the transient words of Homer and his fellow poets, who may delight and please, if only for a moment: οὔτε Ὁμήρου ἐπαινέτου οὔτε ὅστις ἔπεσι μὲν τὸ αὐτίκα τέρψει (II. 41).

This contrast between "history" and "poetry" foregrounds not simply Thucydides' prejudice, but also emphasizes that the purposes and, more significantly, the techniques, no matter how incipient, of the two genres were different. Thus, the paucity of physical evidence relating to the perceptions of the role and work, τὸ ἔργον, of poetry in the period before the early fifth century BCE, does, nevertheless,

indicate that, in spite of its sacred status, critical energy had been applied to it. If, for some, poetry was a divinely inspired oracular gift, an unmediated experience, which bestowed a type of immediate knowledge upon its speaker and listeners (Ledbetter, 2003: 3 & 34 – 39); for others, it was comparable to the crafts, and, like other trades, was subject to scrutiny, and could be evaluated to the extent that it followed the established principles of its own craft. And if, for some, poetry provided fleeting pleasure and delight; for others, it influenced the character of the citizens of the πόλις, and thus, it required examination with respect to its persuasive ability and to the knowledge it purportedly grants.

ATTENDANT PRECURSORS

Frogs by Aristophanes, more than suggests that these often opposing and contradictory views on the generation, purpose, critical power, function, and hegemonic status of poetry were of familiar currency in the exchange of Athenian life during the fifth century BCE.[29] But, more specifically, the play reveals an "understanding of the poet as a practical, purposive ποιητής, a 'maker,' in full rational control of his material, standing on the same footing as other craftsmen" (Halliwell, 1986: 10). Not only is *Frogs* a "satire on sophistic / intellectual techniques of disputation," it is also a "parody of contemporary traits of poetic criticism, including the 'close reading' of texts" (Halliwell, 2005: 398).

[29] "Aristophanes' pervasive commentary on the rival genre [that is, tragedy], to which literary critics like Aristotle owe so much" is returned to by Janko (2009: 270 – 271) in an attractive conjecture concerning two lines in a quotation of Olympiodorus, which possibly belong to Aristophanes.

The play was performed at the Lenaean Festival in 405 BCE during the final days of the Peloponnesian War (431 BCE – 404 BCE).[30] In this context, the authorial παράβασις[31] appeals to Demeter καὶ πολλὰ μὲν γέλοιά μ' εἰπεῖν, πολλὰ δὲ σπουδαῖα (ll. 389 – 390).[32] In the play, Aristophanes expresses views about the dramatic arts and the responsibility of the dramatist in a climate of war, a milieu that is less than certain with respect to religion and morality.[33] The plot follows the search of Dionysos for a skilled dramatist (δέομαι ποητοῦ δεξιοῦ. οἱ μὲν γὰρ οὐκέτ' εἰσίν, οἱ δ' ὄντες κακοί, ll. 72-73), since the contemporary dramatists lack proficiency in their craft. Thus, with his servant, Xanthias, Dionysos proceeds to Hades in order to retrieve Euripides. The commotion that greets their arrival at the dwelling of Pluto concerns the chair of tragedy (ἐκεῖνος εἶχε τὸν τραγῳδικὸν θρόνον, l. 768), which Aeschylus (d. 456/5 BCE) occupies and Euripides covets. Euripides is hailed as ὑπερεμάνησαν κἀνόμισαν σοφώτατον (l. 776), and his audience in Hades is impressed with his scintillating texts. The high regard that Sophocles (d. 406 BCE) has for Aeschylus is cited as the reason why he does not desire the position of professor of tragedy (ὑπεχώρησεν αὐτῷ τοῦ θρόνου, l. 790)

[30] For details of the two main dramatic festivals held in Athens in the fifth century BCE and the various plays required for each, see *inter alia*, Davidson (2005: 196), Green (1994: 7 – 9 & 14 – 15), Baldock (1989: 13 – 17).

[31] An address made in the dramatist's name to the audience by the Chorus.

[32] Sheppard (1963: 82 – 83) states that the play "pleads, in the last crisis of the war, for the forgiveness of old grudges, a closing of the ranks for the salvation of the state. Recall, says Aristophanes, the spirit of Aeschylus, who fought at Marathon, and showed us the Thebans manfully defending their city, the Persians overthrown, Agamemnon leading united Greece to Troy, Orestes home from exile, Achilles wrathful in his tent, but coming to the rescue after all. Take the lesson. Recall your exiles, even Alcibiades, if he will help. Remember how the *Oresteia* ended in a festival of reconciliation. So today, by the light of mystic torches, with hymns that echo the old triumph of Athena, let Dionysus bring the spirit of Aeschylus back to the earth."

[33] Sir Kenneth Dover (1994: 209) was invited to address the Beijing Academy of the Social Sciences in 1982, and writes: "My lectures in Beijing were (at their request) on Aristophanes and the Peloponnesian War. An abstruse subject, one might think, in a country where there were, I believe, only four old men who could read Greek; but understandable at a time when many Chinese were addressing themselves seriously to the question, 'What limits, if any, should be set to open criticism of public policy?' I was asked earnestly if I thought that Aristophanes 'went too far' … Six years had passed since the death of Mao and the repudiation of the Cultural Revolution, and now there was an uncomfortable oscillation between dogma and pragmatism."

for the length of the tenure of Aeschylus. But, if in Dionysos' judgement Euripides defeats Aeschylus in the competition for the post, Sophocles will enter the contest (διαγωνιεῖσθ' ἔφασκε πρός γ' Εὐριπίδην, l. 794).[34]

When Heracles challenges Dionysos' intention of fetching Euripides from Hades, by mentioning that there are many other living dramatists, who could out-chatter Euripides (Εὐριπίδου πλεῖν ἢ σταδίῳ λαλίστερα; l. 91), Dionysos replies that these are gossiping small-fry, who occupy the place of twittering birds (ἐπιφυλλίδες ταῦτ' ἐστὶ καὶ στωμύλματα, χελιδόνων μουσεῖα, ll. 92 – 93), but, more significantly, that they are a disgrace to their trade (λωβηταὶ τέχνης, l. 93). Similarly, the presence of familiar, possibly now established, protocols of the trade, or craft, of dramatic poetry is emphasized immediately prior to the debate between Aeschylus and Euripides, when Xanthias is told of the custom of an award for the arts (νόμος τις ἐνθάδ' ἐστὶ κείμενος ἀπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν, ll. 761 – 762), in which the best practitioner of his craft (τὸν ἄριστον ὄντα τῶν ἑαυτοῦ συντέχνων, l. 763) takes the seat of honour next to Pluto and dines in the *Prytaneion*. Aeschylus alone occupies the position until someone may arrive who is more skilled than he is in the craft of dramatic writing (ἕως ἀφίκοιτο τὴν τέχνην σοφώτερος ἕτερος τις αὐτοῦ, ll. 766 – 767).

This emphasis on the τέχνη of poetry is more specifically noted, and, possibly, derided, by Aristophanes – whether owing to the political context or his own reservations about the art of poetry – in the final section of the play (ll. 1365ff.),

[34] The relative absence of Sophocles from *Frogs* is usually explained by the conjecture that Aristophanes began to write *Frogs* immediately after the death of Euripides in 406 BCE, when Sophocles, who died later that year, was still alive (Dover, 1993: 7 – 8). But a more suggestive reason may be that the contrast between Aeschylus and Sophocles would be less evident and vivid in comparison to that between Aeschylus and Euripides.

when Aeschylus calls for a pair of scales to be brought out, in order that the weight, and thus the worth, of words may be measured (ἐπὶ τὸν σταθμὸν γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀγαγεῖν βούλομαι, ὅπερ ἐξελέγξει τὴν πόησιν νῷν μόνον· τὸ γὰρ βάρος νὼ βασανιεῖ τῶν ῥημάτων, ll. 1365 – 1367).[35] This latter section has been preceded by a critique of the metre employed by Aeschylus and Euripides respectively, when Aeschylus chants ληκύθιον ἀπώλεσεν as the repetitious metrical ending to the lines of Euripides,[36] and Euripides ἰὴ κόπον οὐ πελάθεις ἐπ' ἀρωγάν to those of Aeschylus (ll. 1198 – 1364a).[37]

In addition to these internal features of the craft of dramatic writing, the structural form of tragedies receives the attention of Aristophanes, when, for example, *Frogs* highlights inaugural devices. Thus, Euripides criticizes Aeschylus about his regular openings, which portray a sullen and silent πρωταγωνιστής – a delaying tactic, which, he avers, detracts from the content of the dramatic work by focusing upon the character (ll. 911 – 920). In contrast, Euripides states that εἶτ' οὐκ ἐλήρουν ὅ τι τύχοιμ' οὐδ' ἐμπεσὼν ἔφυρον, ἀλλ' οὑξιὼν πρώτιστα μέν μοι τὸ γένος εἶπ' ἂν εὐθὺς τοῦ δράματος (ll. 945 – 946).

[35] It may be relevant that Aeschylus, as the more technically skilled artist, requests the scales, thus suggesting that the notion of the *craft* of poetry may recede somewhat further back, since the documentation of terms precedes their usage.

[36] The contemporary novelist, Tom Holt, whose familiarity with original classical Greek texts is evident in his novel, *The Walled Orchard* (1990), creates a fictional setting for the genesis of *Frogs*, when the first-person narrator and central character, Eupolis of Pallene and Aristophanes, the son of Philip, are attempting to return to Athens following the disastrous campaign against Syracuse. Eupolis claims authorial ownership of the play: "The finale, like the rest of it, was my idea; Aeschylus would have it that Euripides' iambics are so lazily composed that you could fit any old phrase, like 'lost his oil-bottle,' into them at any point. Euripides is furious, and starts firing off his best-known quotable lines, the sort of lines that people fire at you in support of the thesis that they don't' write 'em like that any more. I was Euripides and Aristophanes was Aeschylus, so all he had to do was fit in 'lost his oil-bottle' at the appropriate point. My job was to find immortal lines from Euripides that could be subjected to this indignity, and this was not easy, since the charge of sloppy versifying was – is – totally unfounded" (Holt, 1990: 370 – 371).

[37] Whilst metre may not be exclusively, nor, perhaps, primarily, the focus of Aristophanes' humour here, it ought not to be overlooked (see Stanford, 1958: 174 & 177; Harriott, 1969: 152).

The two aspects of the craft dimension of the dramatist and that of his public duty – the former, the result of the changes in education and the influence of the sophists; the latter, more urgent owing to the political situation – run concurrently throughout the play. Whilst these two dimensions demonstrate the later emphasis on τέχνη in a socio-political context of battles and military campaigns, of the promise of conquest and victory and the fear of subjugation and defeat, the role of the playwright in the public square also may allude to the earlier and less temporal understanding of the poetic genre, and, indeed, to the didactic role of classical tragedy, since "throughout antiquity poets were seen as purveyors not only of entertainment but also of wisdom" (Croally, 2005: 56), and "through the chorus, the poet taught the city the myths and values that bound them together and connected them to the gods" (Ford, 2002: 197; see also Green, 1994: 2 & Rutherford, 1995: 228). In addition, however, this role indicates something of the τέχνη of dramatic characterization, because of the influence that certain types of characters, as opposed to other types of characters, impress upon their society.

Thus, when Aeschylus asks Euripides why the writer is honoured (τίνος οὕνεκα χρὴ θαυμάζειν ἄνδρα ποητήν;, l. 1008), Euripides replies that it is because of both his creative dexterity, and also the reproaches and censure directed at the citizenry, which encourages them to contribute and to participate in their dutiful service to their cities (δεξιότητος καὶ νουθεσίας, ὅτι βελτίους τε ποιοῦμεν τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν, l. 1009). Poets of the time were convinced of their morally educative function, and believed that a politically and morally relevant message (νουθεσία), formed with imaginative and technical skill and intelligence (δεξιότης), encourages the populace to reinforce and strengthen the life of the πόλις. And death (τεθνάναι,

l. 1012), says Dionysos, should be the penalty for a poet who betrays this vocation (ταῦτ' οὖν εἰ μὴ πεπόηκας … τί παθεῖν φήσεις ἄξιος εἶναι, ll. 1010 – 1012). But, unlike the characters of Aeschylus, the characters of Euripides are idle market-place gossipers (παρ' ἐμοῦ παρεδέξατο πρῶτον, εἰ γενναίους καὶ τετραπήχεις, καὶ μὴ διαδρασιπολίτας, μηδ' ἀγοραίους μηδὲ κοβάλους, ὥσπερ νῦν, μηδὲ πανούργους, ll. 1013 – 1015; λαλιὰν … στωμυλίαν, l. 1069). The latter do little to encourage virtue (χρηστά, l. 1056), which is the role of the poets, who instruct the youth just as the teachers instruct the children (τοῖς μὲν γὰρ παιδαρίοισιν ἐστὶ διδάσκαλος ὅστις φράζει, τοῖσιν δ' ἡβῶσι ποηταί, ll. 1054 -1055). The characters of Euripides are ones that οἰκεῖα πράγματ' εἰσάγων, οἷς χρώμεθ', οἷς ξύνεσμεν (l. 959), in contrast to the γενναίους καὶ τετραπήχεις (l. 1014) characters of Aeschylus. The impact upon the audience is noted by Aeschylus, who declares that Euripides has αὖ λαλιὰν ἐπιτηδεῦσαι καὶ στωμυλίαν ἐδίδαξας (l. 1069).

Not only does it appear probable that the populace perceived of dramatic art as a craft which had employed and, arguably, developed the erstwhile metrical features of dance and song, but playwrights also were subject to scrutiny with respect to the structure of their works. Halliwell (1986: 19) notes that *Frogs* "provides us with our most vivid evidence on the subject" of Greek attitudes to literature in the fifth century BCE, and that, without this play, "mere scraps and glimpses of sophistic thinking" are all that remain. Yet,

> as original and influential as these thinkers [that is, the major dramatists] may have been, there is no Aeschylean nor even Aristophanean position in ancient

> criticism. But the positions expressed in Aeschylus and Aristophanes tell us much about the intellectual currents of the times (Ford: 2002: 189).

The attempt to fill *cette lacune*, which, rather like the oft-imputed nostalgia of Aristotle for the acme of dramatic creation of the former century may have contributed to the inception of his treatise on poetry, may reside in the disparate, agonistic, inchoate field of an incipient discourse of poetry, which becomes evident in the *Poetics* in all of its absent and present otherness. Even if *Frogs* concedes no more than an ichnography of the poetic controversies during the fifth century BCE, both the political and social conventions surrounding the practice of poetry, as well as the more restrictive and hermetic literary dimensions of dramatic purpose and creativity, are evident. In the midst of war, conflict, famine, and disease, the performances of dramatic works continued. Attendant upon this climate are earlier ideas, conversations, and disputes about literature, its function and impact. The evidence reveals an informed public, a critical milieu, and, quite probably, expanding technical developments, and more widespread knowledge and criticism.

But why, and, indeed, how does a more formal discourse accrue in the following century, a discursive regularity at the centre of which lies (again, the *double entendre* is used advisedly) the *Poetics*? The adversative and the assentive, the conflictual and the committed discourses about poetry – about its sacrality, its profanity, its profundity and its ribaldry – evident in the political, social, religious, cultural, oikonomic, and familial discourses of the time, disclose the incipient accretion of a more detailed discursive formation on poetry. But, before pursuing more rigorously

the theoretical mapping of this discourse, one final, partly hesitant, partly pugnacious, critique is delivered, which develops into a powerful adversative discourse about art.

Here is Aristotle's most immediate 'influential anxiety,' his teacher, Plato, whose views (or those of Socrates) are hardly uniform. Like other Athenians, Plato's

> upbringing steeped him in the traditions of tragic theatre. Yet his relationship to those traditions became both unsettling and complex: unsettling, because his own work developed a conspicuously anti-tragic perspective on life; but complex, because anti-tragic voices heard in his dialogues are articulated through disparate elements … which afford no definitive authorial judgement on the genre. The idea of tragedy formed a constant presence in the shadows of Plato's thinking (Halliwell, 2005: 399),

which, in turn, adumbrated its long pall across the thought of Aristotle about poetry. Halliwell (2005: 400 – 410), however, lays out the views of Plato in a fairly traditional manner, more especially by foregrounding Plato's belief in Book X of the *Republic* that tragedy "pulls the mind down from higher truth to lower falsehood" (Halliwell, 2005: 401) and by citing the comparison between political ποιηταί and tragic ποιηταί and the prestige of the former, in the *Laws* (817b).[38] As has been suggested of Aristotle's conviction that tragic drama was inferior to its former achievements when he wrote, likewise Nettleship (1897: 105) states that "Plato felt

[38] *Laws* 817b 6 – 817c 1: ποιηταὶ μὲν οὖν ὑμεῖς, ποιηταὶ δὲ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσμὲν τῶν αὐτῶν, ὑμῖν ἀντιτεχνοί τε καὶ ἀνταγωνισταὶ τοῦ καλλίστου δράματος, ὃ δὴ νόμος ἀληθὴς μόνος ἀποτελεῖν πέφυκεν, ὡς ἡ παρ' ἡμῶν ἐστιν ἐλπίς.

strongly that Greek literature and music were declining; literature, he thought was becoming a mere provider of stimulants to a rather morbid imagination."

However, as intimated by Halliwell (1986) in his earlier text, it is too simplistic to view the ancient dramas as works that unequivocally present and reinforce social values and norms. At an institutional level, the theatre, like the βουλή and the ἐκκλησία, following the reforms of Cleisthenes in 508 BCE, was a feature of the cohesive self-identity of Athens; but, within this cultural form, within the plays, within the action and speeches, opposing views were declared, or, at least, were palpable. In the Athens of the fifth century BCE, debate, conflict, and adversative argument were not absent from the clamour of voices that Socrates appears to have found distasteful.[39] Whilst "poetry is never treated as a subject in itself" (Murray: 1996: 2) by Plato, the singularity of vision in the *Republic* with regard to δικαιοσύνη and the governance of the πόλις, is suggestive of the accretion of views and objections that Plato increasingly entertained and considered when driving his quest for the ideal city and its just governance. The vocation of the philosopher in the pursuit of wisdom requires the craftsmen to present an account of their τέχναι, and to display an understanding of the tasks and truths which they pursue, but Socrates discovers that the poets, like the politicians, are unable to explain their utterances, "for they say many fine things, but they know nothing of what they say" (γὰρ οὗτοι λέγουσι μὲν πολλὰ καὶ καλά, ἴσασιν δὲ οὐδὲν ὧν λέγουσι, *Apology* 22c2 – 3). Similarly, implicit within Socrates dismissal of the rhapsode Ion's art as a τέχνη is

[39] The exclusionary nature of the Athenian democracy, which so often is emphasized, has been questioned recently: " … the political space of the agora was not restricted to Athenian citizens: it was open to women, metics, slaves, and foreigners. They were all present in the agora, working, crafting, selling and buying, talking. It is difficult to see how a political discussion that took place in the agora involving poor citizen artisans, shopkeepers, labourers, would exclude all those other people present: metics, slaves, women" (Vlassopoulos, 2007: 42).

his dismissal of the poet as a craftsman, since rather than possessing knowledge "the poet is a nimble thing, winged and holy, and is not able to produce a work before he has become possessed and frenzied, and his mind no longer in his own control" (κοῦφον γὰρ χρῆμα ποιητής ἐστιν καὶ πτηνὸν καὶ ἱερόν, καὶ οὐ πρότερον οἷός τε ποιεῖν πρὶν ἔνθεός τε γένηται καὶ ἔκφρων καὶ ὁ νοῦς μηκέτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνῇ, *Ion* 534b3 – 6). Likewise, in the latter part of the *Phaedrus* (274c5ff.), which exalts speech over writing[40] – a text to which Derrida's (1972b) applies an invasive and transformative φάρμακον, even whilst it simultaneously denies its textual status – poets are condemned to an outer circle of the ἀρεταί of human beings (shades, possibly, of Dante's *Inferno*?). They have failed to follow after a god and to see the truth (δὲ ἀδυνατήσασα ἐπισπέσθαι μὴ ἴδῃ, *Phaedrus*, 248c5 – 6), unlike the lovers of wisdom, the rulers, the civic minded. Their vision is more limited than most and they trade in derivatives, since they are concerned with imitation (τῶν περὶ μίμησίν, *Phaedrus*, 248e1 – 2), and they are placed in the sixth circle or circuit of human existence (περίοδος, cf. *Phaedrus*, 248c4), just before the δημιουργικὸς, γεωργικός, σοφιστικὸς, δημοτικός, and the τυραννικός (*Phaedrus*, 248e2 – 3).

The shifting views of Plato's Socrates harden, and the banishment of the poets and poetry from the city in Book X of the *Republic*, whilst approving of them and their craft in the education of the young in Book II and Book III, has puzzled scholars, who have proposed, *inter alia*, interpolation (Else, 1972; cited by Too, 1998: 52), aestheticizing-incarnational (Popper, 1962: 165), or authorial development (Nehemas, 1982; cited by Too, 1998: 52) – *bildung* – theories. But, by retaining the focus of the

[40] Commenting on this work, Rutherford (1995: 268) states: "… written words … cannot defend themselves, nor can they choose to whom they speak. Whereas the true rhetorician will suit his discourse to the personality of the listener, the written speech is frozen and lifeless. It is the spoken word that has value, and that can 'write in the soul.'"

Republic on δικαιοσύνη in the state and, by extension, in the life of the individual, commentators may be discouraged from extracting the views of poetry from the argument of the work, in which, "on the analogy of a fine animal, Socrates defines the city as one in which every part has been assigned its proper place" (Too, 1998: 55). Dedication to one's craft engenders an authentic, authorial, propriate proficiency. It is a mastery that is limited, but one that results in ἀρετή: "each art strictly is complete in what it is … (and) … it is not fitting for any art to seek the advantage of that outside its field, since, rightly, each craft is innocent and pure" (ἑκάστη ἀκριβὴς ὅλη ἥπερ ἐστιν …[καὶ] … οὐδὲ προσήκει τέχνῃ ἄλλῳ τὸ συμφέρον ζητεῖν ἢ ἐκείνῳ οὗ τέχνη ἐστίν, αὐτὴ δὲ ἀβλαβὴς καὶ ἀκέραιός ἐστιν ὀρθὴ οὖσα, *Republic*, 342b4 – 6).

Multiple roles and activities engender a kind of profligacy, a desultory and an interfering πολυπραγμοσύνη, which contradicts the δικαιοσύνη appropriate to each individual τέχνη (Nettleship, 1897: 151 – 152; 93) – ἡμῶν φύεται ἕκαστος οὐ πάνυ ὅμοιος ἑκάστῳ, ἀλλὰ διαφέρων τὴν φύσιν, ἄλλος ἐπ' ἄλλου ἔργου πράξει, (*Republic*, 370a8 – 370b2) – and causes a solicitation of that singular aim of achieving excellence in an art. This, as Adam (1902: 95) notes, is "the cardinal principle of the *Republic*, reiterated also with great emphasis in *Laws* 846d – 847b – [and] is deduced by Plato from φύσις, whose rule is specialization." It is the founding principle of the nature of human beings; and both oligarchies and democracies controvert this μέτρησις of appropriateness or commensurability, since either too many roles are undertaken by too few, which denies the possibility of developing expertise, or too many roles are accessible to too many, which results in an appropriation of roles beyond the individual suitability and expertise of a citizen.

The variety of choice and opportunity without direction to, and education for, the most able and pertinent individual, encourages dilettantism. And, by failing to obtain the requisite proficiency in matters of discrimination and judgement, so an inability to discern τὸ δίκαιον from τὸ ἄδικον results. Δικαιοσύνη is a relative concept in a democracy, as is ἀδικία. Whilst neither the *Protagoras* (325e4 – 326a2)[41] nor the *Laws* (659d1 – 660a8)[42] suggest that poetry and choral verse are adverse influences on the πόλις, although the latter text constricts and controls poetic expression, whilst the former text considers vital the development of a critical judgement of poetry (*Protagoras* 338e7 – 339a3),[43] the poets remain unprofessional, because they are said

> πάσας μὲν τέχνας ἐπίστανται, πάντα δὲ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια τὰ πρὸς ἀρετὴν καὶ κακίαν, καὶ τά γε θεῖα· ἀνάγκη γὰρ τὸν ἀγαθὸν ποιητήν, εἰ μέλλει περὶ ὧν ἂν ποιῇ καλῶς ποιήσειν, εἰδότα ἄρα ποιεῖν, ἢ μὴ οἷόν τε εἶναι ποιεῖν (*Republic*, 598e1 – 5).

Such variegated skills Socrates finds too numerous and non-propriate. But, more pressingly, a legion of characters and voices created by the poet interposes

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[41] When children are able to read, they turn to the poets where they encounter the ἔπαινοι καὶ ἐγκώμια παλαιῶν ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν, ἵνα ὁ παῖς ζηλῶν μιμῆται καὶ ὀρέγηται τοιοῦτος γενέσθαι (*Protagoras* 326a2 – 4).

[42] At 659d in the *Laws*, the Athenian summarises the discussion by stating that education accords with the drawing and leading of children towards that discourse which has been pronounced as correct by the law: παιδεία μέν ἐσθ' ἡ παίδων ὁλκή τε καὶ ἀγωγὴ πρὸς τὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου λόγον ὀρθὸν εἰρημένον (*Laws* 659d1 – 3), and that the lawgiver may need to compel the poet to employ his art in τὰ τῶν σωφρόνων τε καὶ ἀνδρείων καὶ πάντως ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν ἔν τε ῥυθμοῖς σχήματα καὶ ἐν ἁρμονίαισιν μέλη ποιοῦντα ὀρθῶς ποιεῖν (*Laws*, 660a5 – 8). Then the Athenian asks Cleinias whether he agrees that the poet must record that the good man, being prudent and just, is happy and blessed, and that the poet would refuse to recall or mention the man, who practises and acquires all the things that would be called good, but does so without justice: τοὺς ποιητὰς ἀναγκάζετε λέγειν ὡς ὁ μὲν ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ σώφρων ὢν καὶ δίκαιος εὐδαίμων ἐστι' καὶ μακάριος … καὶ "Οὔτ' ἂν μνησαίμην," φησὶν ὑμῖν ὁ ποιητής, εἴπερ ὀρθῶς λέγει, "οὔτ' ἐν λόγῳ ἄνδρα τιθείμην," ὃς μὴ πάντα τὰ λεγόμενα καλὰ μετὰ δικαιοσύνης πράττοι καὶ κτῷτο (*Laws* 660e2 – 660e9).

[43] ἡγοῦμαι … ἀνδρὶ παιδείας μέγιστον μέρος εἶναι περὶ ἐπῶν δεινὸν εἶναι· ἔστιν δὲ τοῦτο τὰ ὑπὸ τῶν ποιητῶν λεγόμενα οἷον τ' εἶναι συνιέναι ἃ τε ὀρθῶς πεποίηται καὶ ἃ μή, καὶ ἐπίστασθαι διελεῖν τε καὶ ἐρωτώμενον λόγον δοῦναι (*Protagoras* 338e7 – 339a3).

representations, imitations, μιμήσεις, between the self and the ideal, through the various literary incarnations of the composer in the characters. This 'theatrical' space – the locus of characterization – deconstructs and disperses coherent and singular self-presence, and obscures and occludes, darkens, the human quest of approximating the ἰδέαι. Thus Socrates imposes limits upon speech, its style and its range, since latitude in this area is diffusive and causes a lack of singularity, which is not conducive to the construction of a citizen who is καλὸς κἀγαθός, but he makes the concession that

> ἐὰν δὲ μιμῶνται [τοὺς φύλακας], μιμεῖσθαι τὰ τούτοις προσήκοντα εὐθὺς ἐκ παίδων, ἀνδρείους, σώφρονας, ὁσίους, ἐλευθέρους, καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα πάντα, τὰ δὲ ἀνελεύθερα μήτε ποιεῖν μήτε δεινοὺς εἶναι μιμήσασθαι, μηδὲ ἄλλο μηδὲν τῶν αἰσχρῶν, ἵνα μὴ ἐκ τῆς μιμήσεως τοῦ εἶναι ἀπολαύσωσιν (*Republic*, 395c3 – d1).

Plato's appropriation of *mimesis* as a concept with which to challenge the poets appears to rest upon the tradition of metrically structured dance that reaches back to Homer and the wandering bards. The feet that compose a line of poetry are the steps taken by the members of the dancing circle (David, 2006: 8 – 9), who, in one type of dance, are imitators of the speech (λέξις) of the Muse and ensure magnificence with freedom (*Laws* 795e1 – 3).[44] The arts of the Muses were those of dance, music, and song, and Plato associated their imitative quality with the other productive arts of both physical artefacts and words (Ford, 2002: 94). These too were representative activities in certain respects. But, whilst μίμησις may be a constituent feature of

[44] τῆς ὀρχήσεως δὲ ἄλλη μὲν Μούσης λέξιν μιμουμένων, τό τε μεγαλοπρεπὲς φυλάττοντας ἅμα ἐλεύθερον (*Laws* 795e1 – 3).

cultural activity, of dance, painting, sculpture, and of the poetic arts, for Plato the craft of the poets is not quite like that of other craftsmen, when practising their τέχναι. The artefact, which the craftsman makes, is a representation of the form, ἡ ἰδέα, the object, perfect and complete within itself, without fault or wax, but the craft of the dramatist is further removed from αἱ ἰδέαι than that of other craftsmen, because the poet creates characters who, in turn, undertake mimetic activity. The "poetic arts, beginning with Homer" (ἀπὸ Ὁμήρου ἀρξαμένους πάντας τοὺς ποιητικούς), no matter how skilfully these crafts are practised, "do not seek to lay hold of the truth" (τῆς δὲ ἀληθείας οὐχ ἅπτεσθαι, *Republic* 600e4 – 6), because the poets are imitators of imitators, tellers of the tales of those striving to approximate the perfect ἰδέαι. The quest for knowledge about the truths of human existence is absent: "Thus indeed, I think that we shall say that the poet paints some colourful embellishments … with nouns and verbs, but he merely represents his subjects without knowing them" (Οὕτω δὴ οἶμαι καὶ τὸν ποιητικὸν φήσομεν χρώματα … τοῖς ὀνόμασι καὶ ῥήμασιν ἐπιχρωματίζειν αὐτὸν οὐκ ἐπαΐοντα ἀλλ' ἢ μιμεῖσθαι, *Republic* 601a4 – 6).

Whilst Socrates' and, indeed, Plato's exact conception of αἱ ἰδέαι remains unresolved, observation of, and inferences drawn from, the phenomenal world are inadequate to true knowledge.[45] For them,

> there is something more, something which 'really exists,' unchanging, independent of our indefinitely adjustable generalizations and pragmatic

[45] Writing of the *Timaeus*, Catherine Osborne (1996: 210) states: "… Plato reaffirms an attitude found in the *Republic* [527d – 530c]: a description has validity, not in virtue of its faithfulness to empirical aspects of our familiar world, but in virtue of its aspirations to an ideal."

> definitions … [and] … the human soul is able to attain firm and certain knowledge of real unchanging entities (εἴδη, ἰδέαι 'ideas' or 'forms') by systematic and communicable reasoning. This knowledge is ἐπιστήμη …(Dover, 1980: 6).[46]

Gill (1996: 284) labels Plato's dialogic search for knowledge "objectivist-participant," in the sense that whilst knowledge remains objective, it is through participation in areas of specialization that it is partially incarnated. But what kind of knowledge were the poets producing, since they did not endeavour to reach after the stable and immutable truths of human existence? Poets as educators, who did not understand their own subject matter (*Apology*, 22b8 – c6), who told untruths about the gods, which ἀποδεκτέον οὔτε Ὁμήρου οὔτ' ἄλλου ποιητοῦ (*Republic* 379c9 – d1), and who were thrice removed from their mimetic concept[47] surely proved inadequate to the task of providing ethical instruction (Murray, 1996: 18). The familiar "Myth of the Cave," in Book VII of the *Republic*, asserts that education progresses towards truth, and that truth can be appropriated in all its simplicity and fulness.

For Plato, the appeal to the highest part of the soul, the reason, in its quest for truth and wisdom, is occluded by the poets, who exalt and indulge the emotional faculty of

[46] In his autobiography, Dover (1994: 116) refers to his conception of Plato's thought when preparing to write his commentary on the *Symposium* (1980): "It seemed to me that his [Plato's] metaphysical arguments make sense only if one adopts, with the fervent faith patently characteristic of his Socrates, three axioms. First, that since what we perceive of the world is subject to change and decay, *there must be something which is eternal and immutable*. Secondly, that since opinions and inferences founded on our experience of the world are corrigible, *there must be something which is understandable by incorrigible reasoning*. And thirdly, that if we follow the path of reason to the end, *we must perceive that ultimate reality is good*, and since love is necessarily our reaction to good, reason and love converge and fuse in the experience of that perception" (the emphasis is in the original).

[47] Drawing on the analogy of a bed – its form, its production, and its representation – Ζωγράφος δή, κλινοποιός, θεός, τρεῖς οὗτοι ἐπιστάται τρισὶν εἴδεσι κλινῶν (*Republic* 597b13 – 14), Socrates then notes with respect to the tragedian: Τοῦτ' ἄρα ἔσται καὶ ὁ τραγῳδοποιός, εἴπερ μιμητής ἐστι, τρίτος τις ἀπὸ βασιλέως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας πεφυκώς, καὶ πάντες οἱ ἄλλοι μιμηταί (*Republic* 597e6 – 8).

human nature. A man in grief, who "partakes of a good and moral character, whether having lost a son or anything else of great value … will bear it, anyway, more easily and calmly than others in the same circumstances" (᾽Ανήρ … ἐπιεικὴς τοιᾶσδε τύχης μετασχών, υἱὸν ἀπολέσας ἤ τι ἄλλο ὧν περὶ πλείστου ποιεῖται, ἐλέγομέν που καὶ τότε ὅτι ῥᾷστα οἴσει τῶν ἄλλων, *Republic* 603e3 – 5). Thus, whilst "the emotional experience encourages the loss of control to his griefs" (τὸ δὲ ἕλκον ἐπὶ τὰς λύπας αὐτὸ τὸ πάθος, *Republic* 604b1), since the "excess of emotion reacts upon the character and weakens it" (Nettleship, 1897: 97), the sensations would be disciplined by reason. Socrates asks rhetorically: "Shall we not say that what leads to the recollection of sufferings and causes grief, and is insatiable for these things, is unreasonable and idle and cowardly?" (Τὸ δὲ πρὸς τὰς ἀναμνήσεις τε τοῦ πάθους καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ὀδυρμοὺς ἄγον καὶ ἀπλήστως ἔχον αὐτῶν ἆρ᾽ οὐκ ἀλόγιστόν τε φήσομεν εἶναι καὶ ἀργὸν καὶ δειλίας φίλον;, *Republic* 604d8 – 10). This, for Plato, precisely, is the representation undertaken by the poet for his diverse auditors, since "the sensible and controlled character is … neither easy to understand, nor, when represented, easily understood, especially by the motley crowd gathered in the theatre" (τὸ δὲ φρόνιμόν τε καὶ ἡσύχιον ἦθος … οὔτε ῥᾴδιον μιμήσασθαι οὔτε μιμουμένου εὐπετὲς καταμαθεῖν, ἄλλως τε καὶ πανηγύρει καὶ παντοδαποῖς ἀνθρώποις εἰς θέατρα συλλεγομένοις, *Republic* 604e2 – 5). The poet who "intends to be popular and famous amongst the mob presents characters who are in thrall to their emotions and unstable" (μέλλει εὐδοκιμήσειν ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸ ἀγανακτητικόν τε καὶ ποικίλον ἦθος, *Republic* 605a4 – 5). Thus, the poet is banished from the city "because such a man encourages and nourishes this part of the soul, making it strong, whilst obliterating the reasoning faculty, which is like handing over the city and empowering

the rascals, and thus destroying the educated and refined" (ὅτι τοῦτο ἐγείρει τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τρέφει καὶ ἰσχυρὸν ποιῶν ἀπόλλυσι τὸ λογιστικόν, ὥσπερ ἐν πόλει ὅταν τις μοχθηροὺς ἐγκρατεῖς ποιῶν παραδιδῷ τὴν πόλιν, τοὺς δὲ χαριεστέρους φθείρῃ, *Republic* 605b3 – 6). The emotional faculty of human nature, and the public portrayal of these emotions by the poets, engenders sedition in the soul, since it dethrones reason, and threatens the stability of the orderly city. Plato's concession severely is circumscribed, in that "one must only admit into the city the kind of poetic works which offer praise to the gods and encomia to good men" (ὅσον μόνον ὕμνους θεοῖς καὶ ἐγκώμια τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ποιήσεως παραδεκτέον εἰς πόλιν, *Republic* 607a3 – 5).

In view of "the many roles that Socrates plays in Plato's dialogues," Dorothea Frede (1996: 222) asks, "Who is Socrates?" She answers her question by proffering character portraits:

> There is the gadfly of the *Apology* who intends to sting the Athenians into soul-searching. There is the sting-ray of the *Meno*, who numbs others to make them admit their ignorance as a first step towards a recollection of truths once seen and then forgotten. There is also the Socrates with a programme of his own who rises to Glaucon's and Adeimantus' challenge of explaining the real benefit of justice in the *Republic* in a long monologue. And there is practitioner of philosophical midwifery in the *Theaetetus* (Frede, 1996: 222 – 223).

In addition to the "dramatic roles" of Socrates are the various opinions and changeable views on poets, their role, status, and their craft. Furthermore, the relationship between the writer of, and speaker in, the Platonic corpus *toujours déjà* is *sous rature*, since "Socrates' voice lives in the death of Plato's voice, which lives in the death of Socrates' voice. Whichever voice one hears, the other man is speaking" (Neel, 1988: 17), and thus, Socrates is no less multiple than is his Plato, nor Plato any less multiple than is his Socrates.

It is this multiplicity, this fragmentary dispersion, that provides the fertile soil of Aristotle's poetic vineyard. Poets, as inspired prophets, as conduits of the sacred voices of the gods, as guardians of the common civic life, and as the teachers and educationalists of the young, were the practitioners of an art, increasingly, perhaps momentarily, technical. As creators of dramatic works, they extended the tradition of metrical song and dance by employing the *arses* and *theses* in the beat of the dramatic line, as surely as the iambic pentameter pulses in all of Shakespeare's drama (see Hall, 2003: 26). They transmogrified song forms into monodies for actors and antiphons for choruses. Alternatively, their stories were fakes and forgeries, remote from "the truth;" or "Attic tragedy of the fifth-century was political; it was primarily a discourse of the polis" (Croally, 2005: 67),[48] and "it helped cement a sense of civic identity and belonging in the Athenian consciousness" (Panoussi, 2005: 413). In their thousands, the citizens of Athens gathered in the Theatre of Dionysos, and their pleasures boosted the esteem of the participants and the sponsors – the χορηγία was one of the ordinary λειτουργίαι of Athenian society. But the Attic soil is rocky, and

[48] As André Brink (1980: 17) made the following, fairly common, but not entirely accurate, assertion in his Inaugural Lecture at Rhodes University, Grahamstown: "In traditional tragedy we are offered the Chorus as an intermediary between our world and that of the play: it keeps us 'in touch,' it prevents the play-world from hurtling off into a space so remote that we can no longer follow it. The Chorus is the literal, physical 'representative' of our world in that of the play."

the scattered fragments are the "monuments" which remain of a dispersed site of the adversarial views on poetry and its τέχνη.

THE FORMATION OF A DISCOURSE

In one sense, it is at the end of a series of cycles of debate and accruing consensus, of contention and cumulative agreement, that the gifted mind of synthesis resides: an Augustine to nucleate the thought of Paul, Clement of Alexandria, and Jerome (see Brown, 1988: 386); a Thomas Aquinas to compress the principles of Aristotle and Augustine (see MacIntyre, 1990: 127 & 141; & *passim*). Their contextual and meditative reflection, their ensuing ratiocination, compacts the tradition – the *traditio* – handed over to them. In another sense, it is in the rules of formation that generate a discursive regularity, that inspissate a discourse with its attendant rites of entry, its technical vocabulary, and available subject positions (see Foucault, 1969). In both instances, the place in which the unitary voice or the accretional discourse lies – as "resides" – is a deceptive one. It lies – as "mendacity" – in its choices, since syntheses occlude, marginalize, and exclude a practice upon which demarcation and definition rely.

In the latter sense, the *Poetics* of Aristotle constitutes a "discursive formation" (Foucault, 1969: 53), which appropriates terms and concepts from other discourses, whether specialized or quotidian, and infuses them with a technical sophistication, and lends them a temporary *stasis*, a 'position,' which is pertinent to the momentary locus as a "monument;" rather than a serial position as a "document," which is perceived only in relation to the advance of linear history. These ideas and notions,

in their centripetal dynamic, are employed transformatively, in order to structure the "objects" of its own discourse, and engender the possibility of enunciating this discourse, of being a subject, a speaker, which requires a more exact and precise technical proficiency, a knowledge of the science of poetry – ἡ ἐπιστήμη – as well as an awareness of the integration of knowledge in its realms of practice.[49] To view an influential discourse about poetry, and, more specifically, about tragic drama, in this manner, lightens the burden of *animus* between Aristotle and his informants and predecessors, and suggests that disjunctive uses of the same terms are less concerns of conflictual retardation or development, and rather are matters of discursive licence or specificity. But, such an approach does more, since it reduces the weight of the tradition perhaps to a mere wry and mocking spectre peering over shoulders of its successors, and releases the fetters of history from dogmatically binding the future to itself.[50]

Thus, if the *Poetics* is accredited with a pre-eminent status in the theory of drama, it appropriates its prestige from its accretional δύναμις. The fractional and partial sources less than argue, but more than suggest, that Aristotle's reflections on poetry and, more especially, on the art of tragedy, are the produce both of a pullulating field

[49] MacIntyre's (1990: 52) comment on *L'archéologie du savoir* is insightful, since it involved "a movement towards the preconceptual, the presystematic, and the prediscursive which itself necessarily cannot but be comprehended in terms that are conceptual, systematic, and discursive. So very different and heterogeneous regularities and levels of discourse are disclosed, through which are generated *a variety of incommensurable bodies of claims* assigned in their assemblage the status of a science. To the set of relations which in any given time and place unify the discursive practices underlying any one such body of claims Foucault gave the name '*episteme*,' mocking Plato's and Aristotle's uses of that word in so doing" (emphasis added).

[50] Similarly, Derrida (1972b: 148 – 149, & *passim*) foregrounds the associative and wandering path of words and their meanings: "Comme tout texte, celui de 'Platon' ne pouvait pas ne pas être en rapport, de manière au moins virtuelle, dyamique, latérale, avec tous les mots composant le système de la langue grecque. Des forces d'association unissent, à des distances, avec une force et selon des voies diverses, les mots 'effectivement présents' dans un discours à tout les autres mots du système lexical, qu'ils apparaissent ou non comme 'mots,' c'est-à-dire comme unités verbales relatives dans un tel discours. Elles communiquent avec la totalité du lexique par le jeu syntaxique et au moins par les sous-unités qui composent ce qu'on appelle un mot."

of literary criticism, and of the use of poetic terminology in proximate and distal discursive spheres. The maturity of the field of literary criticism is difficult to determine with great accuracy, but the provenance of a more detailed, specific, and considered discourse on poetry and its protocols was generated in a context of divergent, colloquial, heterogeneous, and disparate views and opinions about the contribution of poetry to human well-being or its diminishment, and influenced by the employment of an inchoate literary vocabulary in various discursive sites.

The various uses of μιμήσις, and the ἀγών between Plato and Aristotle about this term and its poetic appropriation (see Halliwell, 1986: 120 – 131), belie that *mimesis* is, after all, "the brute appeal of poetry" (Ford, 2002: 270). Drama is the performative imitative representation of words in gesture and speech. Actors represent characters and actions. Halliwell's (1986: 121) list of ten "uses of mimeticist terminology in the dialogues" of Plato, from "linguistic" to "choreographic," demonstrate the variety of discourses to which the term belongs. The specific accusation against poetic representation by Plato concerns the distance it places between the quest for the true forms and the mimeticist. Too (1998: 6) notes that "Plato's *Republic*, which to all intents and purposes has become the *fons et origo* for the discourse on art as 'imitation,' is a work whose concern explicitly is the *construction* of the ideal state" (original emphasis).

Thus, the significantly perspicacious texts of inquiry, critique, and proposal often are as much about projected futures, as about their pasts or presents. Plato's marginalization of *mimesis* is the other which Aristotle returns to the centre and places in the footlights of a discourse on poetry, since, for him, "poetry, like painting,

sculpture, instrumental music, and dance, is an art of 'representing' human characters and actions" (Ford, 2002: 95).

To view texts as "monuments" permits an insight into their attractive power – their ability to lure concepts, ensnare them in its own incipient web, and then bestow upon them a technical sophistication appropriate to itself, which hierarchizes them in the new discursive order. And precisely because terms and concepts previously employed in other discursive sites also become members of the new discourse, an instability remains within the new discourse, as, indeed, within the other discourses in which they function. Thus, there are "*espaces de dissension*" (Foucault, 1969: 200) not only between discursive formations, but also within them, and, although the desire for closure and its concomitant hegemony is seductive, it is perennially elusive.[51]

From this perspective, Aristotle's positive use of *mimesis* is less a matter of challenging his tutor, Plato, which is where critics often locate its contrary genesis, but, perhaps initially, the appropriation of a term for a description of the visual experience of theatre, merely as the starting-point for reflecting upon the dramatic art of tragedy, and to which greater definitional clarity and power later accrues. Foucault (1969: 200) does not seek to explain away different usages of discursive terminology, and

> renonce donc à traiter la contradiction comme une fonction générale s'exerçant, de la même façon, à tous les niveaux du discours, et que l'analyse

[51] Continuing the thought in note 49, Derrida (1972b: 149) states: "Mais à déborder ce lexique, nous voulons moins dépasser, à tort ou à raison, certaines limites, qu'appeler la suspicion sur le droit à poser de telles limites. En un mot, nous ne croyons pas qu'il existe en toute rigueur un texte platonicien, clos sur lui-même, avec son dedans et son dehors."

> devrait ou supprimer entièrement ou reconduire *à une forme première et constitutive*: au grand jeu de *la* contradiction – présente sous mille visages, puis supprimée, enfin restituée dans le conflit majeur où elle culmine – (emphasis added).

Arguably, Ford (2002) may be right in emphasizing that Aristotle is indebted to Plato less for an adversative other to critique, than for the notion of developing a coherence in systematic argument, which lends a singular dedication rather than the πολυπραγμοσύνη which Plato shunned. This desire, rather than one for hegemonic ownership of a term, Ford (2002: 270 – 271) suggests, is the

> founding move in treating poetry as literature, as fiction that, while indeed capable of having educational and moral influence in society, is made in accordance with an art that is not the art of politics, not of the sciences, nor of history, but the art of poetry … [There is] a postulate about poetry that has remained central to academic criticism to the present day: all its elements, though not directly answerable to the world of politics or philosophy, or to the real world, must answer at least to each other, and poetics best knows how to discern form and function in its artistic composition.

Within Ford's (2002: 271) phrase "not directly answerable," the notion of the employment of the same terminology in other discursive formations is perceptible; and, for Aristotle, internal coherent argumentation and construction undergirds his reflections on a particular mimetic art, and, ultimately, generates a treatise of anabatic

discursive sophistication, of internal interlocutors, who, to advert again to Ford (2002: 271), "answer at least to each other."

The relegation of the psychological experience of theatrical attendance in Halliwell's well-received 1986 text (esp. 122 – 131), is, without apology, somewhat mitigated in a later article:[52]

> Because the *Poetics* is equivocal about theatrical production, claiming that the essential effect of tragedy is available through reading (meaning, probably, expressive recitation) as well as in performance (1450b 16 – 20, 1453b 1 – 11, 1462a 11 – 18), it is frequently supposed that Aristotle had scant knowledge of tragedy in the theatre. The inference is mistaken. At *Rhetoric* 1404b 21 – 24, Aristotle praised the brilliant artistry of Theodorus, the most successful tragic actor of the 370s and 360s (cf. *Politics* 1336b 28); and his comparative formulation (Theorodus' voice always "seems to belong to the character speaking," while those of other actors sound artificially "alien" to them) demonstrates that he drew on extensive theatrical experience. Aperçus in the *Poetics* itself reinforce this point: the famous reference to Euripides as "the most tragic" of the poets (1453a 29 – 30), for instance, is couched in language that implies direct observation of theatrical audiences. Aristotle's conception of tragedy was shaped by a combination of watching and reading plays – in what proportion, we will never know (Halliwell, 2005: 401 – 402).

[52] Although, on occasions in the earlier work, Halliwell (1986: 131) does raise the following qualification: "Performance, the actor's art, certainly has its own claims to mimetic status … and we should not rule out the possibility that this fact exercised a *latent* influence on Aristotle's thinking" (emphasis added).

Perhaps distance from the ancient sites and academic contortions have generated a less visual-centred reading of the *Poetics*.[53] In contrast, modern theorists, without apology, cite the *raison d'être* of a dramatic work to be its performance,[54] and, recently, English (2007: 199 – 200) emphasized that

> Aristophanes' visual creativity … played an enormous role in the success of his comedies … We need only consider the passage from Plato's *Apology* (19c 2 – 5) where Socrates categorizes his visual characterization in *Clouds* … as one of the primary reasons that public opinion turned against him.

Together with stage props, the gestural, vestimentary, sonic, and scenic aspects of the theatrical experience propagate the words,[55] which, in tragedy, as a unit produce a *katharsis* through pity and fear.

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[53] In the "Introduction" to *Frogs*, Stanford (1958: liii) notes that "Since the seventeenth century many eminent scholars have worked on the text and interpretation of Aristophanes: Casaubon, Bentley, Porson (who, it is said, wept with joy to find that some of his emendations in Aristophanes had been anticipated by Bentley) …" In Book IV of *The Dunciad*, Alexander Pope (1963: 777 – 778) criticizes the atomization of the classical texts by the scholars, and Bentley receives special mention:

> … Bentley late tempestuous wont to sport
> In troubled waters, but now sleeps in Port
> …
> Roman and Greek Grammarians! …
> While tow'ring o'er your Alphabet, like Saul,
> Stands our Digamma, and o'er-tops them all (ll. 201 – 202; 215; 217 – 218).

However, throwing off the stricture and exactitude of Bentley's methods, when a student embarks on the Grand Tour, he

> Spoil'd his own language, and acquir'd no more;
> All Classic learning lost on Classic ground (ll. 320 – 321).

[54] For example, Serpieri et al (1981: 164) notes that "every author, in writing for the theatre, has in mind a stage realization which he *stamps* in the text, drawing upon the system of conventions operative in his time." Sir Peter Hall (2000: 135), in his Clark Lectures at Trinity College, Cambridge, noted that a dramatic work "must be studied with a sense of performance even when it is read … we need to learn the language of the theatre if we are to judge drama … We must develop knowledge and skills which take us beyond reading texts just as texts."

[55] See Elam (1980 [2002]) for the semiotic import of these factors. No signal can be dismissed, because "theatrical messages are non-redundant to the extent that, even where the direct semantic information is low, each signal has (or supposedly has) an 'aesthetic' justification" (Elam, 1980: 43).

Thus, it is suggested that, inspired by the ostensive aspects of drama, Aristotle generated a discourse about tragedy, ordering the constituent features of "the representation of actions and life," and that the performative and participatory aspects are central both to enacting the *arses* and *theses* of the choral liturgical aspects embedded in the drama of the Gospel of Mark, and also of following a way that both generates and entrenches communal and social solidarity. Unlike narrative, where a narrator, through focalization, may occupy a singular "positional advantage;"[56] in drama, positional siting and epistemic awareness is modally nuanced. The audience may experience some marginalization or occlusion, but, in contrast to the reader of a novel, whose invitation into the diegetic world is proffered to the imagination, the invitation into the mimetic world is extended to bodily presence, and the imaginative attendance is spectrumized from the more visually literal to (almost) visual off-stage exclusion – gesture, scenic presentation, and, often, sonic presence, however, more than likely, still "playing its part."

Foucault (1969: 9) controverts the long and linear vision of historians, who,

> comme si, au-dessous des péripéties politiques et de leurs épisodes, ils entreprenaient de metre au jour les équilibres stables et difficiles à rompre, les processus irréversibles, les régulations constantes, les phénomènes tendanciels

[56] Bernard Williams (2002: 42) employs this concept, which may be useful here, in his exploration of a "state of nature" story in the quest for "truth and truthfulness" and "the virtues of truth:" "it is uncontroversial that a basic function of language is communication where this includes, notably, telling other competent language-users things that they do not know. To embody this, we should include right at the beginning the idea of what may be called a *purely positional advantage*. This is the idea that a speaker can tell someone else about a situation because he is or was in it, while his hearer is not or was not." In dramatic performance, the concept of "dramatic irony" permits audience knowledge and character ignorance. Alternatively, the suspension of knowledge is germane to the attendance at repeated performances of the same work.

> … les grands socles immobiles et muets que l'enchevêtrement des récits traditionnels avait recouverts de toute une épaisseur d'événements.

Foucault (1969: 17 & 19) contrasts "une *histoire globale*" with "une *histoire générale*," rejecting the former which "resserre tous les phénomènes autour d'un centre unique" for the latter, which "déploierait au contraire l'espace d'une dispersion." In spite of the disparate nature of historical data available to researchers, it is

> Comme s'il avait été particulièrement difficile, dans cette histoire que les hommes retracent de leurs propres idées et de leurs propres connaissances, de formuler une théorie générale de la discontinuité, des séries, des limites, des unités, des ordres spécifiques, des autonomies et des dépendances différenciées. Comme si ... on éprouvait une répugnance singulière à penser la différence, à décrire des écarts et des dispersions ..." (Foucault, 1969: 21).

His own archaeological inquiry is

> prêt à accueillir chaque moment du discours dans son irruption d'événement; dans cette ponctualité où il apparaît, et dans cette dispersion temporelle qui lui permet d'être répété, su, oublié, transformé, effacé jusque dans ses moindres traces, enfoui ... (Foucault, 1969: 37).

When "toutes les unités admises" are suspended, the restitution

> à l'énoncé sa singularité d'événement, et de montrer que la discontinuité n'est pas seulement un de ces grands accidents qui forment faille dans la géologie de l'histoire, mais là déjà dans le fait simple de l'énoncé; on le fait surgir dans son irruption historique; ce qu'on essaie de mettre sous le regard, c'est cette incision qu'il constitue, cette irréductible – et bien souvent minuscule – émergence" (Foucault, 1969: 40).

And the examination is located in "dans ce champ où se manifestent, se croisent, s'enchevêtrent et se spécifient les questions de l'être humain, de la conscience, de l'origine, et du sujet" (Foucault, 1969: 26). This open field engenders an inquiry into the statements that construct the "monuments" of history in their own discursive locations, that emergence of diverse, discrete, and specific discourses, which are derived from "l'arbre de dérivation" (Foucault, 1969: 192). Employing the image of this tree, at its "racine," there exists "*énoncés recteurs*," which, in spite of their definitional and governing status also "font apparaître les possibilités les plus générales de caractérisation et ouvrent ainsi tout un domaine de concepts à construire … laissent place au plus grand nombre d'options ultérieures" (Foucault, 1969: 192). Both the tree and its branches represent "un buissonnement, des 'découvertes' … des transformations conceptuelles … des émergences de notions inédites ..." (Foucault, 1969: 192). Within the life of this tree, within its trunk, pulsating through and between its branches and leaves, which grow from the same root, are linkages, limitations, and contradictions, both the coherent and "natural," as well as the angular and mutant, outgrowth of the "root statements;" the "successions linéaires" or the interruptions, the "*actes et seuils épistémologiques*" (Foucault, 1969: 9 – 11). The *énoncé* is general and specific, and its specificity is that discursive irruption, which,

once the oppressive restriction of historical continuity is abandoned "tout un domaine en effet se trouve libéré. Un domaine immense, mais qu'on peut définir: il est constitué par l'ensemble de tous les énoncés effectifs ... dans leur dispersion d'événements et dans l'instance qui est propre à chacun" (Foucault, 1969: 38). And, more importantly,

> où on pourrait décrire, entre un certain nombre d'énoncés, un pareil systéme de dispersion, dans le cas où entre les objets, les types d'énonciation, les concepts, les choix thématiques, on pourrait définir une régularité (un ordre, des corrélations, des positions et des fonctionnements, des transformations),

there exists for Foucault (1969: 53), a "*formation discursive*." This "discursive formation" constitutes a "regularity" in which objects are formed from various "surfaces of emergence" – that host of political, economic, social, cultural, religious, academic, and familial arenae – and are then "delimited" and defined by the authorities that appropriate and begin to employ these *énoncés*, and which, in turn, refine them by means of similarities and contrasts into increasingly sophisticated "*grilles de spécification*" (Foucault, 1969: 58). The objects that form a regularity constitute a discursive practice, enabling "la formation des modalités énonciatives" (Foucault, 1969: 68 – 74), who employ the strategies that organize and regulate the objects and concepts of a discourse, strategies that are forged at "les *points de diffraction*" (Foucault, 1969: 87) between discourses and sub-groups within discourses, and are delimited by the choices of the authorities, which are then enacted. From a "dispersion d'éléments ... l'unité d'un discours" (Foucault, 1969: 95) coheres: from an anterior field of juxtaposing, conflicting, disputatious statements and

conceptual formations, a discourse inspissates; but “derrière la façade visible du système,” there exists “la riche incertitude du désordre” (Foucault, 1969: 100).

It is this “most sustained and searching analysis and formulation of the nature of a discourse ... passed over rather quickly by most of Foucault’s own commentators,” since it is his “most difficult book” (Young, 2001: 394), that illustrates the possibility of the development and conceptual transformation of the same discursive terminology, which then constitutes a discourse with its own ‘thin facade’ of stability, buttressed by its own specialized use of discursive terminology, and guarded by its own peculiarly established rites of entry and propriate rituals. Thus, discursive statements (root statements) may belong to diverse discursive regularities, from which, with increased and focused specialization, discursive formations arise. Whilst these more clearly defined and field-determined regularities, through the application of diverse forms and the pressure of variously covert and overt coercion, often attempt to occlude discursive instability, not only are attempts at closure always insufficient, since within the tree and at the branch level of the archive the same terms draw their life possibilities from the same root, and thus, not only do attempts at unique usages of discourse fail in their provenient power, but also definitional hegemony requires a marginalized other, which is an internal absent-presence, in order to demarcate its boundaries. In this vein, it is suggested that Aristotle’s *Poetics* is less confined to a reading in which concepts may be linked and comprehended in a singularly linear fashion, since the rays of light that cast angled shadows upon the sundial depend upon the daylight hour, and which the locality of viewpoint may maximize or minimize. Perceived through this image, Aristotle’s reflections upon drama are both shaded and unshaded; both informed and prescribed, and unique and innovative. Seeking its

meanings in the past may be significant, but its significance must be balanced by the discursive fecundity of new regularities. In this sense, the *Poetics* is a beginning, but a beginning with a wide and varied discursive past, as demonstrated in the scarce and fractured evidence above, and a future no less open and variegated in its attempt to accrete as a discursive formation. To look over the shoulder of the *Poetics* may be less informative than to address it as a discourse; indeed, formed from those diverse emergent surfaces and collocations, but then forming its own objects and concepts, increasingly refining its definitional terms, and permitting new voices to speak its lines, with an inexorable and vulnerable exposure to an unknown futurity from an known and unknown past.

The coalescing of a discourse on poetry from existing "surfaces of emergence," through critique, controversy, and scrutiny, assembles the *Poetics* of Aristotle. But ultimate refinement, as in any systematic formulation, and, more especially in the Humanities, resides beyond its reach, in its future, and in the future of its past, those hidden presences and occlusions both known and unknown to its initial inspissation as a discursive regularity. Therefore, the *Poetics* cannot be bound too tightly to its past, where that past dictates its definitional present. The "authorities" which construct the "grids of specification" (Foucault, 1969) form the *traditio* – the handing on or handing over – of Aristotle's present to the present present, and the stability of meaning is contested in the ἀγών, which, *toujours déjà*, is an open contest.

Thus, our access to the pluri-dimensional, multifarious past of "le jeu citationnel" (Derrida, 1972b: 111) and significatory plenitude both distant from, and proximate to,

the *Poetics* – both its present past and its present future – is provisional, since it is a field where

> des forces d'association unissent, à des distances, avec une force et selon des voies diverses, les mots 'effectivement présents' dans un discours à tout les autres mots du système lexical, qu'ils apparaissent ou non comme 'mots,' c'est-à-dire comme unités verbales relatives dans un discours. Elles communiquent avec la totalité du lexique ... (Derrida, 1972b: 148; and see n. 50 above).

In this dispersed and disseminated arena, the unbounded site of "excès irréductible, par le jeu du supplément, de toute intimité à soi du vivant, du bien, du vrai" (Derrida, 1972b: 195), a reading, and no more than a reading, of the *Poetics* may be undertaken. It solicits the *Poetics* in an alleyway, lit, but sparsely, by the shadows cast upon the mildewed façade from the dim streetlamps. Such a reading may be interpretively courageous and may adopt a provisional semantic presence of relative stability for its own purposes, but it is neither brave enough to venture upon any "resolution" of the problematics of κάθαρσις, nor is it singularly convinced to decide definitively upon the relationship between πράξις and μῦθος. Rather, it does not claim rights, since it is aware that textuality is *toujours déjà* interpretive: "Il roule (*kulindeitai*) ici et là ... comme qulqu'un qui a perdu ses droits, comme un hors-la-loi, un dévoyé, un mauvais garçon, un voyou ou un aventurier" (Derrida, 1972b: 165). Following Foucault (1969), the notion that new discursive regularities arise from existing and diverse discursive formations, enables the appropriation of variously marginal or central technical terminology of other discourses to be employed in yet another discourse in

varying degrees both of discordance and also of consonance between those discourses, and, subsequently, to be comprehended in tentative and provisional consonance and harmony within a discourse. A discourse solicits and scavenges, and, whilst it attempts to 'grid its specifications' and 'authoritatively guard them,' "lorsqu'on l'interroge à tous les coins de rue ... il ne sait pas plus répéter son origine" (Derrida, 1972b: 165).

This inability to 'repeat' with precision, with exact replication, splices pristine self-present signification, and disseminates the definitive semantic content of textual readings. But it does offer a temporary discursive *stasis* for the purposes of establishing momentary and transient protocols of a tragic poetic work, a *pied-a-tèrre*, which enables a tantalizing anticipatory 'forward reading' of some selected dramatic features in the Gospel of Mark, and extends a provisional invitation to a "modalité énonciative" (Foucault, 1969: 68 – 74). Thus, it is as an "enunciative modality" that Dame Iris Murdoch (1992), in her 1982 Gifford Lectures, occupied a voiced position, and appropriated a discursive regularity of the fourth century BCE – one fissile yet viscous, fragmented yet adhesive and tenacious, both in its initial accretion and in the *longue durée*.

Murdoch (1992: 99) summarized Aristotle's account in a seemingly uncontested manner: "Tragedy, he [Aristotle] tells us, is primarily an action or happening (*praxis*), requiring a story or plot (*mythos*), portrayal of character (*ethos*) and intelligent spoken presentation (*dianoia*)." But her summary is a reading amongst readings, and whether or not Aristotle "tells us" is a moot point. Moreover, Aristotle's use, perhaps 'exploitation' may be more apposite, of terminology in a

particular manner may reflect his own education, in that poetry both demands, and must be examined in terms of, its own protocols, since, for Aristotle, "elke wetenskap sy eie metode het en kragtens sy eie norme geëvalueer moet word. Die navorser moet dus steeds na die eiesoortige uitgangspunt (*archê*) van elke besondere wetenskap soek" (De Kock & Cilliers, 1991: xxv).

Furthermore, Aristotle scrutinized a real, observable world, rather than an ideal realm, like Plato. In fact, employing the notion of craft, as explored above, the poet, for Aristotle, is a craftsman amongst other craftsmen, only, in this instance, he is "a maker of plots" (emphasis added) (τὸν ποιητὴν … τῶν μύθων εἶναι δεῖ ποιητήν, *Poetics*, 1451b 27 – 28), and the generation of a specific discourse that defines, grids, authorizes, orders, and invites discursive appropriation concerns the craft of poetry, and here, more specifically, of tragic poetry, since "elke afsonderlike ding (die plant, die dier, en ook die tragedie) het 'n ideale vorm waarheen dit strewe en waarheen dit onderweg is" (De Kock & Cilliers, 1991: xxvi).

THE *POETICS*

Thus, Aristotle begins κατὰ φύσιν πρῶτον ἀπὸ τῶν πρώτων (1447a 12 – 13), and naturally refers to ἐποποιία, κωμῳδία, διθυραμβοποιητικὴ, αὐλητικὴ and κιθαριστικὴ, in addition to τραγῳδία (1447a 13 – 15). All of these assume mimetic forms – πᾶσαι τυγχάνουσιν οὖσαι μιμήσεις (1447a 15 – 16) – and produce their imitation in rhythm, speech, and in melody (ἐν ῥυθμῷ καὶ λόγῳ καὶ ἁρμονίᾳ, 1447a 22), but they do so either distinctly or in combinations (χωρὶς ἢ μεμιγμένοις, 1447a 23). One of the branches of the mimetic arts that employs all of

the aspects mentioned (αἷ πᾶσι χρῶνται τοῖς εἰρημένοις, 1447b 24 – 25) is tragedy.

These mimeticists represent actions (μιμοῦνται οἱ μιμούμενοι πράττοντας, 1448a 1), which may be elevated and serious or trivial and common (σπουδαίους ἢ φαύλους, 1448a 2), a distinction which separates tragedy from comedy (ἐν αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ διαφορᾷ καὶ ἡ τραγῳδία πρὸς τὴν κωμῳδίαν διέστηκεν, 1448a 16 – 17). The manner of representation may employ both pronouncements and narrative description (ἀπαγγέλλοντα, ἢ ἕτερόν τι γιγνόμενον, 1448a 21 – 22), narrative without variation (μὴ μεταβάλλοντα, 1448a 22 – 23), or only performance (πάντας ὡς πράττοντας, 1448a 23). *Mimesis* is both congenital to, and enjoyable for, all (σύμφυτον … τὸ χαίρειν τοῖς μιμήμασι πάντας, 1448b 5 & 8 – 9), and is natural for human beings to undertake (κατὰ φύσιν δὲ ὄντος ἡμῖν τοῦ μιμεῖσθαι, 1448b 20). The choice between the portrayal of noble characters and their actions (τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμοῦντο πράξεις καὶ τὰς τῶν τοιούτων, 1448b 25 – 26) by the more devout scriptwriters (σεμνότεροι), or of the actions of common people (τὰς τῶν φαύλων, 1448b 26) by the less worthy authors (εὐτελέστεροι, 1448b 26), relates the choice between the noble genres (epic, tragedy) and the less noble genres (comedy, iambic verse) to the character of the poet and his mimetic creations.

This initial emphasis upon *mimesis* is significant, because it signals the development of a finer lexical definition within a specific discursive formation. Whilst "poetry, like painting, sculpture, instrumental music, and dance, is an art of 'representing' human characters and actions" (Ford, 2002: 95), tragic *mimesis* is enactively expressive, "manifesting a human capacity to model and imaginatively enact the

possibilities of experience" (Halliwell, 2005: 402). Aristotle removes the delimitation of *mimesis* from static representation, and transgresses the boundaries of the mimetic arts[57] in two ways. First, 'reality' or traditional myths are reordered with licence, and therefore "against the Platonic castigation of mimesis as falsehood, he is adumbrating a concept of *fiction* which allows the poet's stance towards reality to be more oblique" (Halliwell, 1986: 133); and second, the dynamism of poetic *mimesis* in its portrayal of action and character permits an audience responsiveness and identification on a number of levels, which themselves are non-static but progress impactively and transformatively both during and following a performance, a matter not insignificant to performing the gospel in its liturgical and ethical dimensions. But lest one be drawn too quickly to the ethical import of poetry, there is an extended aspect to the participatory experience which is suggested by the *sui generis* use of *mimesis*. The tradition emphasized by Aristophanes that poets teach and also shape the moral formation of character, summarized in Pluto's injunction to Aeschylus at the end of *Frogs*: σῴζε πόλιν τὴν ἡμετέραν γνώμαις ἀγαθαῖς, καὶ παίδευσον τοὺς ἀνοήτους· πολλοὶ δ' εἰσίν· (ll. 1501 – 1503),[58] and criticized by Plato because, rather, of the falsehoods they convey, is contrasted with Aristotle's appropriation of *mimesis* for his own literary purpose, which centres on how representation operates in poetic performative works. Dynamic *mimesis*, that enactive and influential ostension of action, is attractive. This is not mere

[57] Without perceiving the manner in which discourses form, scholars may accuse Aristotle of misrepresentation, as David (2006: 25) does: "The fact ... that Aristotle's conception of tragedy as a kind of mimetic or representational art, combined with his neglect of its roots as a species of χορεία, is symptomatic of a distortion of the poetic realities as they are found in the whole train of poets from Homer to Euripides."

[58] Bennett (1997) notes the difficulty of undertaking quantitative and/or qualitative research on the impact of a dramatic work upon the audience. The matter may be of more relevance in societies in which agitprop theatre is employed as a form of political protest. The pertinent issue concerns the degree to which, for example, protest theatre influenced audiences in their political thought and social action during the years of apartheid in South Africa, which is explored in a little more detail in Chapter Four.

observation, but purposeful enticement of the intellect of the spectator into the possible world of the drama, so that "the spectator is guided from the features of the figure, as they are represented in the image, and through a cognitive process, to identification with the actual object" (Tsitsiridis, 2005: 443).

Thus, in employing μίμησις, Aristotle generates a technical term, or, perhaps more exactly, a specific usage of a term, which is constrained, rather than defined, by an incipient discursive regularity. In the technical lexicon, its definitional status is supported by increasingly specialized classificatory demarcation and bounded by rites of entry and authoritative usage (cf. Foucault, 1969). But, at another level, within the world of the drama, and generated by the dramatic text and its *mise en scène*, it engenders an instability, it is errant, and attracts spectator identification. On the one hand, the dynamism of *mimesis*, although a foundational term within a technical discourse on drama, forges an inexorable concatenation of key terms within the *Poetics*: it is the μίμησις of a μῦθος, evident in τὰ ἤθη, which reflects the πρᾶξις; on the other hand, in its errancy and deviancy, μίμησις breaches the fourth wall, and causes ἔλεος καὶ φόβος, and engenders a κάθαρσις. Thus, Aristotle's understanding of tragedy "correlates the 'internal' requirements of dramatic construction with the emotional effects of plays on audiences" (Halliwell, 2005: 402). Therefore, from inceptive moments of improvised spontaneity (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτοσχεδιαστικῆς, 1449a 9 – 10),[59] and following after the example of the leaders of the dithyramb (ἀπὸ τῶν ἐξαρχόντων τὸν διθύραμβον, 1449a 10 – 11), or, in Foucauldian and Derridean terms, through liminal border raids of pilfer and plunder

[59] The origins of tragedy remain a matter of scholarly dispute. For the claim of that Icarius dressed in the skin of a slain goat, who was eating the new shoots of his vines, and danced around them, see Davidson (2007: 293); cf. p. 34, n. 14.

of proximate and distant lexical *réseaux*, tragedy adjusted and transformed, restructured and reformed itself; or, more idiomatically, structured and fashioned itself in terms of its own creative activity, until it reached a sophisticated (Plato's critique is perceptible in this word) status, which was its true nature, and, for Aristotle, was no longer subject to transformative improvements (καὶ πολλὰς μεταβολὰς … ἡ τραγῳδία ἐπαύσατο, ἐπεὶ ἔσχε τὴν αὑτῆς φύσιν, 1449a 14 – 15). Here, for Aristotle, it ought to have remained, retaining this exalted and excellent form (see Green 1994: 50), when τὰ ἐνόντα καὶ τὰ ἁρμόττοντα (1450b 5) are uttered; however, in contrast, in Aristotle's contemporary milieu, characters employ rhetoric (οἱ δὲ νῦν ῥητορικῶς, 1450b 7 – 8). But this gradual augmentation (κατὰ μικρὸν ηὐξήθη, 1449a 13), whilst practically ostended and publicly evident to an audience in performance, simultaneously is generative of a theoretical discourse about the art of dramatic fiction. Playwrights instrumental in the propagation of an influential classificatory inventory included Aeschylus, who employed two actors rather than one (ἐξ ἑνὸς εἰς δύο, 1449a 16), reduced the part of the chorus (τὰ τοῦ χοροῦ ἠλάττωσε, 1449a 17), and forged the domination of speech (τὸν λόγον πρωταγωνιστεῖν παρεσκεύασεν, 1449a 17 – 18), and Sophocles, who added a third actor and scenery (τρεῖς δὲ καὶ σκηνογραφίαν, 1449a 18 – 19). Superficial and insubstantial plots, which were accompanied by ludicrous speeches, were no longer employed (ἐκ μικρῶν μύθων καὶ λέξεως γελοίας, 1449a 19 – 20), and the superiority and prestige of tragedy was recognized (ἀπεσεμνύνθη, 1449a 20). In addition to other elements, the appropriate meter of speech, the iambic trimeter (μάλιστα γὰρ λεκτικὸν τῶν μέτρων τὸ ἰαμβεῖόν ἐστιν, 1449a 24 – 25), became the principle meter of tragic dramas, and the number, and/or length or, perhaps, even complexity (ἔτι δὲ ἐπεισοδίων πλήθη, 1449a 28), of the episodes was changed so

that an intentional coherence was maintained. Indeed, with reference to Foucault (1969), it is these mutations of greater of lesser innovation, and which were observable in performances, that accrete to constitute an expository source of future dramatic writing.

Aristotle notes that the history of the development of comedy has been lost, because it did not attract sufficient attention to be documented (ἡ δὲ κωμῳδία διὰ τὸ μὴ σουδάζεσθαι ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἔλαθεν, 1449a 38 – 1449b 1), whilst that of tragedy has been preserved in the common memory (οὐ λελήθασιν, 1449a 38). And although tragedy appropriated the practice in epic of dealing with matters of serious import (μίμησις εἶναι σπουδαίων ἠκολούθησεν, 1449b 10), in contrast to tragedy, epic 'tells' but does not 'show,' and the metre is a simple one (τὸ μέτρον ἁπλοῦν ἔχειν καὶ ἀπαγγελίαν εἶναι, 1449b 11). Epic is without the constraint of time, which is one of its distinguishing features (ἀόριστος τῷ χρόνῳ καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρει, 1449b 14); and although tragedy initially is similarly structured (καίτοι τὸ πρῶτον ὁμοίως … ἐποίουν, 1449b 14 – 15), with regard to length or duration of the action (τῷ μήκει, 1449b 12), the norm was soon established to endeavour to reach its *dénouement* within a single revolution of the sun or even in more restricted time (πειρᾶται ὑπὸ μίαν περίοδον ἡλίου εἶναι ἢ μικρὸν ἐξαλλάττειν, 1449b12 – 13).

In these comparisons and contrasts between the two genres, Aristotle is sharpening, defining, and delimiting the boundaries of tragic drama, and, of course simultaneously, sharpening, defining, and delimiting the boundaries of epic and comedy. But the borders of definition haemorrhage, and, as the connotation suggests, the protocols of definition ride on the back of the transgressing φαρμακός,

excluded but "reguliérement mis en place par la communauté" (Derrida, 1972b: 152), a recognition that Aristotle appears to share, since that which epic possesses is also the property of tragedy (ὑπάρχει τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ, 1449b 19); but not all of that which constitutes tragedy is present in epic (οὐ πάντα ἐν τῇ ἐποποιίᾳ, 1449b 19 – 20.)

With restrictions and qualifications in mind, Aristotle closes in on tragedy: A tragic drama represents an action that is serious, complete, and of importance (ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης, 1449b 24 – 25), in language that has been embellished distinctly and specifically in each section of its forms (ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ χωρὶς ἑκάστῳ τῶν εἰδῶν ἐν τοῖς μορίοις, 1449b25 – 26) – whether that of speech or of melody – and in a dramatic rather than a narrative mode (δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι᾽ ἀπαγγελίας, 1449b 26 – 27), engenders pity and fear, and, subsequently, finally achieves the purification of such anguish and emotion (δι᾽ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν, 1449b 27 – 28). But, such definitional closure is premature, and vexatious terms now jostle for space and power in their quest for greater terminological exactitude and hegemony, and, as a consequence, they also extend interpretive options to the reader, and thus the *traditio* continues in subsequent hermeneutic inquisitions, suspicions, and choices.

Immediately, however, it must be noted, once again, that the persistent attempts to distance Aristotle from the performative nature of dramatic texts are contested by Aristotle himself, since, without pause, he adverts to visible ostension: Since actors undertake representative actions, chiefly and by necessity, a constituent part of a tragedy would involve the arrangement of visible aspects – that is, tragic drama is

unable to omit performative aspects (ἐπεὶ δὲ πράττοντες ποιοῦνται τὴν μίμησιν, πρῶτον μὲν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἂν εἴη τι μόριον τραγῳδίας ὁ τῆς ὄψεως κόσμος, 1449b31 – 33).[60]

But, of more significance is the chain generated by the distinctive application of μίμησις, which interpolates a hierarchy of terms with vital conceptual import, as Dame Iris Murdoch (1992) summarily pointed out above, and which is germane to this study. Soliciting, even seducing, the definition of tragedy is the notion of πρᾶξις. Aristotle informs us that ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως (1449b 24), when defining tragedy, and, more exactly, when defining the type of action that constitutes the subject of a tragic work: the action is serious, of importance, elevated. This, controversially *upostatic*, concept of the emanative dynamic of a tragic drama is replicated twice in quick succession, when noting that the action will be acted out or performed by actors – ἐπεὶ δὲ πράξεώς ἐστι μίμησις, πράττεται δὲ ὑπὸ τινῶν πραττόντων (1449b 36 – 37) – and when referring to the μῦθος – that ἔστιν δὲ τῆς μὲν πράξεως ὁ μῦθος ἡ μίμησις (1450a 3 – 4). Thus, from a wide field, *mimesis* is appropriated by the narrower pasture of literary theory, and then, subsequently, by the demarcated patch of the theory of drama, and germinates both its own, as well as other, hybrid auxiliaries, as the image of Foucault's (1969) tree of discursive possibilities illustrated.

[60] The translation of πρῶτον μὲν ἐξ ἀνάγκης as "chiefly, and by necessity," seems to emphasize a defining aspect of dramatic works, namely, their performative nature. The practical nature of Aristotle's treatises, and not simply this one on poetry, is emphasized by Hamilton Fyfe (1940: xiv), who, with reference to the *Poetics*, states that "before tacking in the *Poetics* the theory of poetry and drama, he [Aristotle] compiled a list of plays produced at Athens with the titles of the plays and the names of the author, producer and actors, and the winners of prizes."

Primary amongst them then, it is argued, is πρᾶξις. First, there are no variant readings to the above citations: the one that engenders some concern occurs later, in 1450a 16, and demands closer scrutiny. Second, a series of linked terms is circumscribed and hierarchized by the πρᾶξις, which is mimeticized. Whilst, for the writer of a tragedy, the action is the informing rationale of the μῦθος; for the viewer, it unfolds in a proleptic manner and, ultimately, is viewed as a construct of the μῦθος. The πρᾶξις resides outside the μῦθος for both author and spectator: known and inscribed by the former in the drama; perceived in, and the product of, the performance or of a reading by the latter. The μῦθος displays the πρᾶξις, which, both in its present absence and its absent presence, constitutes *toujours déjà* a known, and yet anticipatory, suspense. Thus, as Aristotle states (1450a 38), the μῦθος is the ψυχή of the tragic work as an ostensible drama, and the use of ψυχή, which is qualified by οἷον, arguably, ought not to transgress the performative *raison d'être* of playwriting, but neither does it stand alone, but is contrasted with τὰ ἤθη (1450a 39).

It is this sublation of πρᾶξις for which Kitto (1939: 104), with some prevarication, and writing primarily about Aeschylus, reaches, when he states that

> [i]t is not the characters that shape the plot either in Aeschylus or in Sophocles. Nor is it the story … once it has been seen that he [Aeschylus] is neither dramatizing a story nor making a drama about individuals of a certain kind in a certain situation, but about man and the gods, and certain verities of the human universe ... (1939: 104 & 106).

These "verities" were foregrounded, so that Aeschylus's "interest in character was limited … [and the] … elaboration of character would only distract attention from what is really going on; therefore it is kept to a minimum …" (Kitto, 1939: 103), and, some twelve years later, Kitto (1951: 185 – 186) is more succinct: "All Greek plays are built on a single conception, and nothing that does not directly contribute to it is admitted." This thematic singularity coheres with Aristotle's emphasis on an informing action which is given shape in a plot. Without the action, little coherence will be forged in the dramatic writing, and the lack of fidelity to the action causes episodic incoherence.[61] Halliwell (1986: 141 – 142) perspicaciously observes that

> … the 'action' (*praxis*) is the structure of the play's events viewed as a dimension of the events themselves; it is the pattern discernible in the 'actions and life' which the poet dramatizes. As such, it can be described as the object or content of the plot-structure (*muthos*), which can in turn be understood to be the design or significant organization of the work of art.

The prominence of an heroic tragic character, who attracts critical attention and occludes the foundational intentionality of the action, and who is afflicted by an ἁμαρτία, may be less apt to the 'monumental' examination of the *Poetics* than to the period

[61] In Holt's novel, *The Walled Garden* (1990), which has been referred to above (n. 36), the importance of a central action, although here in comedy, is evident. Eupolis, after returning from the war against the Syracusans, visits his farm in Pallene: "While I was busy with my vetch, I started work on a new Comedy. It virtually crept up on me when I wasn't looking, for I had not intended to enter anything for a while; but before I knew where I was I had thought of a splendid entry for a chorus of sheep, and after that there was no stopping me. Of course I needed a Message, and I couldn't really think of one. The City was a very different place now, after the disaster, and the old themes no longer seemed appropriate" (Holt, 1990: 442).

> when Romanticism became the new orthodoxy … [and] … people turned to those parts of the *Poetics* which seemed to promise human psychological interest – to *katharsis*, and to the dramatic character who shall strike us as like ourselves, and to the idea of a fatal flaw or blunder (*hamartia*). They turned most insistently to the tragic hero (Jones, 1962: 12).

An interiority, seamlessly introjected from a later vantage point, demands a mandate of proscriptions, more especially with respect to the will, and, in particular, to our vespertine readings of the *Antigone* (to which we shall return), because

> even if it would appear to us that there is nothing more obvious than an individual will, there are no classical philosophical texts which speak of such a will, just as there are no appearances of the will as such in classical literature, and not even in Greek tragedy, for the Greek tragic hero or heroine is not a uniquely singular individual, and never does that hero or heroine engage in an interior *agon* or conflict (Altizer, 1990: 120).

Thus, subsequently, Jones (1962: 18) launches a trenchant attack on those who insistently foreground character rather than action. His own words require citation:

> Notice the helpless and almost lunatic fixity of the sober academic comment (one could cite a hundred like it) that Aeschylus's *Suppliant Women* "represent the primitive character of Greek tragedy. It has no 'hero.' Chorus and heroine are one;" whereas his *Seven against Thebes* "presents us with the first proper hero in the history of tragic art." (What is a proper hero?) This is

> the environment of the long sterile debate as to whether Creon is the real hero of Antigone's play and Odysseus of Ajax's, and Clytemnestra the heroine of Agamemnon's; while *The Women of Trachis* has been pulled in two between Deianeira and Heracles; one or other has to be granted the heroic role; we must make our minds up.

But, characters are the product of an arrangement in the μῦθος of the πρᾶξις, and the

> interpolation of the tragic hero is the first step towards re-writing Aristotle's treatise, and a decisive one in that the most elementary loyalty to his principles is surrendered as soon as the hero appears and attracts to himself, as he automatically does, the idea of tragic error (Jones, 1962: 46).

Aylen (1964: 154 – 155) is as insistent in asserting that "all talk of the 'tragic hero' is irrelevant" and that the Classical Greek tragedies "are not plays of 'character,'"[62] and, in a similar fashion to Jones (1962) invoking Romantic individualism as engendering the focus upon a single character, Aylen (1964: 247) states:

> When we see Greek tragedies we ask of the actions represented, Was it right, Was it wrong? How was it right, how was it wrong? And we shall be shown how to make up our minds. All the poetry leads towards insight. In the

[62] Jebb's (1841 – 1905) influence on character-centred approaches to the Classical Greek tragedies ought to be noted, since he held the Regius Chair of Greek at Cambridge and produced editions of the plays of Sophocles (see Rehm, 2004: 43 – 44). However, the realization of a changing conception of character may lessen the perceived foregrounding of this aspect by Victorian and early twentieth century commentators, because a notion of 'character stability' may have been more prevalent during this period and may have cohered less obtrusively with the conception of a unitary πρᾶξις (see Budelmann, 2004: 35).

> nineteenth century we are asked to become involved with a surge of emotion in the hero's misfortunes ...

and, adverting to the practice where "the Greeks never used more than three actors in tragedy," Aylen (1964: 29) is able to assert that "they preferred to emphasize basic pattern at the expense of the details of characterization."

But, *toujours déjà*, and not simply since a more 'individualistic understanding' of the human person, readings of the *Poetics* have been reliant upon various types of interpretive translations and the 'misprisions' of readers, no matter how diligent, and whether or not they have access to Classical Greek. The matter, one avers, is less one of a 'correct' reading of Aristotle's lecture notes – and they do appear to be notes – than of having access both to the slippages in the 'original' and also to the subsequent dispersed interpretive readings. Without this, rather hesitant and uncertain, perspective, the peremptory conflation of 'action' and 'plot,' or the inability to distinguish between 'action' and 'actions,' results in some dubiously 'definitive' pronouncements:

> Aristotle ... claims in his *Poetics*, [that] the most important point of drama is the plot and the connection between the plot and the characters. We find this same emphasis on character and action at points in the dialogue when reason seems to fail (McCoy, 2008: 18).

Citing Aristotle, Goodkin (1991: 39 – 40) adverts to the lack of congruity between tragedy as the μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης

(*Poetics*, 1449b 24 – 25), and the "middle case" of the "tragic hero," who is "neither purely good nor purely bad, [and] seems to be defined as an average taken between extremes, an example of the ethical middle, a being who is in no essential way distinguishable ... from the collectivity," and thus he perceives those resident uncertainties that plague the act of reading. The reference to, rather than the denial of, these problematical assertions is of more, and not of less, assistance. Referring to the possible explanation that "perhaps Aristotle means that the hero himself is average, though his action is good," Goodkin (1991: 40) continues that "such explanations do nothing to efface the ambiguity of Aristotle's attitude toward the tragic hero, who is simultaneously meant to be like us, that is, average, and better than us." This exposition contributes both to elucidate the dramatic character of the πρωταγωνιστής, for whom 'pity' must be felt and 'fear' experienced, in order for the κάθαρσις to occur, and also contributes to maintain the distinction between *praxis* and character that Jones (1962) so vehemently defends and that causes Halliwell (1986; and evident in 2005: 404) some equivocation.

In fact, the disputed reading of πράξεων for πράξεως in the fourteenth-century manuscript, Riccardianus 46, in line 1450a 16, may draw more attention than is necessary in this contest of superior interpretational insight.[63] First, Riccardianus 46 is later than Parisinus 1741, and, for that reason, it may be preferable to accept the latter, as Halliwell (1995 [1999]) does, rather than the former reading, which is employed by Kassel (1965: 11). Second, before this occurrence, Aristotle has stated

[63] In the text, Kassel (1965: 11) reads "πράξεων καὶ βίου," and notes that "πράξεων" is found in Riccardianus 46, saec. XIV, whilst "πράξεως" is found in Parisinus 1741, saec. X/XI, which is earlier than Riccardianus and Guilelmi codex graecus deperditus. In Parisinus, lines 1450a 15 – 16 could be rendered: "Tragedy is an imitation not of human beings but of an action and of life;" but Riccardianus is translated: "Tragedy is an imitation not of human beings but of actions and of life." If the text employed by Kassel (1965) is appropriated, the possible implication is that tragedy mimeticizes the actions of human beings, rather than revealing an action through the ostended actions of characters.

twice that πρᾶξις is foundational to tragedy (1449b 24; 1449b 36). Third, and significantly, immediately before dealing with the μῦθος and its arrangement, Aristotle re-emphasizes that ἔστιν δὲ τῆς μὲν πράξεως ὁ μῦθος ἡ μίμησις (1450a 3 – 4). Fourth, the contested reading is contextually explicable, because it follows the listing of the μέρη ἕξ (1450a 8) of tragedy, and they concern that which is <u>internal</u> to the tragic drama. Fifth, the assertion that action is essential to tragedy, whilst character is not (ἄνευ μὲν πράξεως οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο τραγῳδία, ἄνευ δὲ ἠθῶν γένοιτ' ἄν, 1450a 24) evinces evidence that, for Aristotle, the πρᾶξις of a dramatic work is not the same as the πράξεις of the actors as they appropriate the characters in a dramatic work. And even if, as Eagleton (2003: 27) concedes, "what grips the imagination is the death of the hero," he admits that the sometime professor of drama at Cambridge, Raymond "Williams is right to insist that 'the ordinary tragic action is what happens *through* the hero.'" Characterization is a feature of the composition of a tragic dramatic work and focuses the emotions of the audience, but the action is both the possibility of a play – it is its inaugural promise[64] – and its possible final reading. As Aristotle turns to the internal organization of the action in the μῦθος, so may one turn to Narrative Theory, in order to seek some assistance and, perhaps, some clarity about the relationship between the action of a dramatic work and the plot. Arguably,

[64] It ought to be noted that it was Theophrastus (372 – 287 BCE), "Aristotle's favourite pupil and successor as head of the Peripatetic School" (Carlson, 1984; 1993: 21), who defined tragedy as a "'change in a hero's fortunes' [*ἡρωικῆς τύχης περίστασις*, Diomedes, *De Poematibus*, 8.1], and it may be that we have here a rarely exact parting of the ways in the late fourth century, with Aristotle telling his students that Tragedy is not an imitation of human beings, and with those students – or some of them – unmoved and sceptical in the light of their experience of Euripidean creations like Medea: at a time, too, when the visible presence of the stage-figure is becoming newly and 'heroically' magnificent, and virtuoso acting is on the increase" (Jones, 1962: 276; emphasis added; also see Carlson, 1984; 1993: 21). Steiner (2003: 6 & 80 ff.), in the 2001 – 2002 *Charles Eliot Norton Lectures* at Harvard, illustrates the contest and betrayal between teacher and pupil in the bitter relationship between Husserl and Heidegger, whilst Neel (1988: 173 – 174), in his Derridean critique of Plato's understanding of writing, notes that "since they [our students] can never speak with our voice absolutely, they must silence us in order to have a place to speak at all. Our discourse, what we would write if we held the pen, falls silent, allowing the student a space in which to write. Derrida writes this way all the time by writing through and even inside other texts." Perhaps Aristotle's relative silence or economy on the expatiation of the more exact relationship between action and plot has offered space and voice to his pupil, Theophrastus, as, indeed, to his other pupils, and his pupils' pupils.

it may be suggested that Genette's *histoire*, or the *fabula* of the Russian Formalists – that is, the story removed from the time and space of its diegetic recounting – corresponds to the action; whilst the plot – that is, the textual arrangement of the events – is not dissimilar to the *recit* or the *suzet*[65] (see, Webster, 1996: 51 – 52; Rimmon-Kenan, 1983: 3; Eagleton, 1983: 105). The ordering of the narrative text, and, by inference, the structuring of the dramatic performance, is the province of the *récit* or *suzet*, an imaginatively, or literally, sensory experience that produces a κάθαρσις (Halliwell, 1995 [1999]: 18 – 19; Cooper, 1963: 31 – 32).[66] If, for Aristotle, the plot is the soul of the tragedy (ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγῳδίας, 1450a 38), the action is the soul's kindling genesis, which, if the drama unfolds with a fidelity to the πράξις, it will be "there" in its authorial creation, and evident and perceptible to the reader or viewer, even the subject of discussion and debate, at the τέλος (see Butcher, 1936: 2).

Words, as generative of the possible world of the drama and the dramatic experience, command the important, elevated, noble, and accomplished (σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος, 1449b 24 – 25) nature of the tragic work to exercise care in the use of language (ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ, 1449b 25), in order that the enactment (δρώντων,

[65] The spelling here appears more widely accepted amongst English-speaking literary theorist, although Elam (1980) employs "*sjuzet*."

[66] The following caution ought to be noted: "Die ooreenstemming tussen *fabula* en *praxis* blyk nie so eksplisiet nie omdat Aristoteles nêrens sê dat die handelinge wat nageboots word, mekaar kronologies opvolg nie …" (De Kock and Cilliers, 1991: 135); whilst Elam's (1980: 119 ff.) fairly wide use of "*fabula*" is apposite, although he writes from a visual rather than compositional perspective: "It is clear that the *fabula*, being an abstraction from the *sjuzet*/plot as such, is a paraphrase of a pseudo-narrative kind, made, for example, by a spectator or critic in recounting the 'story' of the drama. It is usually the prime object of the spectator's hypothesizing in witnessing the representation: he anticipates events, attempts to 'bridge' incidents whose connection is not immediately clear and generally endeavours to infer the overall frame of action from the bits of information he is fed. In trying to project the possible world of the drama, the spectator is principally concerned with piecing together the underlying logic of the action."

1449b 26) of the tragic work causes an affective and transformative identification (περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν, 1449b27 – 28).

Internal to the tragic dramatic text are plot (μῦθος), character (ἦθη), diction (λέξις), intention (διάνοια), spectacle (ὄψις), and the musical setting of the choral odes (μελοποιία) (1450a 9 – 10). Of these μέρη, the ability to order the events of the mimetic creation in a tragic composition of quality is the most significant (μέγιστον δὲ τούτων ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν πραγμάτων σύστασις, 1450a 15), where, as Aristotle stated earlier, the plot is the composition and combination of events (τὴν σύνθεσιν τῶν πραγμάτων, 1450a 4 – 5).

Expanding slightly on his hierarchy of the tragic dramatic composition, Aristotle again states that the plot is primary and may be said to be the soul of tragedy (ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ οἷον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγῳδίας, 1450a 38 – 39). Second is the matter of characterization (δεύτερον δὲ τὰ ἦθη, 1450a 39), which reveals the possibility of choice (ὃ δηλοῖ τὴν προαίρεσιν, 1450b 8 – 9), and is displayed by actors, whose *raison d'être* is to reveal the action (ἔστιν τε μίμησις πράξεως καὶ διὰ ταύτην μάλιστα τῶν πραττόντων, 1450b 3 – 4). Perhaps perceptible in the third feature of tragic composition is an adversative stance to the tangential asides in comedy, where the ability of the dramatist is tested with regard to the cohesion of intentionality and apposite writing (τοῦτο δέ ἐστιν τὸ λέγειν δύνασθαι τὰ ἐνόντα καὶ τὰ ἁρμόττοντα, 1450b 4 – 5), an ability that will be demonstrated in the suitability of characterization that will be ostended (διάνοια δὲ ἐν οἷς ἀποδεικνύουσί τι ὡς ἔστιν ἢ ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν ἢ καθόλου τι ἀποφαίνονται, 1450b

11 – 12).[67] Fourth, the diction in the speeches[68] entails the selection of apposite words (λέξιν εἶναι τὴν διὰ τῆς ὀνομασίας ἑρμηνείαν, 1450b 13 – 14) by the playwright, whilst the choral odes provide the most felicitous embellishment to the drama (ἡ μελοποιία μέγιστον τῶν ἡδυσμάτων, 1450b 16). Exhibitionist scenic stagecraft receives little approbation from Aristotle: ἡ δὲ ὄψις ψυχαγωγικὸν μέν, ἀτεχνότατον δὲ καὶ ἥκιστα οἰκεῖον τῆς ποιητικῆς (*Poetics*, 1450b 16 – 17).[69] Rather, no matter what its appeal, spectacle tends to "upstage" the playwright but, at most, is ancillary to tragedy (ἔτι δὲ κυριωτέρα περὶ τὴν ἀπεργασίαν τῶν ὄψεων ἡ τοῦ σκευοποιοῦ τέχνη τῆς τῶν ποιητῶν ἐστιν, 1450b 19 – 20).[70]

If a tragedy is to be whole, a beginning, a middle, and an end must be evident (ὅλον δέ ἐστιν τὸ ἔχον ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσον καὶ τελευτήν, 1450b 26 – 27), and, furthermore, for Aristotle, carefully constructed plots neither begin nor end randomly (δεῖ ἄρα τοὺς συνεστῶτας εὖ μύθους μήθ' ὁπόθεν ἔτυχεν ἄρχεσθαι μήθ' ὅπου ἔτυχε τελευτᾶν, 1450b 32 – 33), a matter appropriated with particular importance with

[67] Intentionality and purpose is suggested in the term διάνοια, which is linked to ostension, because Aristotle may be presenting a "nuwe gedagte, te wete dat die handelende persone sekere kwaliteite moet hê danksy hul karakter en denke" (De Kock and Cilliers 1991: 133). Therefore, "intentionality" extends to the actor's portrayal of a character, as De Kock and Cilliers (1991: 136) later note: "Dit word [denke (*dianoia*)] dus openbaar deur 'n figuur se woorde waardeur hy 'n sekere houding by die ander dramatiese figure en by die toeskouers teweeg wil bring." Halliwell (1986: 154 – 156), not without cause, perceives no intrinsically aware ironic slippage between the attributes of a character and his utterances and gestures; however, the possibility of an ironizing of intentionality, which is not irrelevant to the Gospel of Mark, may be suggested in the plots of complex recognition (*Poetics* 1455a 12 – 16; cf. Ford, 2002: 85). In addition, connotative citational play cannot be neutralized (cf. Derrida, 1972b: 111). In contrast, Bilezikian (1977: 112) appears to abstract the notion of *dianoia*, and label it the "intellectual content" of the drama.

[68] Kassel (1965: 12) notes that τῶν μὲν λόγων is included in cod. Parisinus 1741, saec. X/XI, cod. Riccardianus 46, saec. XIV, and Guilelmi codex graecus deperditus, but that it is omitted in translatio Arabica ab Abú Bišr saec. X ad syriacum exemplar (saec. IX?) confecta, e versione latina Jaroslai Tkatsch.

[69] This rendering is contained in cod. Parisinus 1741, saec. X/XI, whereas in cod. Riccardianus 46, saec. XIV αἱ ὄψεις is found (see critical apparatus, Kassel, 1965: 13).

[70] Hutton's (1982: 52) somewhat free translation reads: "Spectacle … is … least germane to the art of poetry. For tragedy fulfils its function even without a public performance and actors, and, besides, in the realization of spectacular effects the art of the property man counts for more than the art of the poets."

reference to dramatic Mark in the following chapter. Since many of the fifth-century BCE Athenian tragic dramas were based upon the common store of generally known legends, the matters of beginnings and endings of plays – the former, perhaps, more significant than the latter (as noted in *Frogs* above, by Euripides accusation of Aeschylus' use of a silent πρωταγωνιστής at the beginning of his plays) – demanded the special attention of the playwright. The challenge was how to be innovative in the inception and conclusion of the drama's internal dynamic without contradicting, or, at least, abusing, a traditional myth (Roberts, 2005: 136 – 137). The majority of conclusions to classical tragedies are grave and earnest, with a prevalence of concluding exequies and their attendant lamentations, a feature not absent from the Gospel of Mark. As Walsh (2008: 7) laconically observes, tragedy provides "a profound space for acknowledging loss."

The plot of a tragedy is to be both apprehended and also recalled with ease (τοῦτο δὲ εὐσύνοπτον εἶναι … τοῦτο δὲ εὐμνημόνευτον εἶναι, 1451a 4 – 6), and the durational limits are to accord with the probable or necessary successive transformation from fortune to misfortune or from misfortune to fortune (ὡς δὲ ἁπλῶς διορίσαντας εἰπεῖν, ἐν ὅσῳ μεγέθει κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἐφεξῆς γιγνομένων συμβαίνει εἰς εὐτυχίαν ἐκ δυστυχίας ἢ ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν μεταβάλλειν, ἱκανὸς ὅρος ἐστὶν τοῦ μεγέθους, 1451a 11 – 15).

Thus, Aristotle requires the length of a play to cohere with the orderly outworking of the plot, and it is the plot that must be single and complete, which, significantly, is not the same as the exclusive focus upon one character. In fact, he states that emphasis upon one character does not ensure coherence and singularity (Μῦθος δ' ἐστὶν εἷς

οὐχ ὥσπερ τινὲς οἴονται ἐὰν περὶ ἕνα ᾖ ... ἡ μία μίμησις ἑνός ἐστιν, οὕτω καὶ τὸν μῦθον, ἐπεὶ πράξεως μίμησίς ἐστι, μιᾶς τε εἶναι καὶ ταύτης ὅλης, 1451a 16 – 17;1451a 30 – 32), a gentle chastisement of the singular focus upon the πρωταγωνιστής in the Gospel of Mark, whose shift to the margin may foreground both the plot, and more significantly, the central tragic action of the Gospel.

Aristotle, perhaps overhearing Thucydides, draws a distinction between playwrights and historians: the former are the purveyors of the imaginative art of probability, whilst the latter deal with actuality. The remit of the τέχνη of the dramatist permits of that 'probability or necessity' which allows the universally recognizable (καθόλου, 1451b 7) words or gestures that a character in such a similar situation would utter or enact, rather than the factual circumstances and actions of, for example, Alcibiades (ὅτι οὐ τὸ τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τοῦτο ποιητοῦ ἔργον ἐστίν, ἀλλ' οἷα ἂν γένοιτο καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ... τί Ἀλκιβιάδης ἔπραξεν ἢ τί ἔπαθεν, 1451a 36 – 38; 1451b 11),[71] and the stock of traditional stories, which most often inform dramatic works, is not necessarily their essential material (ὥστ' οὐ πάντως εἶναι ζητητέον τῶν παραδεδομένων μύθων, 1451b 23 – 24).[72] And, in contrast to the lyric poets, the playwright, who is practising the dramatic craft, focuses upon the mimetic nature of his own τέχνη, which is to make plots that involve an enactive mode (δῆλον οὖν ἐκ τούτων ὅτι τὸν ποιητὴν μᾶλλον τῶν

[71] Halliwell (1986: 284) endeavours to elevate Aristotle's poetic intentions, by "attributing to it the power to dramatize general truths about human actions," which invokes "the spectator's possibility to reflect upon and to lead himself *inductively* to something beyond empirical data" (Tsitsiridis, 2005: 446).

[72] Croally (2005: 67) notes four exceptions, three of which (*The Phoenician Women*, *The Capture of Miletus* by Phrynichus, and *The Persians* by Aeschylus) were based on current events, whilst one was entirely fictional (*The Antheus* by Agathon, which, as Aristotle notes, in spite of this, remains pleasurable, *Poetics*, 1451b 21 – 23).

μύθων εἶναι δεῖ ποιητὴν ἢ τῶν μέτρων, ὅσῳ ποιητὴς κατὰ τὴν μιμησίν ἐστιν, μιμεῖται δὲ τὰς πράξεις, 1451b 27 – 29).[73]

But whether the plots rely on the tradition or are more innovative, Aristotle finds them written either without due concern for their episodic concatenation by indifferent playwrights, or, in order to display the actors by good poets (ποιοῦνται ὑπὸ μὲν τῶν φαύλων ποιητῶν δι' αὐτούς, ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν ἀγαθῶν διὰ τοὺς ὑποκριτάς, 1451b 36 – 37), and he states that successive episodes that fail to cohere to the events of the drama (αἱ ἐπεισοδιώδεις εἰσὶν χείρισται· λέγω δ' ἐπεισοδιώδη μῦθον ἐν ᾧ τὰ ἐπεισόδια μετ' ἄλληλα οὔτ' εἰκὸς οὔτ' ἀνάγκη εἶναι, 1451b 34 – 35), should be avoided. Proleptically, it would not be unobserved that if the necessary tragic concision is to be envisaged in a rendering of the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy, then ruthless editing may be required. The speeches of the characters and the dialogic exchanges between the characters constitute an episode, which, in Halleran's (2005: 168) analysis, may fall on a spectrum comprising forty lines to over six hundred lines, with an average episode forming about two-hundred lines. Noteworthy is the framing of episodes, because the exits and entrances of dramatic participants permit controversial, even contradictory, viewpoints to be asserted, as well as dramatic deception to be aired; whilst the ἀγών, the formal dispute, simultaneously exhibits contrary opinions, and also anticipates Markan exchanges (for example, *Hippolytus* by Euripides, ll. 902ff.; also, *Frogs*, above, ll. 905ff.).

[73] "Aristoteles … stel dit baie ekplisiet dat die digter die maker/skepper … van *plots* en nie van verse moet wees," and that "Die primêre taak van die digter is dus die strukturering van die gebeure tot 'n plot" (De Kock and Cilliers, 1991: 160).

In the transition of fortune, simple plots unfold without reversal or recognition, like the *Prometheus Bound* by Aeschylus, whilst intricate plots contain one or both (ἄνευ περιπετείας ἢ ἀναγνωρισμοῦ ἡ μετάβασις γίνεται, πεπλεγμένην δε ἐξ ἧς μετὰ ἀναγνωρισμοῦ ἢ περιπετείας ἢ ἀμφοῖν ἡ μετάβασίς ἐστιν, 1452a 15 – 18), which ought to emerge from the coherent plot construction (ταῦτα δὲ δεῖ γίνεσθαι ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς συστάσεως τοῦ μύθου, 1452a 18 – 19), like *Oedipus Tyrannos* by Sophocles.

A reversal is evident when the current flow of events is changed and, subsequently, progresses in the opposite direction (Ἔστι δὲ περιπέτεια μὲν ἡ εἰς τὸ ἐναντίον τῶν πραττομένων μεταβολὴ, 1452a 22 – 23), and recognition entails the transition from ignorance to knowledge (ἀναγνώρισις … ἐξ ἀγνοίας εἰς γνῶσιν μεταβολή, 1452a 29 – 31), whilst the simultaneous occurrence of both is best (καλλίστη δὲ ἀναγνώρισις, ὅταν ἅμα περιπετείᾳ γένηται, 1452a 32 – 33). Accompanying these transitions are destructive and painful events which cause suffering (πάθος δέ ἐστι πρᾶξις φθαρτικὴ ἢ ὀδυνηρά, 1452b 11 – 12). This reference to distress may be linked to the heightened experience of ἔλεος and φόβος, since "reversal and recognition set the transformation in stark relief" (Halliwell, 1986: 172), and the identification of this moment, or these moments, is pivotal to subjecting the Gospel of Mark to Aristotelian protocols.

Common to all tragedies (κοινὰ μὲν ἁπάντων ταῦτα, 1452b 17 – 18) are the following sections: the prologue (πρόλογος, 1452b 16), which occurs prior to the entrance of the chorus, the episode (ἐπεισόδιον, 1452b 16), which is between two complete choral parts (μεταξὺ ὅλων χορικῶν μελῶν, 1452b 20 – 21), the exit

(ἔξοδος, 1452b 16), which concludes the work, and various choral parts (χορικόν, 1452b 16), which include the *parodos*, the first complete statement of the chorus (χορικοῦ δὲ πάροδος μὲν ἡ πρώτη λέξις ὅλη χοροῦ, 1452b 22 – 23), and the *stasimon*, which is sung by the chorus, but does not employ anapaests or trochees (στάσιμον δὲ μέλος χοροῦ τὸ ἄνευ ἀναπαίστου καὶ τροχαίου, 1452b 23 – 24). The antiphonal *kommos* is a dirge taken up by the chorus (on the orchestra) and by those on stage (the actors) (κομμὸς δὲ θρῆνος κοινὸς χοροῦ καὶ ἀπὸ σκηνῆς, 1452b 24 – 25). But these songs for the players and the antiphonal threnodies are unique only to some tragedies (ἴδια δὲ τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ κομμοί, 1452b 18).

Next, plot, character, and the effect of the tragedy receive Aristotle's attention. An intricate plot is the best (τὴν σύνθεσιν εἶναι τῆς καλλίστης τραγῳδίας μὴ ἁπλῆν ἀλλὰ πεπλεγμένην, 1452b 31 – 32), and should display fearful and pitiable events, which, significantly, as the discourse is specified more finely, is the unique and peculiar feature of this kind of *mimesis* (ταύτην φοβερῶν καὶ ἐλεεινῶν εἶναι μιμητικήν (τοῦτο γὰρ ἴδιον τῆς τοιαύτης μιμήσεώς ἐστιν), 1452b 32 – 33). The πρωταγωνιστής plays a character who should not be distinctive in virtue or exceedingly righteous, and it seems that Aristotle prefers that the trials and misfortunes of the principle character should not result from a personally intentioned act of evil or wickedness (ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μήτε ἀρετῇ διαφέρων καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ μήτε διὰ κακίαν καὶ μοχθηρίαν μεταβάλλων εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν, 1453a 7 – 9), but be the effect of some, almost congenital, or, at least, imposed, fault or error (ἀλλὰ δι' ἁμαρτίαν τινά, 1453a 9 – 10). Whilst the issue of legal culpability was not absent from the perennially forensic Athenian community; nevertheless, the notion of limited liability owing to a fault of nature, of

uncontrollable circumstances, or, what MacIntyre (1981: 163) calls, "a flaw in practical intelligence which springs from inadequate possession or exercise of some virtue," is evident in the *Encomium to Helen.* Halliwell's (1986: 146) initial resistance to foregrounding more rigorously the divide between πρᾶξις and μῦθος, and his conviction of an

> agent-centred perspective within which dramatic poetry is seen in the treatise: it is the agents themselves who are the prime causative force in the action of the play; it is they who direct, or through the failures of action for which *hamartia* stands, *misdirect*, the development of events which gives the plot its structure and unity,

once again, is mitigated somewhat later, when, closer to MacIntyre (1981: 163) above, Halliwell (2005: 404) states that "'a great *hamartia*' will encompass various kinds of scenario in which limitations of human agency – limitations of knowledge or ethical judgement – lead ... to pitifully far-reaching consequences."[74] It must be conceded, however, that, in the earlier work, Halliwell (1986: 215 – 222) does admit that *hamartia* is not a 'settled term' in the *Poetics*, again, an allusion which attends upon a Foucauldian archaeological excavation of the formation of discourses, but, of more importance to the internal development and coherence of the discursive regularity within the *Poetics* is his allusion to the emotional aspect of the perception of a fault and the subsequent fall of the πρωταγωνιστής, an impact upon the

[74] The distinction between the *Poetics* and Aristotle's other works, which has been suggested, may be evident in the notion of character in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, where there is full responsibility "for the character we develop," whose acts are voluntary when "the moving principle of the action must be in the agent and not extend to him" and "the action must not be done in ignorance of particulars" (Orr, 2006: 68, 74 & 76). In the *Poetics*, the character rather more 'suffers' or 'undergoes' (πάσχειν), actions which have personal consequences.

emotions, which, for Aristotle, is central to the theatrical experience of the readers or spectators.

Although Euripides may err in other areas, he is hailed by Aristotle as the most tragic of playwrights, because his plays follow a single trajectory (ὁ Ευριπίδης, εἰ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα μὴ εὖ οἰκονομεῖ, ἀλλὰ τραγικώτατός γε τῶν ποιητῶν φαίνεται, 1453a 28 – 30), which, for Aristotle, is most fitting (ἀνάγκη ἄρα τὸν καλῶς ἔχοντα μῦθον ἁπλοῦν εἶναι, 1453a 12 – 13). From positions of wealth, honour, acclaim, the πρωταγωνιστής descends into poverty, rejection, and shame, but, again, not through personal, almost willed, acts of wickedness, but, perhaps, one could suggest, through significant 'systemic' failures or faults (ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν μὴ διὰ μοχθηρίαν ἀλλὰ δι' ἁμαρτίαν μεγάλην, 1453a 15 – 16).

Whilst Aristotle admits that theatrical spectacle can engender fear and pity (Ἔστιν μὲν οὖν τὸ φοβερὸν καὶ ἐλεεινὸν ἐκ τῆς ὄψεως γίγνεσθαι, 1453b1 – 2), he avers not only that this experience can be engendered from the compositional arrangement and ordering of the events (ἔστιν δὲ καὶ ἐξ αὐτῆς τῆς συστάσεως τῶν πραγμάτων, 1453b 2 – 3), but that the latter is the manner in which the superior playwright achieves these effects. Thus, when merely listening to the dramatic events as they unfold, but *without* the aid of special visual effects, the hearer would shudder and experience sorrow (ἄνευ τοῦ ὁρᾶν … τὸν ἀκούοντα τὰ πράγματα γινόμενα καὶ φρίττειν καὶ ἐλεεῖν, 1453b 4 – 5). Aristotle emphasizes that the requisite emotions of the dramatic tragic experience, namely, those of pity and fear, must be embedded in the mimetic events (τὴν ἀπὸ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου διὰ μιμήσεως δεῖ ἡδονὴν παρασκευάζειν τὸν ποιητήν, φανερὸν ὡς τοῦτο ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν

ἐμποιητέον, 1453b 12 – 14), and that the inclusion of sensational theatrics provides the kind of pleasure incommensurate to tragedies (οἱ δὲ μὴ τὸ φοβερὸν διὰ τῆς ὄψεως ἀλλὰ τὸ τερατῶδες μόνον παρασκευάζοντες οὐδὲν τραγῳδίᾳ κοινωνοῦσιν· οὐ γὰρ πᾶσαν δεῖ ζητεῖν ἡδονὴν ἀπὸ τραγῳδίας, 1453b 8 – 11).

These notions of fault, fall, and emotional identification impel an agitated momentary decent into the problematics of κάθαρσις and its relation to pity and fear. In the *Politics* (1341b 37 – 40), Aristotle's reflection on the benefits of music adverts to the *Poetics*, when he lists them as παιδείας ἕνεκεν καὶ καθάρσεως – τί δὲ λέγομεν τὴν κάθαρσιν, νῦν μὲν ἁπλῶς, πάλιν δ' ἐν τοῖς περὶ ποιητικῆς ἐροῦμεν σαφέστερον – τρίτον δὲ πρὸς διαγωγὴν, but the latter work provides little assistance.

Halliwell's (1986: 350 - 356) helpful appendix on this topic supplements his assertion that the emotions are affected and "changed" in some way by "a conscious, cognitive experience of a work of mimetic art" (Halliwell, 1986: 199 & 200), through which an imaginative act of recognition is stimulated (Halliwell, 1986: 182). The cognitive dimension is appropriated by Belfiore (1992), whose later inquiry returns to the *Rhetoric*, and commences with the fearful sensation, by stating that "tragedy, like rhetoric, arouses fear by leading us to *understand* that we, like others, are 'such as to suffer' (τοιουτοί εἰσιν οἷοι παθεῖν, *Rhet*. 1383 a 8 – 12)" (Belfiore 1992: 246; emphasis added). Pity is felt both because the spectator and the tragic character are fellow sufferers,[75] and because the ἁμαρτία that afflicts the tragic character causes a suffering that is undeserved. The Aristotelian concept of medical κάθαρσις, through

[75] The reference to this notion is evident, when Bloom (1987: 108), writing of the "sexual revolution" and the influence of Feminism on university campuses in the USA, notes: "Aristotle teaches that pity for the plight of others requires that the same thing could happen to us. Now, however, the same things that used to happen to people, at least in the relations between the sexes, do not happen to students anymore."

which the body expels that which prevents normative functioning, is also invoked (Belfiore, 1992: 299 – 300), but, where Golden (1992: 37) asserts that the medical analogy is incomplete, it may be better perceived as the manner in which terms are appropriated by incipient discourses, and both retain their semantic links to the former field initially, and then generate their own, less erstwhile traceable semantic connections.[76] In tragedy, the purgative means in medicine is appropriated by this emerging dramatic lexicon, and is transformed into an awareness and intellectual cognition of the reasons for the experiences of pity and fear, of recognizing and apprehending the consequences of active choices and passive events (Halliwell, 1986: 76 – 77). Thus, tragic κάθαρσις suggests a cognitive, epistemic act that focuses the emotions, and, most significantly, nucleates them in the μετάβασις; and then, in the subsequent unfolding of the μῦθος, realigns, re-orders, and 'purifies' them of their menace, disempowering them through a κάθαρσις that restores the equilibrium of the spectator, or, in Frede's (1996: 246) reading of Plato's *Sophist*, engenders "a harmonious order ... [when] ... all the soul's inventory is straightened out."[77]

[76] The porous and unstable nature of discourses, in spite of formidable attempts restrict them, is evident in Craik's (2006) counter reading of the majoritarian view that Aristotle drew upon medical κάθαρσις, since "there is evidence to suggest rather that medical theorists themselves were airing ideas of mind-body interaction or parallel action" and that the "*Poetics* – and with it the parallel discussion in *Politics* – may be seen as a considered contribution to ongoing medical debates ... on corollaries in the functioning of mind and body" (Craik, 2006: 293 & 297). This important perspective is noted later (see n. 95).

[77] Something of the troublesome centrality of κάθαρσις in the *Poetics* and its role in the interpretation of the genre of tragedy may be observed in the following references:
The perception of κάθαρσις in *Crisis and Catharsis: the Power of the Apocalypse* is similar to that of Frede (1996), as Yarbro Collins (1984: 152) notes, "There is a certain analogy between Aristotle's explanation of the function of Greek tragedy and the function of Revelation. In each case certain emotions are aroused and then a catharsis of those emotions is achieved. Tragedy manipulates the emotions of fear and pity; Revelation primarily fear and resentment. Aristotle's term 'catharsis' is a medical metaphor. In the medical sense it refers to the removal from the body of alien matter that is painful and the restoration of the system to its normal state. The relation between this medical sense and Aristotle's application of the term to tragedy has been much debated. He does not appear to have meant that the emotions of pity and fear are removed by tragedy, but only that their painful or disquieting elements are removed. Fear and pity in daily life can be disquieting for at least two reasons. Such feelings are very often inarticulate, vague, and thus difficult to deal with. Also, they relate to people and events that are very close to home and thus especially threatening. This threatening character applies also to pity in Aristotle's understanding: we pity others where under like circumstances we would fear for ourselves. The emotions of the audience are purged in the sense that

Examining Racine through Aristotelian lenses, Goodkin's (1991: 171) observation, noted above, concerning the "tragic hero" of the *Poetics* as "'in between,' that is, in the middle between good and evil" provides some tangential assistance to the notion of κάθαρσις explored here, since "[t]he exclusion of the hero leads to the establishment of tragic magnitude. It gives the hero a newly established value, a majesty in suffering which makes him purely other. His exclusion leads the audience back to 'prudence' ..." It is the 'otherness' and 'sameness' of tragedy, which is vital

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their feelings of fear and pity are intensified and given objective expression. The feelings are thus brought to consciousness and become less threatening."

De Kock and Cilliers (1991: 131 – 132) also first highlight the 'medical interpretation' of katharsis, which, subsequently, informs the 'moral interpretation.' In the former, the emotions are stimulated by "'n homeopatiese proses;" whilst, in the latter, "die emosies deur die proses van *katarsis* gestimuleer word, indirek die bonus mee dat hulle geoefen en versterk word en deur gewenning nader aan die korrekte norm gebring word."

Halliwell (2005: 404 – 405) emphasizes the pleasure of tragic κάθαρσις, but it is a pleasure of both identification and differentiation.

Leech (1969: 47 – 55) notes various interpretations of κάθαρσις in a fairly cursory manner, he does refer to an experience of viewing *Lear*, with Sir John Gielgud in the eponymous role, at Stratford-upon-Avon, which is not dissimilar to that suggested above. In the aftermath of the performance, Leech (1969: 50 – 51) recalls his heightened emotional state, which included a sense of *recognition* and *knowledge* of his identification with the experiences suffered by the central character.

With reference to the experience of 'pity,' Taylor's (1991: 27) analogy is illustrative of the aspect of identification: "Like Greek tragedy, sacrifice is a substitute for the literal dismemberment of the individual. By identifying with the victim, one vicariously experiences the return to intimacy without actually dying."

Scruton (1994: 349), writing of "imaginary worlds," suggests that "it seems that we can feel towards these fictitious scenes a version of the emotions that animate our real existence. We feel sympathy for the tragic character, and Aristotle assimilated this sympathy to pity and fear." But, contrary to asserting their extended impact, Scruton (1994: 349) continues: "Yet – because the objects of these emotions are not only unreal but known to be so – we are not motivated to act as we normally should act. We do not rush on to the stage to make common cause with the beleaguered hero. On the contrary, we relax into our emotions, and live for a while on a plane of untroubled sympathy, laughing and crying without the slightest moral or physical cost." In contrast, appropriating κάθαρσις for his own purpose in a somewhat compressed and tangential manner, Mayne (1998: 104) states: "The earliest Greek drama had recognized both its moral and psychological role. Great men who showed a self-confident contempt for a divine moral order, and their proper place within it, demonstrated the flaw of *hubris*. They had to be punished. That aroused in the audience a healthy pity and terror, what Aristotle in his *Poetics* describes as that purging of strong emotion in the process known as *catharsis*."

The notion of κάθαρσις as "restoration" was not foreign to Plato (Sedley, 1996: 102), nor was both the "sensual" and "intellectual" components of a pleasurable experience (Frede, 1996: 234, n. 27).

Walker (2000: 77) adds the caveat that παθημάτων (1449b 28) ought not to exclude the agonies and torments endured by the characters in the plot, because it "can mean 'experiences' or 'sufferings,' or 'emotional things,' and thus can refer to the tragic events portrayed on stage; but can also mean 'emotional conditions' or states of mind and thus can refer to the pity and fear felt by the audience, and this variance makes elusive the specific meaning of *katharsis* in the *Poetics*," thus engendering the possibility of evaluating their *katharsis* within the mimetic world.

to the dramatic *katharsis*, and which also invokes a tragic vocation for the Gospel of Mark.

The obscure, almost non-culpable, nature of that fault line, the ἁμαρτία, is evident in the tragic character, which, for Aristotle, should be moral, and display these attributes in good intentional choices in word and deed (ἓν μὲν καὶ πρῶτον, ὅπως χρηστὰ ᾖ … φανερὸν ὁ λόγος ἢ ἡ πρᾶξις προαίρεσίν τινα … ᾖ … δεύτερον δὲ τὸ ἁρμόττοντα, 1454a 16 – 19; 22). But the characterization must also ostend a fidelity to real experience (τρίτον δὲ τὸ ὅμοιον, 1454a 24),[78] and the character must maintain a recognizable consistency for the duration of the drama (τέταρτον δὲ τὸ ὁμαλόν, 1454a 26).[79] The intentionality of choice, invoked by the word, προαίρεσις, is emphasized by Halliwell (1986: 151), but the deliberative aspect present in this word remains subservient to the πρᾶξις,[80] and, indeed, as noted above, by the tragic notion of ἁμαρτία, thereby limiting Aristotle's concept of characterization, as Halliwell (1986: 164) admits. The emphasis, expectedly, is, as Aristotle notes, upon decided utterances and consequent external actions rather than

[78] Halliwell's (1995 [1999]: 79) note states: "As the rest of the sentence suggests, likeness in basic humanity: cf. 'like us' at e.g. 48a 5 – 6." Here Halliwell (1995 [1999]) follows Else (1967: 460, 461 & 478), although, in contrast, the latter seeks clarity by referring to 1454b 8 – 14, which, as Else (1967: 480) admits, presents its own difficulties. Else (1967: 481 – 482) conjectures, a conjecture that importantly retains the didactic dimension of dramatic instruction and is highlighted in the "discussion of terms" below (esp. i; & iv & v), that Aristotle begins by contrasting tragic and comedic characterization and, therefore, elevates the former over the latter, but he also requires a degree of identification between spectator and character and, therefore, the character must be "like us," as well as requiring a 'universal' dimension.

[79] This impacts upon gestures and words, since "Speech is a product of the body: producing breath involves the whole body and formations of the mouth may instinctively be echoed by other parts of the body. This corporeality of the spoken or sung word tends to be forgotten in a culture of the book, and it is symptomatic that discussion of embodiment has virtually vanished from academic discussion of drama in translation" (Harrop & Wiles, 2008: 62)

[80] MacIntyre (2006: 74) notes that, for Aristotle, deliberation "is about means and not about ends. When we deliberate about what means to adopt in order to achieve some end, we take for granted, for the moment at least, that this particular end should be our end, that it *is* the good to be pursued by me or by us here and now." In a similar manner, the action of a dramatic work already has prescribed the end, and the choices made by the characters, which are exhibited in their words and deeds, are subservient to the πρᾶξις, as are those of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark.

upon internal states of equivocal deliberation. The issue of the identifiable consistency and coherence of characterization leads Aristotle to broaden his purview momentarily. Thus, he notes that the *dénouements* of plots must proceed from, and correspond to, the plots (τὰς λύσεις τῶν μύθων ἐξ αὐτοῦ δεῖ τοῦ μύθου συμβαίνειν, 1454a 37 – 1454b 1), whilst informative anaphoric or proleptic events or announcements may be displayed by means of mechanical devices (μηχανῇ χρηστέον ἐπὶ τὰ ἔξω τοῦ δράματος, 1454b 2 – 3). Events internal to the drama, however, must remain reasonable and plausible (ἄλογον δὲ μηδὲν εἶναι ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν, εἰ δὲ μή, ἔξω τῆς τραγῳδίας, 1454b 6 – 7).

The transition from ignorance to knowledge, that sudden recognition of the reason for the situation of the drama, may occur through a sign, which is the least skilled manner (πρώτη μὲν ἡ ἀτεχνοτάτη καὶ ᾗ πλείστῃ χρῶνται δι' ἀπορίαν, ἡ διὰ τῶν σημείων, 1454b 20 – 21), through a fabricated situation or event (αἱ πεποιημέναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ, 1454b 30 – 31), through triggering the memory by means of some sensory perception (διὰ μνήμης τῷ αἰσθέσθαι τι ἰδόντα, 1454b 37 – 38), or through the inferences of the reason (ἡ ἐκ συλλογισμοῦ, 1455a 4), and perhaps the first two are perceptible initially in the μετάβασις in the Gospel of Mark. In addition, and without insignificance to the blindness and insight of the participants in the drama of Mark, is composite recognition (ἔστιν δέ τις καὶ συνθετὴ ἐκ παραλογισμοῦ τοῦ θεάτρου, 1455a 12 – 13), in which deception is evident between the character and his actions. Yet, in Aristotle's view, the superior way in which the turning-point of the action is comprehended occurs when the events themselves generate awareness and recognition (πασῶν δὲ βελτίστη ἀναγνώρισις ἡ ἐξ αὐτῶν

τῶν πραγμάτων, 1455a 16 – 17), a matter not without import in reflecting both upon the μῦθος and the πρᾶξις of a drama.

The performative nature of poetic composition resurfaces when Aristotle refers to the collocation of the plots and their supplementation with apposite dialogue. Whilst considerable dispute remains – here, as with the other terms, the discourse of Aristotelian dramatic theory remains porous – Aristotle seems to suggest that the act of playwriting ought to be undertaken through a creative act of visual 'seeing' (Δεῖ δὲ τοὺς μύθους συνιστάναι καὶ τῇ λέξει συναπεργάζεσθαι ὅτι μάλιστα πρὸ ὀμμάτων τιθέμενον, 1455a 22 – 23). Imaginative construction, as if present at a performance (οὕτω γὰρ ἂν ἐναργέστατα [ὁ] ὁρῶν ὥσπερ παρ' αὐτοῖς γιγνόμενος τοῖς πραττομένοις, 1455a 23 – 25), enables the playwright to observe, and to discriminate between, the appropriate and the contradictory (εὑρίσκοι τὸ πρέπον καὶ ἥκιστα ἂν λανθάνοι [τὸ] τὰ ὑπεναντία, 1455a 25 – 26). Gestural and emotional identification – whether literal, displaced, or imaginative – is also required of the dramatist (ὅσα δὲ δυνατὸν καὶ τοῖς σχήμασιν συναπεργαζόμενον· πιθανώτατοι γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς φύσεως οἱ ἐν τοῖς πάθεσίν εἰσιν, καὶ χειμαίνει ὁ χειμαζόμενος καὶ χαλεπαίνει ὁ ὀργιζόμενος ἀληθινώτατα, 1455a 29 – 32).[81]

[81] Although it is remains contested amongst scholars of the *Poetics*, one suggests that the performative nature of dramatic works is evident in this section, and to place the events "before one's eyes … as if being at the events themselves" (πρὸ ὀμμάτων … ὥσπερ παρ' αὐτοῖς γιγνόμενος τοῖς πραττομένοις) means that the playwright ought to envisage his work being performed, in order to discover what may be fitting (εὑρίσκοι τὸ πρέπον) and to note the contradictions. Thus, McLeish's (1998: 24) translation: "So far as possible, they should act out what they are writing, even down to the characters' movements and gestures." Thus, Harrop and Wiles (2008: 51) state forthrightly that "In his advice to the playwright about the process of working out *lexis* or language, Aristotle argues three things: (1) the writer should place the scene before his eyes; (2) he should as far as he can work out the *schemata* or 'gestures;' and (3) he should feel the emotions of the play." In "Notes on Seeing and Hearing Shakespeare's Plays in South Africa," Professor Guy Butler (1994: 18) exceeds Aristotle's balance of reading and viewing drama, but his bold viewpoint is worth stating: "Performance – the

When the whole outline of the play has been envisioned, the episodic sequence is to be established (δεῖ καὶ αὐτὸν ποιοῦντα ἐκτίθεσθαι καθόλου, εἶθ' οὕτως ἐπεισοδιοῦν καὶ παρατείνειν, 1455b 1 – 2), which, it is suggested in the subsequent chapter, would involve re-ordering the sequence in the Gospel of Mark for the scripting of an Aristotelian dramatic Mark. Then the choice of the names of the characters is made, and the expansion of the outline for the harmonious insertion of the episodes, which must be appropriate, brief and focused (ὑποθέντα τὰ ὀνόματα ἐπεισοδιοῦν· ὅπως δὲ ἔσται οἰκεῖα τὰ ἐπεισόδια … ἐν μὲν οὖν τοῖς δράμασιν τὰ ἐπεισόδια σύντομα, 1455b 12 – 13; 15 – 16)[82] is undertaken, and which, it is proposed, in tragic Mark, should involve excisions.

For Aristotle, every tragedy contains both a predicament and a resolution (Ἔστι δὲ πάσης τραγῳδίας τὸ μὲν δέσις τὸ δὲ λύσις, 1455b 24). The former may inform the play either from outside or from within the possible world of the drama (τὰ μὲν ἔξωθεν καὶ ἔνια τῶν ἔσωθεν πολλάκις ἡ δέσις, 1455b 24 – 25), and it dominates the action until the final moment before the transition of fortune (λέγω δὲ δέσιν μὲν εἶναι τὴν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς μέχρι τούτου τοῦ μέρους ὃ ἔσχατόν ἐστιν ἐξ οὗ μεταβαίνει εἰς εὐτυχίαν ἢ εἰς ἀτυχίαν, 1455b 26 – 28), which the rest of the play then resolves (τὸ δὲ λοιπὸν ἡ λύσις, 1455b 25 – 26), which coheres with a dilemma

direct appeal to eye and ear – unlocks and liberates emotions and meanings barely discernible in the printed text and the date directions of a play script."

[82] Episodic coherence is linked to the kathartic function of drama, as Finkelberg (2006: 64) notes: "... the episodic plot breaks the dramatic illusion, prevents the spectator's or the reader's identification with the characters, and thus precludes tragedy from fulfilling its edifying function. To put it in modern terms, the episodic plot creates what is sometimes called 'emotional distancing.' In that it forces the spectator or the reader to become estranged from the fictional action, such emotional distancing encourages the audience to retain its critical judgement vis-à-vis the dramatic illusion." This reflective space, however, is pertinent to emotional commitment and participation in the drama of the Gospel of Mark.

in Mark of 'following' the cause of Jesus, and the transitional moment of recognizing the cost of discipleship.

Of some significance is Aristotle's brief reference to the chorus, which ought to assume the role of one of the actors, and be a constituent part of the whole drama (καὶ τὸν χορὸν δὲ ἕνα δεῖ ὑπολαμβάνειν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, καὶ μόριον εἶναι τοῦ ὅλου καὶ συναγωνίζεσθαι, 1456a 25 – 27). Although Else (1967: 552) notes that "The passage is famous, mainly because it is the only one in the entire *Poetics* where Aristotle has even this much to say about the chorus;" nevertheless, it may be inferred that, for Aristotle, the chorus may be said to form "not only a collective character standing in a defined relation to the other characters of the drama, but also an intermediary between the world of the play and the audience whose perspective it helps to shape" (Burian, 1997: 198). But the evidence for choric definitional roles, for example, *inter alia*, as "empirical readers / spectators," abstract philosophers, the authorial voice, or the community's perspective, is ambiguous, as Battezzato (2005: 154 – 155) demonstrates; and whilst, on the one hand, David (2006: 256 – 257) implies that Aristotle's relative silence on the chorus may be owing to its inextricable and provenential association with tragedy; on the other hand, Halliwell (1986: 250 – 251) implies that the attempt to define tragic poetry led Aristotle to distance *lyric* aspects from his emphasis on action and plot. The extant dramatic texts suggest not only choric implicature in a discourse on the poetics of drama, but also a residual lack of concerted discursive traction, owing to the spectrum of distal or proximate choral involvement in tragic plots. The Gospel of Mark provides fertile possibilities for a dramatic chorus, and the manner in which choral comment and participation is

incorporated in tragic Mark is significant both to the recasting of this gospel as Aristotelian drama, as well as to its production arenae and potential actors.

The creative writing of the speeches and the dialogue, and the communication of intention and purpose, are amongst Aristotle's remaining concerns (λοιπὸν δὲ περὶ λέξεως καὶ διανοίας εἰπεῖν, 1456a 33 – 34). Although Aristotle states that the latter is more relevant to his work on rhetoric (τὰ μὲν οὖν περὶ τὴν διάνοιαν ἐν τοῖς περὶ ῥητορικῆς κείσθω, 1456a 34 – 35), nevertheless, he does insist here that intention deliberately must be conveyed by the emotional tenor of the *utterance* (τὸ πάθη παρασκευάζειν, 1456a 38), and must also be evident in the *actions*, but, in the latter instance, without speech (ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν … τὰ μὲν δεῖ φαίνεσθαι ἄνευ διδασκαλίας, 1456b 2; 5).[83] Excellence in the speeches and the dialogue demands clarity and the avoidance of a prosaic text (Λέξεως δὲ ἀρετὴ σαφῆ καὶ μὴ ταπεινὴν εἶναι, 1458a 18). The employment of foreign words, metaphors, embellishments, neologisms, and modified words together with vernacular terms and quotidian language in a generally acceptable proportion (τὸ δὲ μέτρον κοινὸν ἁπάντων, 1458b 12), produces a skilful, entertaining, and intelligible play (τὸ μὲν γὰρ τὸ μὴ ἰδιωτικὸν ποιήσει μηδὲ ταπεινόν … τὸ δὲ κύριον τὴν σαφήνειαν, 1458a 31 – 34). The single most important language form that enriches a drama is metaphor, and where it is present, a naturally gifted dramatist in present (πολὺ δὲ μέγιστον τὸ

[83] The following comments are helpful. Whilst De Kock and Cilliers (1991: 242) explain this passage in terms of the speeches: "… dieselfde beginsels … wat die digter moes gebruik om in toesprake die beoogde effek te verkry, ook vir die handelingskomposisie geld;" Hutton (1982: 65) refers to both speech and action: "Obviously, in their actions as well as in their utterances, the personages will employ Thought … the only difference being that the acts must make their impression immediately, without verbal explanation."

μεταφορικὸν εἶναι. μόνον γὰρ τοῦτο οὔτε παρ᾽ ἄλλου ἔστι λαβεῖν εὐφυΐας τε σημεῖόν ἐστι, 1459a 5 – 7).[84]

Aristotle's more exacting comparative reading of metaphor[85] – here are Foucault's (1969: 58) "*grilles de spécification*" closing down definitional latitude – which includes simile, does, nevertheless, connote the interactive transference of language images, rather than merely proffer a process of substitutionary naming (Thiselton, 1992: 353; Stewart, 1988, 144 & 147; Madison, 1988: 194 n. 39; Kennedy, 1991: 222 n. 25, 246 n. 120), since it is the "*bringing to* of an alien or foreign name" (μεταφορὰ δὲ ἐστιν ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορά, 1457b 6 – 7, emphasis added), or the *application* of a term from a source domain to a target domain. The enticing, almost alchemical, quality of this trope is emphasized by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric*, where he states that "metaphor, especially, has clarity, pleasantness, and strangeness, and cannot be learned from another person" (καὶ τὸ σαφὲς καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ καὶ τὸ ξενικὸν ἔχει μάλιστα ἡ μεταφορά, καὶ λαβεῖν οὐκ ἔστιν αὐτὴν παρ᾽ ἄλλου, 1405a 8 – 10). In this sense, metaphor extends an invitation for an enhanced and pleasurable perspicacity which estranges,[86] and, arguably, or perhaps more boldly, palpably,

[84] The ability of the poet is measured by his choice of metaphors, since they should be ἀπὸ καλῶν ἢ τῇ φωνῇ ἢ τῇ δυνάμει ἢ τῇ ὄψει ἢ ἄλλῃ τινὶ αἰσθήσει. διαφέρει δ᾽ εἰπεῖν, οἷον ῥοδοδάκτυλος ἠὼς μᾶλλον ἢ φοινικοδάκτυλος, ἢ ἔτι φαυλότερον ἐρυθροδάκτυλος, *Rhetoric*, 1405b 17 – 20.
[85] Recent research has widened the scope of the influence of metaphor in human cognition and interaction and, for example, has produced fertile readings of New Testament texts, see Wanamaker (2005). Although "three components of his [Aristotle's] explanation have influenced metaphorical analysis up to the twenty-first century ... [i]n 1936, I.A.Richards first made the argument that metaphor was a matter of thought, not just word or language ... [and] ... [c]ontemporary cognitive linguistics argues that metaphor is a matter of thinking, not a matter of language ... Metaphor imposes structure on thinking, and allows one to reason about, not just talk about, one thing in terms of another" (Descamp, 2007: 19 – 21).
[86] The quality of estrangement inherent in metaphors, with its soliciting and unsettling quality, suggests an instability of meaning and "enforce the understanding that there are at least two sides to everything" (Hansson, 1999: 456).

engenders a *kathartic* re-ordering[87] and provides more profound insight for those with ears to hear and imaginations to quarry.[88]

Finally, in the context of evaluating tragedy against epic, Aristotle notes that an art that requires gesture must pay attention to the quality of the performances of the actors (εἶτα οὐδὲ κίνησις ἅπασα ἀποδοκιμαστέα … ἀλλ᾽ ἡ φαύλων, 1462a 8 – 9),[89] since music and theatrical spectacle are not without significance to tragic dramas (καὶ ἔτι οὐ μικρὸν μέρος τὴν μουσικήν [καὶ τὰς ὄψεις], 1462a 15 – 16). And yet, for Aristotle, the distinct nature of a tragedy ensures that it can be apprehended as an experience of the senses and with emotional depth, not simply in performance but also by reading it (τὸ ἐναργὲς ἔχει καὶ ἐν τῇ ἀναγνώσει καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων, 1462a 17 – 18), and that tragedy accomplishes its purpose with a concision that makes it pleasurable (τῷ ἐν ἐλάττονι μήκει τὸ τέλος τῆς μιμήσεως εἶναι (τὸ γὰρ ἀθροώτερον ἥδιον), 1462a 18 – 1462b1).

[87] The confluence of the emotions of pity and fear and the *kathartic* effect, noted above, suggests an affective quality of metaphors, which, perhaps, too often is overlooked, see Sopory (2005).

[88] Wright's (1992: 40) insightful definition of metaphor is worth quoting: "Metaphor consists in bringing two sets of ideas close together, close enough for a spark to jump, but not too close, so that the spark, in jumping, illuminates for a moment the whole area around, changing perceptions as it does so."

[89] It remains the contention that the composition of a play ought not to be separated from its realization on the stage. Thus, Halliwell's (1995 [1999]: 137 – 139) translation states: "… not all movement (any more than all dancing) should be eschewed, but only that of crude performers …," and De Kock and Cilliers (1991: 324) note: "Wat wel veroordeel moet word, is die uitbeelding (deur bewegings) van swak karakters." Aristotle notes that the reason for the lack of attention to the verbal realization by actors of the written text is because ὑπεκρίνοντο γὰρ αὐτοὶ τὰς τραγῳδίας οἱ ποιηταὶ τὸ πρῶτον, *Rhetoric* 1403b 24), but one asserts that the emphasis on the experiential dimension in the act of dramatic composition is because "Aristotle had rated sight and hearing as the two highest of the five senses, both absolutely and in respect of their roles in the service of knowledge" (Turner, 1995: 201).

Discussion of terms:

Although some iteration may occur, the Foucauldian perspective on the formation of the 'discursive regularity' of the *Poetics*, quite probably, ought not to exclude a discussion of some of the central and controversial terms within the work, although, as has been noted, and as will be observed, the work and its terms, no matter how technical they may appear, cannot be hermetically sealed from extraneous positive and negative contributory effects. To this caveat – that of repetition – three others need to be added. First, the nature of this study has ensured the retention of an element of 'undecidability,' of the vulnerability of interpretations, and of their semantic slippage. Thus, in avoiding obturation, an element of obscuration may persist. Second, in consequence and under the weight of too august an interpretive heritage, all the proposals are submitted with timidity and apprehension, even when this does not appear to be the case, although some may retain a greater degree of indeterminacy than others. Third, and as already argued above, the issue of the πρᾶξις of the Aristotelian tragedy for this reader of the *Poetics*, not only deserves re-visiting, but also, as is evident in the various discussions of the terms that follow, intrudes upon the other concepts.

(i) *Mimesis*:

The *Poetics* opens with a concentration of the μίμησις word group, rising from 1447a & b to 1448a, and especially concentrated in 1448b, 1449b, and 1450a. The semantic field of this term is wide, and Halliwell (1995; 1999: 29) most usually transliterates the noun form of the word, although occasionally he employs the verb, "represent,"

Bywater (1909) regularly uses "imitation," whilst Lucas (1968: 259) states that "we need in different contexts 'imitate,' 'represent,' 'indicate,' 'suggest,' 'express.'" It is possible that Halliwell's (1995; 1999) attempt to avoid ambiguity merely compounds it – particularly for readers without Greek – and Lucas's (1968) breadth of translations obscures the attempt by Aristotle to 'grid' and 'specify' the term in a Foucauldian sense.

The first appearance of μίμησις occurs with reference to ἐποποιία, τραγῳδία, κωμῳδία, and διθυραμβοποιητική (*Poetics*, 1447a 13 – 14), which were the "kinds of poetry ... most important at this date" (Lucas, 1968: 54). They, together with music for the αὐλός and the κιθάρα are referred to as 'modes' or 'kinds' of *mimesis* or imitation.[90] These 'modes' are distinguished with reference to their media – whether that of rhythm, melody, or language, or in some form of combination – the objects that are represented, and the varying imitative manner of epic, narrative, and drama. Following some detail and examples on the separation or synthesis of the media, the distinction or integration of the mimetic manner of each genre, and the types of objects which are represented, Aristotle refers to the genesis of poetry as σύμφυτον (*Poetics*, 1448b 5), both in the act of imitation and the pleasure derived from the act or the product of *mimesis*. The assertion that *mimesis* is natural to human beings, is impacted by the additional statement that τὰς μαθήσεις ποιεῖται διὰ μιμήσεως τὰς πρώτας (*Poetics*, 1448b 7 – 8), and which may embed a foundational notion for Aristotle with reference to poetry, and, particularly, to tragedy – Halliwell (1995; 1999: 37) places the phrase from καὶ (*Poetics*, 1448b 6) to

[90] Bywater (1909: 100) notes that "[i]n actual use the word is wide enough to include the counterfeiting of movement and attitude by the dancer, that of voice and sound by the singer and musician, that of the forms and colours of things by the sculptor and painter, and even the representation of things in words, as in speech and literature."

πρώτας (*Poetics*, 1448b 8) in parentheses – and may inform his claim for the pedagogic ability of dramatic tragedy in a Platonic context that may doubt its instructive power. Thus, *mimesis* itself embodies an act of learning and generates understanding, and *mimesis*, both as an act of ποίησις, an activity, and as an act of witness, of response, is educative. One suggests that this notion of *mimesis* ought to be retained as informative of Aristotle's conception of dramatic tragedy in the *Poetics*, and that it is this instructive aspect of tragic dramatic ostension that generates his "grave inconsistency" (Bywater, 1909: 101), to express it strongly, or his "equivocal treatment of epic" (Halliwell, 1986: 128), to express it less strongly, in his treatise. Initially, Homer's epics are treated as a mixed manner of *mimesis* (1448a 20 – 22), then epic is defined as a διηγηματικὴ / -ν μίμησι(ς) / -(ν) (1459b 36 – 37 & 33), and, ultimately, Homer returns as a dramatist of quality (1460a 9 – 11). But if *mimesis* is pedagogic, and if "Aristotle's guiding notion of mimesis is implicitly that of enactment" (Halliwell, 1986: 128), then Homer's edifying doctrines may well be included in the *mimesis* of enactment. And, as a paedeutic means, it is attractive to place Aristotle's challenge to Plato in more forthright terms and upon the same basis, and in the "break-through to a new order of ideas; [where] the artist produces not a copy but an idealization of his original" (Lucas, 1968: 264). But Lucas (1968: 264 – 265) is decidedly cautious here, and appositely exempts Aristotle's endeavour as an attempt to procure the Platonic ideal, and rather emphasises the importance of the structural coherence of tragic *mimesis*, which "reveals something about the nature of an action under the conditions obtaining in our world" (Lucas, 1968: 266). But this too is educational, since the ordered and synchronized compaction of a fine tragedy, as the imitation or *mimesis* of an action, "reveals something about the nature of an action under the conditions obtaining in our world ... [and] ... shows a general truth ...

(Lucas, 1968: 266; the added emphasis contains a notion central to the suggested πρᾶξις of the Gospel of Mark in the following chapter), and διὸ καὶ φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποίησις ἱστορίας ἐστίν· ἡ μὲν γὰρ ποίησις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου, ἡ δ' ἱστορία τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον λέγει (*Poetics*, 1451b 5 – 7). The distinctness of this notion is acutely observed by Lucas (1968: 120), again, with a direct link to the πρᾶξις of the Gospel of Mark that is proposed in the next chapter: "Events happen in the way they must in the light of what has happened before and of human decisions superimposed on the logic of events. When the universal regularities are revealed, events are intelligible," a perception which, for this reader, is linked to the *kathartic* experience and to the appropriation of the action of a tragic drama. One ought not to pretermit the directive thrust in Halliwell's (1986: 137) balanced statement about the two aspects of *mimesis* in the *Poetics*:

> Aristotle certainly attached value to mimetic directness and vividness as qualities of the *modes* which mimesis might use to embody its material. This vividness is not, however, an end in itself, but a means to the successful communication of mimetic significance; for vividness concerns concrete details – actions and characters – which are taken, in their unified presentation, to be capable of signifying universals.

But, as is evident in the argument above, this disputed reading amongst interpretive readings, in its 'misprisions' and 'anxieties,' converges with one of Halliwell's (1986: 137) less reluctant statements, which conclude his treatment of *mimesis*:

> The immediacy of the mode of poetic enactment is not required for the sake of a deceptive simulation of life, but in order to be the vehicle of a structure of meaning which Aristotle believes can nourish the understanding and move the emotions with ethical force. In this way, Aristotle's interpretation of mimesis perhaps restores to the poet at least something of the possibility of the knowledge and wisdom which Greek tradition had always claimed for him, but which Plato had been impelled to deny.

More than lambent in the "simulation of life" that is not "deceptive," but "nourish[es] understanding" is the significance of fictional portrayals of truthful universals in poetry, which is "a serious achievement with which to credit the poet" (Lucas, 1968: 120). Nevertheless, however diligently the interpreter endeavours to demarcate *mimesis*, to foreclose upon it, as, indeed, upon other terms, and, more especially, to bind it to enactment, its intercalated dynamic marshals a field of terms, of *kathartic* apprehension and, more particularly, of the notion of "action." For, *inter alia*, *mimesis*, imitation, representation, or expression, repeatedly is linked to πρᾶξις (for example, *Poetics*, 1449b 24; 36; 1450a 3 – 4; 16 – 17; 1451a 16 – 19; 1462b 11), and both in its *kathartic* dimension as well as in the troublesome and, quite possibly, for this reader, technical refinement of "action," some further exploration is required.

(ii) *Muthos*:

But, if it may be argued that Aristotle strives for greater definitional clarity of, or, at least, there is a sense of predetermination about, μίμησις, for this reader of the *Poetics*, μῦθος remains a disagreeable term, and, possibly more so than "the

appallingly intractable Aristotelian concept of *katharsis*" (Mossman, 1995: 143, n. 6), which, shortly, receives some scrutiny. More precisely, it is the relation of μῦθος to πρᾶξις that troubles this reader into proposing – again, it is a suggestion amongst suggestions, and it may simply be a Derridean 'other reading' – that a distinction between the two terms is present in the *Poetics*. Perhaps it is an inchoate distinction, but, nevertheless, where other terms are permitted definitional latitude and a degree of imprecision, and inferences are required, so the proposal, which has been noted above, that *muthos* and *praxis* do not seamlessly converge in Aristotle's treatise, at least, may be entertained. The issue of a πρᾶξις or the πρᾶξις of a tragic drama has been engendered by the previous inquiry into μίμησις, but now it is an issue contiguous to, or, perhaps, enmeshed in, the concept of μῦθος.

The primary locus of the latter term in the *Poetics* occurs between 1450a and 1453b, with a surfeit of references in 1451a & b, and 1452a. However, its first appearance occurs in the opening statement of the contents of the *Poetics*, which includes πῶς δεῖ συνίστασθαι τοὺς μύθους (*Poetics*, 1447a 9). Lucas (1968: 54) notes that plot is mentioned here because "it is the dominating theme" of the treatise, but the composition or "structure" (Bywater, 1909: 3) of tragic plots, or, more liberally, the "canons of plot construction" (Halliwell, 1995; 1999: 29) will receive explication for a particular purpose: εἰ μέλλει καλῶς ἕξειν ἡ ποίησις (*Poetics*, 1447a 10). And it is this purpose that Lucas (1968: 54) then highlights, since "[i]t is by the construction of plots more than by any other single means that the poet achieves his purpose," so that when the appropriate protocols of plot construction are employed, poetic excellence is achieved, an achievement that emerges, perhaps, not simply in, but also from, the ordered structure of the plot.

And the latter is emphasized because, after the "modes" or "kinds" of *mimesis*, with respect to their "media," "objects," and "manner," the τινα δύναμιν ἕκαστον ἔχει (*Poetics*, 1447a 8 – 9), and the origins of drama are noted, the definition of tragedy is stated before "plot" is dealt with in detail. And the purpose, of which plot construction is the cause, is to produce a tragedy, and

> 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 (*Poetics*, 1449b 24 – 28).

The opening clause of this definition is repeated throughout the *Poetics*, as noted above, and then, immediately prior to stating what λέγω (*Poetics*, 1450a 4) *muthos* to be, Aristotle asserts that ἔστιν δὲ τῆς μὲν πράξεως ὁ μῦθος ἡ μίμησις (*Poetics*, 1450a 3 – 4). Therefore, although it is stated that "tragedy is the representation of an action" (*Poetics*, 1449b 24), and that, in Halliwell's (1995; 1999: 49) translation, "the plot is the mimesis of the action" (*Poetics*, 1450a 3 – 4) – we are not entirely aided by Bywater's (1909: 19) rendering of this clause as "the action (that which is done) is presented in the play by the Fable or Plot" – the plot is then defined as τὴν σύνθεσιν τῶν πραγμάτων (*Poetics*, 1450a 4 – 5; 15). But the tragedy, as the "mimesis of an action" in the definition of such a work, is more than "the construction of events" (Halliwell, 1995; 1999: 49) or "the combination of the incidents" (Bywater, 1909: 19), but is also the effects of the arrangements of the events, so that pity and fear are aroused and *katharsis* is experienced.

Bywater (1909) does not render great assistance in his use of "Fable" and "Plot" as synonyms, as well as his, often parenthesized, addition to "action" of "actions," and Lucas (1968: 97) appears to refer to the earlier proposals of Jones (1962) and others as "almost ineffable mysteries." Nevertheless, prior to this dismissal, the, rather unfortunate, brevity of the comments of Lucas (1968: 96) includes the statement that πρᾶξις "means ... an action initiated with a view to an end and carried on in pursuit of it; it can thus include a whole complex of subordinate actions (cf. 51a 18, 19)," which itself may contain a disclosure which suggests that the argument presented by Jones (1962), Aylen (1964, 28 – 29; 153 – 159), Kitto (1951: 185 – 186; 1956: 233;), and Eagleton (2003: 77) may be a little less enigmatically oracular. For it is Halliwell (1986: 141 – 142) who states that, for Aristotle, the "action (*praxis*) ... is the pattern discernible in the 'actions and life' which the poet dramatizes. As such, it can be described as the object or content of the plot-structure (*muthos*), which can in turn be understood to be the design or significant organization of the work of art." But is the "object," or even the "content," the same as "the design or significant organization" of a drama? Halliwell's (1986: 141) asseveration that "[s]uperimposed onto the normal uses [of *pragmata*, the verb *prattein*, and the noun *praxis*], the *Poetics* contains an original development of the word *praxis* to mean the organized totality of a play's structure of events, its complete dramatic framework" raises the question as to why entertain a neologistic meaning to *praxis* when Aristotle's (and/or Halliwell's (1986)) *muthos* is adequate, and, subsequently, bequeath so inextricably formidable an examination to his students and subsequent readers, who are required to discern when *praxis* is *muthos*, when it is a neoteric coinage, and when it is indistinguishable from the *praxeis* of the *prattontes*. For, although Halliwell (1986: 5; 23 - 24) appears to follow Murray (1927: 150), who claims that "Aristotle's

praxis, or story, covers the internal as well as the external" meaning and structured intent of a dramatic work, he appears required to add that "[a] poetic *muthos*, in Aristotle's most concise terms, is the mimetic representation of an action," which, given the above, leaves the reader in a quandary as to what type of "action" Halliwell (1986) means, because, for Halliwell (1986: 24), Aristotle's "careful consideration of the properties of a tragic *muthos*" includes "the crucial shape of the ideal tragic action." More forceful is the statement by Halliwell (1986: 143; emphasis added) that "the action of a play is <u>not</u> simply the sum of the component actions or events; it is a coherent and meaningful order, a pattern which supervenes on the arrangement of this material and arises out of the combination of purposive individual actions." Appropriating this statement, it may be proposed that the action is the "order" and not the 'ordering,' it "supervenes" – in a Latin sense which Halliwell (1986) appears to invoke – and "it arises out of" the actions (plural) ostended in the *muthos*, which give rise to pity and fear, and is *kathartic* in its apprehension. It may be unjustified to subject Halliwell's (1986) detail to the brief rendering permitted here, but he does appear to employ a distinction between πρᾶξις and μῦθος, which, on occasions, suggests an excess to πρᾶξις that it not wholly accounted for in μῦθος. Thus, rightly, "[c]haracter ... is a subordinate aspect of the play, but one which must contribute to the unity, and therefore the significance, of the action" (Halliwell, 1986 162), and whose πράξεις engender "[p]ity and fear [which] need[s] to be comprehended within the framework of a coherent tragic action" (Halliwell, 1986: 171). Although the dubiety and irresolution endures – as it ought to do so in Classic texts – one is prompted to advert to the display of "universals" that the "coherent tragic action" discloses, an action that is pedagogic of the 'truths' of the meaning of being human, as noted in the discussion of *mimesis* above.

Therefore, when Kermode (1979: 154, n.2) asserts that "[f]or Aristotle ... a sequence of moral choices is an action," it is the action that is evident in the sequence as a sequence of actions in a plot, which is the "structure of events," ostended by the characters. It is this dual usage of "action" and "actions," whose conflation or severance engenders too fervent support or detraction, which, for this reader of the *Poetics*, may permit a distinction, a matter which will continue to be examined below, because, even if the assertion that "tragedy is the imitation not of people but of an action and of life" (*Poetics*, 1450a 16 – 17) is subjected here or elsewhere to translational disputes, as, indeed, is much of the *Poetics*, and even though discrepant readings may be dissentient, it is an assertion that is repeated in the *Poetics* (1449b 24; 1449b 36; 1450a 3 – 4; 1451a 16 – 19; 1462b 11).

(iii) *Prattô*

Such a notion of πρᾶξις, which severs the conflation of πρᾶξις and μῦθος proposed, and yet not proposed, by Halliwell (1986), both comports a diligence with regard to the distinction in the use of πρᾶξις and πράξεις, and also bears its weight upon the related verb πράσσω – or in Attic, πράττω – and its participial form, which often is employed of the 'actions of the characters.' This extended translation of πράττοντες, likewise, may assist in withholding the transfer of rendering πράττειν as "to act," and, therefore, of the πράττοντες as "actors," and also in resisting the rather graceless use of "agents" for the participial form. Once again, as occurs in the incipience of a technical discourse, the question arises as to whether Aristotle means "actors," "characters," or "agents who perform actions," when he employs πράττοντες. The diverse English versions of πράττοντες amongst interpreters all

too often leads to the dogmatic foreclosure upon the term by, indeed, embryonic schools of interpreters, which, for the reasons evident in Foucault (1969), precipitately become indelibly 'formalist' or functionalist,' rather than accord consent to dialogic, perhaps, multilogic perspectives. Else (1967: 240, n. 66) observes the difficulty:

> Try as we will, we cannot get a good English equivalent for πράττοντες. 'Actors' and 'performers' both suggest the theatre; 'enactors' is impossibly artificial and smacks, if anything, of legal jargon; and 'characters,' besides not carrying the implication of πράττειν, runs into ambiguity with 'character.' Is 'agents' possible? I hardly think so.

In acute form, such a dispute is evident amongst scholars at *Poetics*, 1449b 37, where Lucas (1968: 99)[91] and Else (1967: 239) refer to "actors," who require qualities of "character" (τὸ ἦθος, *Poetics*, 1449b 38) and "intention" (τὴν διάνοιαν, *Poetics*, 1449b 38), which is an assertion that Halliwell (1986: 140, n. 2) finds 'absurd.' If Lucas (1968) and Else (1967) had to hand Halliwell's (2005: 401 – 402) later recognition of the significance of 'live theatre' to Aristotle, they may have modestly ruffled his earlier *hauteur*.[92]

However, owing to the nature of the *Poetics*, a variety of terms may be preferable, although the initial appearance of πράττοντας, at *Poetics*, 1448a 1, may appropriate a gloss, and suggest that "[s]ince dramatic mimeticists represent actions, the actions of

[91] Lucas (1968: 99) is quite firm: "πραττόντων: the performers, who have the same ἤθη as the original characters in the story."

[92] Perhaps some reticence ought to be counselled with respect to the summary dismissal of a relationship between possible intended performers and a dramatic and/or musical text, particularly in a relatively limited environment of proximate authors and performers. This especially is evident of Mozart's operatic music, and, to an extent, of some of the libretti, see Glover (2005: 227 – 228; 233; 242; especially, 261; 273).

the characters (τούτους) must be of a serious or trivial nature ..." Consequently, when the manner of *mimesis* is distinguished, the whole mimeticization of "the same" (τὰ αὐτὰ, *Poetics*, 1448a 20) "objects [sc.]" that epic and narrative represent are "acted out and performed" (πράττοντας καὶ ἐνεργοῦντας, *Poetics*, 1448a 23) in the dramatic manner.

As much as the *Poetics* is neoteric and, in a sense, 'inaugural,' in the oppressive shadow of his Socratic teacher, Aristotle repeatedly invokes the peerless (ἄριστα, *Poetics*, 1462b 11) works of Homer, almost as tragedy's begetter. Not only are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* μάλιστα μιᾶς πράξεως μίμησις (*Poetics*, 1462b 11) – an assertion of some magnitude given the discussion of *muthos* and *praxis* above – but they share with tragedy the art of *mimesis*, of representing the same kinds of objects, although they are separated by the dedication of drama to πράττοντας γὰρ μιμοῦνται καὶ δρῶντας (*Poetics*, 1448a 27 – 28). The use of both πράττω and δράω by Aristotle here may emphasize that drama is exclusively an enactive *mimesis* – in Bywater's (1909: 9) version: "present their personages as acting and doing" – and also may enable a brief, if, for Aristotle, questionable excursus to be undertaken on the naming of plays as δράματα rather than as πράγματα (see Bywater, 1909: 125).

But the use of πράττοντες or δρώντων (the latter not unimportantly employed in the definition of tragedy, in *Poetics*, 1449b 26) to reify this particular enactive mode of *mimesis*, or of *mimesis* by means of action, τῆς ἐν τῷ πράττειν μιμήσεως (*Poetics*, 1459a 15), the phrase with which Aristotle signals that περὶ μὲν οὖν τραγῳδίας … ἱκανὰ τὰ εἰρημένα (*Poetics* 1459a 15 – 16), must not be conflated

with character in any 'modern,' psychological, or expressive Stanislavskian sense,[93] as Jones (1962: 59) reminds us. Although Jones (1962: 59) does wish to 'enfold' both 'actor' and 'character' in the term πράττοντες, an assimilation that is dismissed by Halliwell (1986: 140, n. 2), he (Jones, 1962: 59 – 60) does efface the actor-character conflation by interposing the tragic mask, and in his use of the term "stage figure" (Jones, 1962: 59), rather than "agent" or "actions of a character." In addition, the proximity of the playwright to the dramatic performance in Classical Athens ought not to be eroded by our sedentary postures and downward textual gaze in concentrated 'acts' of exegesis.

Regrettably, such an exploration of rival interpretations, however nuanced, does little to elucidate *Poetics*, 1450a 15 – 1450b 4. Nevertheless, it is suggested that, however reluctantly, πρᾶξις ought to be respected as an increasingly technical term to signify the "unified action" (μία … πρᾶξις, *Poetics*, 1451a 19), whilst the "agents" or "stage figures" may ostend "many actions" (πράξεις … πολλαί, *Poetics*, 1451a 18), and, in some instances, "from which no single action is evident" (ἐξ ὧν μία οὐδεμία γίνεται πρᾶξις, *Poetics*, 1451a 19), and, as a consequence, "the plot is not one" (Μῦθος δ' ἐστὶν εἷς, *Poetics*, 1451a 16). And "the plot is not one," or, perhaps better, it does not constitute a unity, if it is centred upon one individual character or heroic figure, since, and here Bywater's (1909: 25) translation of *Poetics*, 1451a 17 is impactful: "[a]n infinity of things befall that one man." Fundamental to the forthright reproof of poets who suppose that a single μῦθος presents a single individual, or,

[93] States (1985: 163 – 164) refers to Veltrusky recalling Stanislavski's mention of "the Russian Actor, Yermilov Sadovsky, who ... 'suddenly stopped in the middle of a sentence to portray the character feeling in his mouth for a hair from his fur collar, and went on for a long time moving his tongue around and 'trying to take the hair out' with his fingers while the sentence he had begun remained unfinished' ... It is exactly the revelation of something hitherto subtheatrical, not simply realism but an audacious display of the actor's power to be 'real' on the microlevel."

more appositely, that a single individual may be represented in a single μῦθος, is the evident point that their respective multiple actions, and the multifarious nature of human lives, would be impossible to reproduce. If such an endeavour were essayed, it would not produce a coherent plot, because a coherent plot where τὰ μέρη συνεστάναι τῶν πραγμάτων (*Poetics,* 1451a 32 – 33) is to represent a πρᾶξις, which is μιᾶς τε εἶναι καὶ ταύτης ὅλης (*Poetics*, 1451a 32).

The problematic passage in this context – *Poetics,* 1450a 16 – 1450b 4 – appears to begin by reiterating the repeated statement that tragedy is the *mimesis* of an action (cf. *Poetics*, 1449b 24; 36; 1450a 3 – 4; 1451a 18 – 19). However, Aristotle is elucidating the actions of characters and their place in a tragic dramatic work, and the assimilation of the πράττω group of words, which is employed here, with the aggregating technical use of πρᾶξις, as explored above, ought to be contested. Furthermore, possibly embedded in the statement that ἡ γὰρ τραγῳδία μίμησις ἐστιν οὐκ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλὰ πράξεων καὶ βίου (*Poetics,* 1450a 16 – 17) may be the notion of what constitutes the tragic experience or pleasure, since actions produce the qualities of character, and it is the actions that bring about their well-being or otherwise, because κατὰ δὲ τὰς πράξεις εὐδαίμονες ἢ τοὐναντίον (*Poetics*, 1450a 19 – 20). This proposal renders the use of πράξεως, which is possible on the textual evidence, rather than πράξεων, as employed by Kassel (1965) above, less likely, and, owing to the reiteration that 'tragedy as the imitation of an action' in the *Poetics*, the former reading is not required to bolster that particular argument. But, a degree of *aporia* remains, because of the subsequent statements that τὸ τέλος πρᾶξίς τις ἐστίν (*Poetics*, 1450a 18) is interpreted by Halliwell (1995; 1999: 51, n. c) as the

telos "of either drama or life: Ar[istotle] may mean both," and which extends the remit of Halliwell's (1986) earlier and reluctant notion of *praxis*.

But, this is all rather unsatisfactory, since, within a few lines, Aristotle has asserted that τὰ πράγματα καὶ ὁ μῦθος τέλος τῆς τραγῳδίας (*Poetics* 1450a 22 – 23). Thus, perhaps, the "goal" of a tragedy is "a certain kind" (τις) of "action," but "actions" or "events," to which Halliwell (1995; 1999: 51) adds "the plot" and Bywater (1909: 19) places "Fable or Plot" in apposition to "action" (here, notably, in the singular), is "the goal" of tragedy. And, in case aporetic vertigo has not affected his students, Aristotle then informs them that "action" or "an action" is central to tragedy, and, furthermore, that a tragedy could do without "character" (*Poetics,* 1450a 23 – 25). Thus, on the one hand, Lucas (1968: 102) is right to observe that "τέλος in l. 18 is awkward with τέλος in l. 22, especially as the first refers to the end of the action which is the subject of the tragedy, the second to the action itself with is the end of tragedy;" but, on the other hand, it will be noticed that this is a somewhat beguiling statement in the context of Lucas's (1968: 96 – 97) earlier rejection of a division between *praxis* and *muthos*.

Nevertheless, in summary, possibly one may suggest that, in Aristotle's thought here, he appears to be attempting to address, with lapidary concision – the lecture format may have provided him with an opportunity to expatiate – the notion of a πρᾶξις as an informing action of a dramatic work, the "actions" of characters, and the effect of those actions in a plot, which contains περιπέτειαι καὶ ἀναγνωρίσεις (*Poetics,* 1450a 34 – 35). The outward informing rationale and the inward informing principles seem to be employed in conflict and, if not to clash semantically, at least to

blur denotative precision. But Foucault (1969) has not preceded this exploration of some of the concepts in Aristotle's *Poetics* as a stratagem for avoiding clarity; rather, it proposes that a relative ambiguity appears to reside in the passage as it seeks for discursive coherence, as it would in any similar endeavour to forge a 'discursive regularity.'

Moreover, and as noted earlier, it cannot simply be dismissed that the *Poetics* is less Aristotle's ratiocination about tragedy than his reflection upon tragedy within a performative environment, and that, in this sense, the *Poetics* is 'theatrical.' As resistant as Lucas (1968) may be to evoking such an ambience (and not without cause, cf. 1450b 17 – 18; although, possibly, Aristotle may be less "emphatic" than Lucas (1968)), the *Poetics* is not without a mood of post-performance meditations upon the live dramatic spectacle, and this 'practical' aspect of his lectures is an experience from which his students would not have been excluded. Therefore, the interpretive struggle for precision ought to be mitigated by the unstable processes of generating a technical discourse, by the experience of theatre, by the comparison of that contemporary experience with evidence of an earlier milieu, and by the proposal that the propinquitous apprehension of the lecturer's propositions may have been heard as less agonistic and more contextually appropriate, with the additional possibility of a shared fiduciary framework of common and commonly understood terms between lecturer and students, than they continue to be heard by the removed cousins of the interpretive tradition.[94] In essence, then, it is the contention – *toujours déjà*

[94] The problem of personal and surrounding contexts in the matter of translation, understanding and interpretation is emphasized in its most acute form by Steiner (1998: 178 – 179): "No two human beings share an identical associative context. Because such a context is made up of the totality of an individual existence, because it comprehends not only the sum of personal memory and experience but also the reservoir of the particular subconscious, it will differ from person to person. There are no

corrigible – that, for Aristotle, as possibly for his hearers – a πρᾶξις in an accomplished tragedy prescribes to a μῦθος, in which the πράξεις of the πράττοντες are ostended, and through which, by their actions, the φόβος and ἔλεος appropriate and proper to the particular μῦθος and coherent with, and mobilized by, the πρᾶξις is generated. If this process moves opportunely, then the requisite κάθαρσις will be obtained.

(iv) *Hamartia*

The desired emotional identification with the central "agent," the "stage figure," or the 'character who performs the actions' in the best of tragedies, is focused in the μεταβάλλων from prosperity to adversity through some kind of ἁμαρτία (*Poetics*, 1453a 9 – 10; 15 – 16). Although this group of words – its verbal and substantive forms – primarily is employed in the *Poetics* of the errors and faults, the mistakes and technical misjudgements of the poetic craft, and mostly of the dramatists themselves, although occasionally of the critics (*Poetics*, 1451a 20; 1453a 24; 1454b 17; 1456b 15; 1460b 15, 17, 19, 23, 29, 30, etc.), the interpretive challenge resides where the change in the fortunes of the πρωταγωνιστής occurs δι' ἁμαρτίαν τινά (*Poetics*, 1453a 9 – 10) and μεταβάλλειν … ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν … δι' ἁματίαν μεγάλην (*Poetics* 1453a 14 – 16).

The argument presented above, which foregrounds the importance of the structural features of a good tragedy in the *Poetics* – that a single action is developed in events which unfold in a coherent plot, and that character is subservient to a cohesive plot,

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facsimiles of sensibility, no twin psyches. All speech forms and notations, therefore, entail a latent or realized element of individual specificity."

which itself remains faithful to an action – resists Halliwell's (1986: 146) brinkmanship with the concepts of πρᾶξις and μῦθος, as noted above. Halliwell's (1986) retreat from crossing over the *praxis-muthos* divide, conflates, what appears to this reader as, admittedly, an uncertain scission of the two concepts, and leads to this puzzling and, again, for this reader, almost beguiling statement, which notably, is preceded by an unsurprising concession:

> Although the attention paid to action in the earlier parts of the *Poetics* to some extent reflects Aristotle's interest in the dramatic *mode* of mimesis ... it is also a sign of the larger agent-centred view of drama which the treatise consistently offers ... Scrutiny of the theory of tragedy outlined in the *Poetics* warrants us, I believe, in concluding that Aristotle is concerned to exclude from the structure of a plot all those sources of causation which are external to the actions of the human figures themselves. These sources encompass, most importantly, the full range of traditional religious explanations for events in the world. The figures of tragedy are primarily characterised as 'the agents' because it is this description which best fits the agent-centred perspective within which dramatic poetry is seen in the treatise: it is the agents them[s]elves who are the prime causative force in the action of the play; it is they who direct, or, through the failures of action for which *hamartia* stands, *misdirect*, the development of events which gives the plot its structure and unity (Halliwell, 1986: 146).

The assertion that *hamartia* signifies a "failure of action" by the agent, who then "misdirects" the "development of events" advertises the actions of the agents in the

dramatic work, and, particularly, publicizes the actions of the principal character, and yet the actions are bound, and, simultaneously, not bound through inaction, to the principal character. The issue is less one of Halliwell's (1986) prevarication on some of the key concepts of the *Poetics* – this, as Foucault (1969) has assisted in demonstrating, is appropriate – than it is the relative certainty with which he may claim that the focus on "action in the earlier parts of the *Poetics* is ... a sign of the larger agent-centred view of drama which the treatise consistently offers" (Halliwell, 1986: 146). The reservations of this reader have been stated, and, in addition, the focus on the πρωταγωνιστής and his actions, which Halliwell (1986) emphasizes here – whether action or inaction, direction or misdirection – when concomitantly viewed with his fall, does warrant Jones's (1962: 46) admonition with respect to "the promising inwardness of *hamartia* – a familiar world of temptation, self-division, the exposed pathos of struggling conscience," and leads, one concurs, to his contextually vital reproof to translators – here, Else and Bywater – of a presumption of psychological motives by their imputation of internal motivation in the verb μέλλειν (Jones, 1962: 48 – 50). In his summary of the views of Jones (1962) and House (1964), Eagleton (2003: 77) refers to ἁμαρτία as "more of a bungling or missing-the-mark in the action than some moral defect, an objective blunder or error more than a state of the soul."

How, then, is *hamartia* best appropriated and rendered in *Poetics*? One suggests that, on the one hand, any proposal ought to endeavour to resist the inward willing act, which would permit the interpellation of 'modern' psychological motives; and, with this in mind, on the other hand, to admit meanings that do not present too dogmatic a foreclosure upon the term. Both Janko (1984: 210) and Halliwell (1986: 221) refer to

the semantic range of the term in Aristotle's writings, and, perhaps in conception, a liability to error or failure, which causes actions to be undertaken with a lack of malevolent intent (Janko, 1984: 209), actions which are veiled by an ignorance of their outcome, invokes the type of *hamartia* most apposite to that τῆς καλλίστης τραγῳδίας (*Poetics*, 1452b 31). Actions undertaken in error of understanding, or of full knowledge, have tragic implications and results, which lead to a recognition of the action undertaken in error, and a reversal, which is ἡ εἰς τὸ ἐναντίον τῶν πραττομένων μεταβολὴ (*Poetics*, 1452a 22 – 23). And, although contrary examples may be cited (see, *inter alia*, Eagleton, 2003: 80), it is precisely the masterly drama that Aristotle is envisioning, and of "those situations in which action is taken or intended by those ignorant of the real position" (Lucas, 1968: 303). More influential of Aristotle's tragic foreshadowing of the Gospel of Mark is Lucas's (1968: 307) assertion that "[t]he tragedy of error, of that blindness which is part of the human condition ... represents an experience and a vision of life ..." – a vision blinded by its own insight and insightful in the cause of its own blind actions, which represent the tragedy and truthfulness of being human.

(v) *Katharsis*

A strong element of 'undecidability' is evident both within the *Poetics* and also when pursuing an exegesis of the work, but, possibly, no more provocatively so with respect to the burden of tradition, than when reaching the term, κάθαρσις, which "has long been the most vexed in the entire work" (Halliwell, 1995; 1999: 17).

The *crux interpretationis* occurs within the definition of tragedy (*Poetics*, 1449b 24 – 28), when, δι᾽ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου (*Poetics*, 1449b 27), the achievement of κάθαρσις results. Bywater's (1909: 151) note, that the phrase "δι᾽ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου: means practically δι᾽ ἐλεεινῶν καὶ φοβερῶν," is not without import with regard to the monition of Jones (1962: 46) above, in the sense that what is ostended are "piteous and alarming scenes" (Bywater, 1909: 151). But this is not to attribute the κάθαρσις exclusively to the 'possible dramatic world,' to which Else (1967: 439 & 441) inclines, since "the emotions affected are those of the audience" (Janko, 1984: 139). Nevertheless, vigilance must be observed lest the homeopathic purification of unchecked emotions, which responds to the Platonic suspicion of the emotional excesses of theatre, asserts that tragedy is group therapy for the emotionally ungovernable. In addition, cognizance must be taken of Bywater's (1909: 161) reminder that strong emotions mirrored to the strongly emotional may heighten, rather than lessen, emotional exuberance.

Needless to say – the 'needless' bears the litotes – an interpretation of the contested term cannot be settled upon here. However, the following, somewhat bold, proposal is stated:

i) the emotional response to tragedy does not exclude any person;

ii) the "*katharsis*" of "pity" and "fear" endeavours not to dispose of the emotions, but to order them; and

iii) that act of ordering generates a sense of equilibrium which is pleasurable in the manner appropriate to the "serious" and "elevated" nature of the genre.

One agrees both with Bywater (1909: esp. 155) that the medical background to the concept of *katharsis* is informative, but also with Golden (1992: 37) that it remains wanting with respect to tragedy. One is unsure that Halliwell's (1986: 354 – 355) assertion that the cognitive and intellectual approach is as inadequate as he states, since "[events arousing] pity and fear" may not, of necessity, exclude the arousing of the emotions of the spectators, nor that the "events" that generate the "arousing" would be undertaken or not – 'directed' or 'misdirected' – by his 'agent-centred doers' (Halliwell, 1986: 355).

Perhaps one may suggest that, through *mimesis*, events in a tragedy of a pitiful and fearful nature engender pity and fear in the spectator for the 'agents,' or 'stage figures,' or 'characters which perform the actions' and their predicaments, and the pity and fear undergone and experienced (πάσχειν) by the spectator are not without personal and communal import for the audience – with reference both to the self and to the *polis* – and that "pity and fear, aroused by the drama, act on the latent emotions of pity and fear in the spectator" (Janko, 1984: 142). Therefore, those events and predicaments cause this pity and fear to arise, and this pity and fear is purged by that pity and fear aroused by the events and predicaments – the homeopathic remedy – and, through a state of recognition and intellection, a state of relief, understanding, and the restoration of equilibrium is activated, which is a pleasurable experience, and ἡ ἡδονή is of a serious rather than a comedic kind (Janko, 1984: 141).

Lucas (1968) is not alone in wanting more from Aristotle than any 'readerly' reading of the *Poetics* produces. Nevertheless, one suggests that the distance may be traversed from a detached reflection on, and/or an emotional submersion in, the

dramatic ostension, to the sober realization of the nature of human experience and existence in a 'writerly' reading of Aristotle's treatise. Lucas (1968: 278) parodies this "theory a tragedy [in] which ... pity and fear are cleansed of their pain because the tragic situation is made comprehensible ... and the poet's philosophic insight leads to a clam and passionless, or acquiescent, contemplation of the human condition," but it is one not without commendation, as has been noted earlier, particularly with reference to Belfiore (1992; & ns. 76 & 77). Somewhat derisively, he concludes that Aristotle "would not have said anything so clumsy as that pity and fear purify pity and fear", but, as Janko (1984: 142) points out, "this is the vital principle involved, that of homeopathy."

In fact, it is Janko's (1984) inquiry of the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, as the basis for the lost, missing, partial, or non-existent 'Poetics of Comedy' by Aristotle that generates a view not without proleptic significance, and one informative of an attractive viewpoint, which is not too indistinguishable from that of Belfiore (1992) and the one appropriated here, and, moreover, of relevance to the suggested κάθαρσις evident in a possible dramatically tragic Gospel of Mark. The medical interpretation of κάθαρσις casts its pall upon other interpretations, and although *Poetics* 1453b 12 – 13 is of uncertain assistance, the phrase, διὰ μιμήσεως, may be a responsive equivalent to the manner in which medicinal *katharsis* may act.[95] But, even if it cannot bear this exegetical weight (see especially, Lucas, 1968: 151, who reflects the uncertainty; also, Janko, 1984: 141 – 142; Bywater, 1909: 19; Halliwell, 1995; 1999: 75), its proximity to the pleasure of tragedy and of the emotions of pity and fear is observed.

[95] Craik's suggestion is of some importance, see n. 76.

If a mood of disappointment and dissatisfaction may prevail following the examination of some of the disputed terms in the *Poetics* above, here a permissible mood may be one of frustrated discontent. Perhaps a view may be adopted, and it is one that concurs with Belfiore (1992) as stated earlier, is close to Golden's view (1998: 106 – 107), although he emphasizes the 'intellectual' aspect specifically, and shares in Janko's (1984: 141) approval of House (1964), if somewhat less forthrightly:

> The purpose of the catharsis of pity and fear, as House argues forcefully, is not to drain our emotional capacities so that we are no longer able to feel these emotions; instead it is to predispose us to feel emotion in the right way, at the right time, towards the right object, with the right motive, and to the proper degree ... Catharsis 'brings our emotions nearer to those of a good and wise man,' i.e. to equilibrium or emotional balance, the Golden Mean. The restoration of balance naturally causes pleasure.

Lucas (1968: 287) may be too assured in his view that "Aristotle produced his theory [of *katharsis*] *ad hoc* in answer to Plato's condemnation of drama and never developed it outside this context," and he cites the distant futures of Castelvetro and Voltaire in agreement (Lucas, 1968: 287, n. 2). But, if Lucas (1968) means that it was <u>especially</u> tied to drama, then it is present not as a peripheral 'extra,' but present within the very definition of tragedy itself. Therefore, if it requires explanatory interpretation, it requires interpretation within <u>that</u> context, and, for this reader of the *Poetics*, that context proposes that the serious matter of an action unfolds in a plot, and, in the best of tragedies, causes a heightened emotional identification of some

degree, and entails in the spectator a cognitive processing of those circumstances, the events and the predicament, which engenders an intellectual comprehension, ordering and equilibrium, which is a *kathartic* pleasure.

The various interpretations of that *kathartic* pleasure throughout the tradition, and, more particularly, through more recent psycho-analytic and psycho-therapeutic spectacles, inevitably searches the past through the futures of that past, and invokes tragedy which is

> pleasurable, majestic, awe-inspiring, suggestive of infinitive capacity and immeasurable value, yet also punitive, intimidating, cutting us savagely down to size. We see men and women chastised by the Law for their illicit desire, a censure which with admirable economy satisfies our sense of justice, our respect for authority and our impulse to sadism. But since we also identify with these malcontents, we feel the bitterness of their longing, a sympathy which morally speaking is pity, and psychoanalytically speaking is masochism. We share their seditious passion, while reaping pleasure from castigating ourselves for such delinquent delight. Pity brings us libidinally close to them, while fear pushes them away in the name of the Law. But we also fear our own pity, alarmed by our own dalliance with destruction ... [and] ... the issues at stake remain ethical and political ones, questions of justice, violence, self-fulfilment and the like. Few artistic forms display such impressive erotic economy, and perhaps none caters so cunningly to our sadism, masochism and moral conscience all at the same time. Few, also,

> reveal such a close mirroring between the transactions on stage and the transactions between stage and spectators (Eagleton, 2003: 176);

or, subsequently, reveal the transactions between the spectators when they are the actors on the stages of their own existence. For it is also there that human "finitude is thus thrown into harsh relief, [and] so by contrast is the august infinity which we crave" (Eagleton, 2003: 176), a notion which encapsulates the suggested πρᾶξις of the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy.

CONCLUSION

Ironically, to read the *Poetics* as a "monument" in its own "spaces of dissension," dispersion, and dissemination is not to render it more definitive, as scholars like Jones (1962) and Halliwell (1986)[96] appear to expect. Rather, a Foucauldian reading highlights and foregrounds the activity of discursive solicitation and exploitation undertaken by an incipient discourse on poetry, and demonstrates its actions of meretricious perfidy, with its duplicitous adducements, its plagiarisms and interpretive citations. Even when the 'evidence' is so fragmentary, so limited, so dimly perceivable; nevertheless, an inquiry that probes discursive constructs must examine

> the conditions in which the archival material was assembled as living social relations embodying tensions, contradictions and struggle. Thus the material,

[96] The modifications, even though most are modest, between Halliwell (1986) and Halliwell (2005) noted above suggest the problems of discursive closure.

> though it attempts to fix and categorize people in line with the dominant views ... cannot fully render these tensions static and dead (Doy, 2000: 119).

And the current researcher returns to those interstices of tangential and rival perspectives – so often restrictively partial and suggestive – in order to participate in those ancient and ongoing struggles, in an endeavour to confront the conflicts which have shaped discourses, and, *toujours déjà*, continue to trap, and foreclose upon, discursive fluidity, and to re-invoke the adversative challenges to their exclusionary power, which writes itself upon the bodies of subjects and is ostended in their material enactments.

For it is in the discursive struggle, the ἀγών, to be original and pristine, to utter a 'new word,' and to inaugurate a bounded and hegemonic discourse, that the *Poetics* selectively adopts, adapts, and converts terms and concepts variously utilized and serviceable elsewhere, but now for its own adhibition. But its accretional actions and adscititious abilities are not uniform, and its extortionate exactions vary in their intimidation and violation of previous terminological limitations. In the incipient and temporary monumental *stasis* of Aristotle's treatise, and breeding and harbouring its own φαρμακός within – indeed, a poisoner, a sorcerer, and a scapegoat – definitional precision *toujours déjà* is *sous rature*. Almost simultaneous with, and, of course, consequent to, the inspissation of a discourse from heterogeneous emergent surfaces, 'definitive' interpreters eisegetically create, re-create, mould, and mint a sophisticated discursive map, and demarcate its contours and co-ordinates more exactly and finely, and then, prepare the catechism, test the candidates, and conduct the rites of entry and rituals of admission. But discourses are 'regularities,' and regularities are defined by

their exceptions. Moreover, the power ceded to subject voices, which appropriate the discourse, itself engenders interpretive instability, as the more acute examination of some of key terms within the *Poetics* has revealed.

Since a discursive formation is established by raiding existing discourses, seizing, colonizing, and then cultivating terms and their variously nuanced conceptual presents and futures, so too, these former sequestrations themselves become other future tendentious borrowings and confiscations, and commission their consequent, and always defective, employment. Here lies, in its mendacious appropriation, the protocols of "reading differently" (Derrida, 1967b: 130), of reading both forward and backward, by placing in a dialogic ἀγών possible dramatic features in the Gospel of Mark and the components of a good tragedy in the *Poetics* of Aristotle.

Central to this reading is the πρᾶξις, an action external to the possible mimetic world of the dramatic μῦθος, but the kindling of that plot and its quickened flame, which shines both within the dramatic world and also disperses light beyond it. The μῦθος is composed of episodes, peopled with probable human actions and assimilable, possibly, reachable human characters, who display noble moral choices, and choral interludes, which often reflect the communal story. The central character stumbles, owing to an ἁμαρτία, and, in the more preferable complex plot, through an act of ἀναγνώρισις of the circumstances and events themselves, he turns, engendering a περιπέτεια, and thus forging a μετάβασις as the μῦθος transfers its focus from the δέσις, in order to pursue the ultimate λύσις. Outside the mimetically subjunctive dramatic arena resides the authorial creative world. If evidence of the πρᾶξις is contained within the flow of the μῦθος in the mimetic world, the πρᾶξις is the

primary informing power of the very possibility of a μῦθος. It is the story behind and within the actions ostended behind the fourth wall. If the 'mythoic' sphere is the 'possible' world, then the 'practic' sphere is the 'real,' or, perhaps better, the 'implied' authorial world and, whether or not emotional identification and re-ordering occurs within the dramatic arena, primarily it is in the latter world of the spectator's being human that the responses of ἔλεος and φόβος arise, and the ensuing κάθαρσις is effected. Finally, it is within the world of the readers and the viewers that the πρᾶξις may be discussed and debated, and although the possibility of multiple πράξεις may reside within the conceptual frame of the author, inevitably, the perspectives of viewers and readers will engender an interpretive multivalency of the πρᾶξις or πράξεις.[97]

From Plato's harsh critique of the poets and their words to Aristotle's careful analysis of the τέχνη of poetry, perhaps it may be opportune to conclude with a moment of applause for the poets from Horace, which later was echoed by Shakespeare:

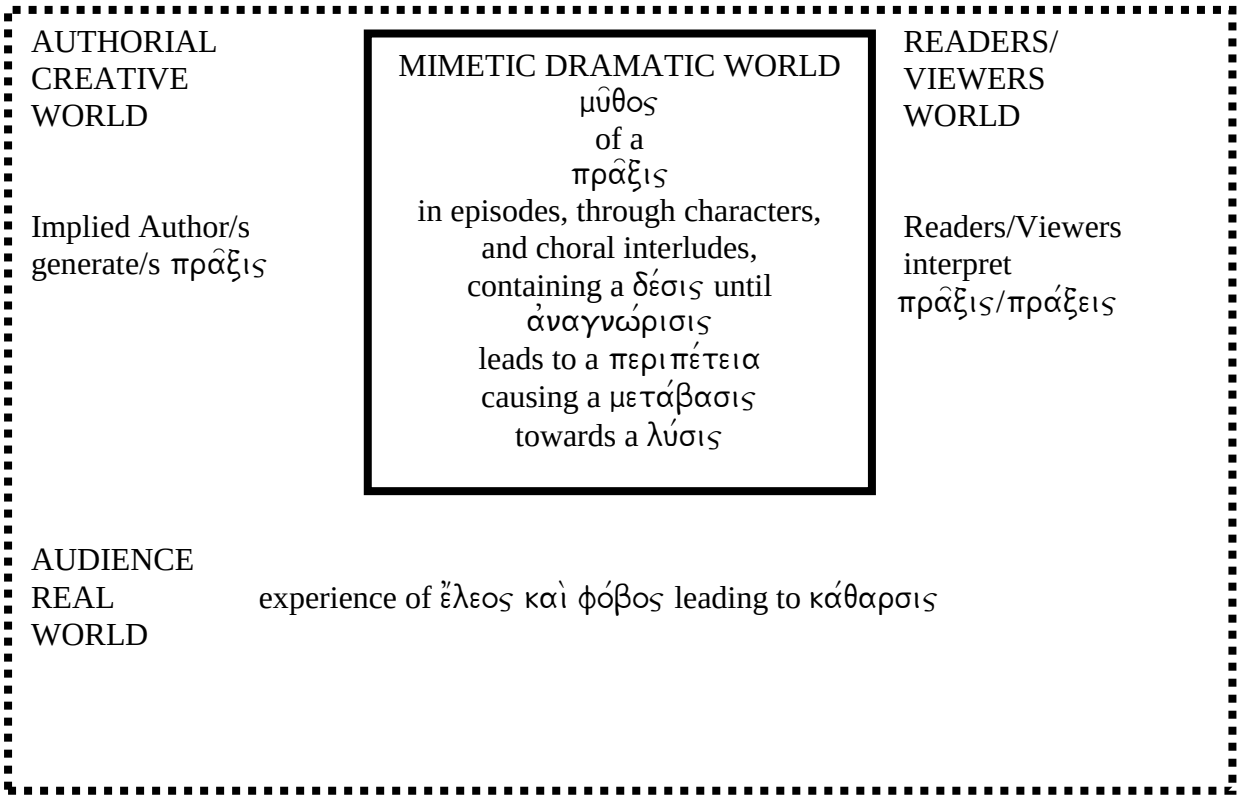
> ac ne forte putes me, quae facere ipse recurem, cum recte tractent alii, laudare maligne, ille per extentum funem mihi posse videtur ire poeta, meum qui pectus inaniter angit, irritat, mulcet, falsis terroribus implet, ut magus, et modo me Thebis, modo ponit Athenis (*Epistulae*, 2.1.208 – 213).

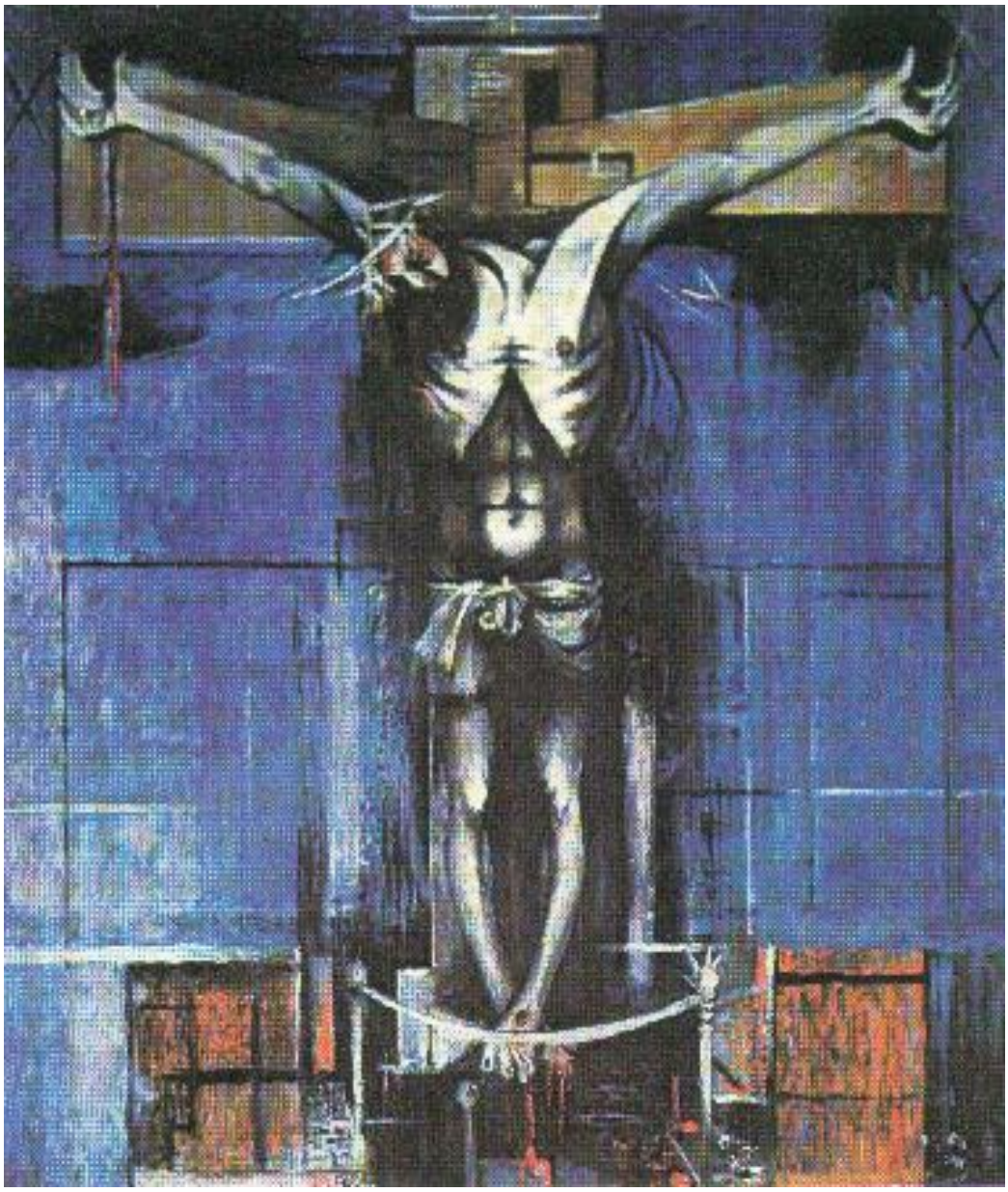
[97] Aristotle's observation of the succinct and economic containment of the classical tragedy is noted by the professional theatre critic of *The Spectator* (29th September, 2007), Lloyd Evans: "Strange, perhaps, to define a good production by what it lacks but *The Burial at Thebes* (a version of *Antigone* translated by Seamus Heaney) is an exemplary production of a Greek tragedy. The Athenians wrote small plays. The scripts are short, the cast few and the staging simple to the point of crudity, but directors are often intimidated by the 5th century and feel they need to put on a gymkhana."

Recalling the inscriptive power of the classic, and the representative, yet also transfiguring, nature of poetic creativity and its impress, it may be asserted that

> the poem, the statue, the sonata are not so much read, viewed or heard as they are *lived*. The encounter with the aesthetic is, together with certain modes of religious and of metaphysical experience, the most 'ingressive,' transformative summons available to human experiencing (Steiner, 1989: 143).

DIAGRAM OF THE ABOVE READING OF ARISTOTLE'S *POETICS*





Graham Sutherland

THE CRUCIFIXION

1946

St Matthew's Church, Northampton

(from: *The Face of Christ* by Dennis Thomas. London: Hamlyn, 1979)

CHAPTER FOUR

MARK AS DRAMA

INTRODUCTION

Derrida's (1967b: 130) statement that "Parce que nous commençons à écrire, à écrire autrement, nous devons relire autrement" is one that offers an invitation to undertake 'differential re-readings,' readings that seek out and appropriate the occlusions, the marginalized, and the concealed suggestive possibilities. Associations proffered by texts, which cannot bypass "être en rapport, de manière au moins virtuelle, dunamique, latérale, avec tous les mots composant le système de la langue" (Derrida, 1972b: 148) throw open the field of signifiers and their possible concatenations and intercalations, and include, for Moore (1992: 100), the language of dreams and cartoons, even if he asserts that the preference, regrettably, of "biblical scholars and theologians ... [is] ... to take a jackhammer to the concrete language of the Gospels, to replace graphic images with abstract categories." If "concrete" and "graphic" denote the etched quality both of the narrower and the deeper glyptic serration, as well as of the wider and less caustic, epidemic serrulation, then it is these graphemes, these markings, that are the inscriptions of versatile, and, often, purposefully phased[98] potencies and pressures on the body-text, and which, subsequently, produce

[98] "Purposefully phased" qualifies "versatile," because in the construction of ordered and disciplined bodies, political, religious, cultural, and familial discourses construct subjects in a deliberate manner, and introduce that process as a phased and structured practice.

entextualized bodies, both in each inceptive act, as well as in each consequent enactive ἀνάμνησις.

BEGINNINGS THROUGH ENDINGS

Dramatic beginnings may be 'mythoic' rather than 'practic' in terms of the exploration above. Therefore, in the progression from Implied Author to auditor, or in the transfer from the foyer to the dress circle, the spectator is thrust *in medias res*; and when that μῦθος already is known, its beginning is more, and not less, challenging to the playwright's ingenuity. The Gospel of Mark begins with a πρόλογος, but here it is one that attempts to state a πράξις, and then set the opening scene. Taylor (1966), Nineham (1963), Hooker (1991), and France (2002) demarcate this section as verses 1 – 13, and Hooker (1991: 32) highlights the "concentration of christological material ... as though Mark were allowing us to view the drama from a heavenly vantage-point." Hooker's (1991: 32) use of "drama" is not unnoticed, and, in an ostensive presentation, this initial section may be appropriated as a reference to the intentional πρᾶξις of the Implied Author. Present in the bold opening statements and graphic depictions of the "drama" of Mark reside the suspicion that other equally forthright pronouncements, as well as other allusive inferences, have been marginalized, relinquished, and discharged.

With respect to Aristotle's injunctions, it may be more prudent to restrict the πρόλογος of the Gospel of Mark to verse 1, which contains the kerygmatic statement

of a πράξις: Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ θεοῦ].[99] However, this statement is one that requires its own ἀγών, since, as has been noted, tragedy "begins with a problem or conflict which the ensuing action tries to resolve" (Segal, 1992: 86). The scenic depictions that follow verse 1 are highly visual, and, in particular, it is "[t]he dramatic opening [that] presumes a situation in which the speaker of the poem finds himself" (Race, 1992: 13), which is a suggestive theatrical device of participation and yet reflective distance, and one which may include the peremptory tone of verse 1. It is these two aspects of the semantic density of the initial statement and the richly kinetic and imaginative quality of the descriptions that follow, which may evoke a dramatic quality to the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy. But it also engenders an ἴχνος, that residual doubt both in the imperious pronouncement in verse 1, as well as in the dramatic exertion in the succeeding and persuasive ὄψις, which together appear as a compressed and spectacular campaign to convince the reader and viewer of an impending portentous occurrence, because, for Aristotle, the τερατῶδες μόνον … οὐδὲν τραγῳδίᾳ κοινωνοῦσιν (*Poetics* 1453b 9 – 10). Here, the anti-closural absent presence of Derrida's (1967b: 110) "trace," which "excède la question *qu'est-ce que* et la rend éventuellement possible," is dynamic, interrogative, and reflexive, and that doubt, together with the approach to the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy, formulates this opening as a "tragic beginning ... [which] ... must motivate the audience to ask who or why." However, Segal's (1992: 96) subsequent caveat is all the more significant, namely, that "only rarely does it make this

[99] Textual insertions, emendations, and revisions, whilst essential to biblical scholarship, are of less significance to the location of the Gospel of Mark in a dramatic environment, more especially in the recasting of the work as a drama. Here, however, the omission of υἱοῦ θεοῦ in the original reading of Codex Sinaiticus and in 𝔔, which is somewhat later, resists an exaltation which is both revealed and concealed in the μῦθος itself, and presents a more human tragic figure, possessed of that perennial human quality of ὕβρις.

interrogative gesture overt, perhaps because it aims at creating a total fiction and at excluding a self-conscious awareness of its aesthetic frame."

But such hermeticism has been rejected both in the bodily inscriptive dimension of the classics, and here, of the Gospel of Mark, as well as in the deconstructive signifier "[c]ourant les rues, il ne sait même pas qui il est, quelle est son identité" (Derrida, 1972b: 165), and thus, it takes an errant route. More pertinently, within the devices of drama theory itself, Barthes (1972) identifies a rupture between, on the one hand, the 'total fictionality' of a dramatic work, the experience of identification, and the subsequent kathartic pleasures of the audience; and, on the other hand, the *Verfremdungseffekt*, the defamiliarization strategy, which, in its socio-political form, was the cause of Brecht's "epic theatre." Using techniques of estrangement, of alienation – in the actor/character relationship, in the textual layering or textual tissues, in the contrast between set design and action, in the paucity of decor and props, which deliberately forces a conscious imaginative effort on the part of the spectator, in the use of spatial dynamics between characters, between characters and scenic appendages, and between supporting props (see Rorrison in Brecht, 1983: xxviii – xxxv) – Brecht sought to ensure that the audience would exercise its critical, rather than its affective, faculty, effectively and purposefully breaking that framed and fictional dramatic world. Thus, in Brecht's *Mother Courage*, the eponymous character is without sight and the audience without blindness. The spectator *sees* Mother Courage as a pawn in the economics of war, and *observes* the way in which she is implicated in the noxious bond between capitalism and militarization, and the spectator also witnesses her brutalization, her desensitization. War, the play asserts,

does not produce heroes as much as those complicit, at various levels, in the structures of exploitative capitalism.

Thus, it is the auditor who is called upon to become an actor, to be a hero in, and not simply a passive observer of, the events that occur on the stage, and to perceive his or her own participation and, implicit or explicit, ideological complicity, in the social and political order, and, having been conscientized, to endeavour to alter the existing reality. That 'reality' is outside the auditorium, but the fictional frame is broken and the message is foregrounded in the dialogic, gestural, scenic, sonic, and vestimentary coding of the performance. But the transition from appropriating the message – that πρᾶξις of which we have spoken – of the dramatic work and the consequential adoption of an external practice are distinct, and the impact of the socio-political causes of theatre are difficult to measure. However, the argument that agitprop theatre did have an effect in the democratic struggle in a country such as South Africa is not without merit, since dramatic enactments, whether in formal theatrical settings or in rural locations, were able to fulfil a role denied to the more traditional political voices. As Brink (1997: 166 – 167) notes:

> In the context of postmodernism in the United States and Europe, it may be entirely understandable for a theatre personality like Robert Wilson to say: "I am not interested in changing the world through theatre. I'm giving people invitations to daydreams." In South Africa, under apartheid, conditions differed vastly from those confronted by Wilson: Within a closed society, where the daily drama of existence permits of little daydreaming, theatre almost naturally assumes a more urgent and vital role.

And, quite possibly, dramatic works do move beyond proscenium closure in their inscriptive promise, whether as resigned acceptance, the reaffirmation of existing mores, or, perhaps, with conscientizing potential, and the ensuing κάθαρσις does engender a suspicion of unsettling, or, at least, realigning, the sense of equilibrium, and, conceivably, invoking the potential of challenge.[100] Those wider reaches, of which we have spoken in Chapter One, are embedded in the multi-perspectives of the overt and covert intentions of the Implied Author, and in the 'misprisions,' the 'creative misreadings and misinterpretations' (Bloom, 1994: 8), which are themselves readings and interpretations, undertaken by the spectators in their interpretive worlds, and, in the case of the gospels are etched upon the bodies of religious and non-religious adherents, and enacted with various degrees of enthusiasm (ἐνθουσιάζω) in public and private life-worlds.

With respect to Greek tragedy, and with some import for that extra-theatrical world to which a message, a πρᾶξις, may be transported, Roberts (2005: 137) has noted that, whilst surprising, innovative, and challenging techniques of opening and closing dramatic works are created by playwrights, and that

[100] See Steadman (1980), Coplan (1985), & Kruger (1999). With respect to Greenblatt's (1994: 29) assertion that Shakespeare's plays are "centrally and repeatedly concerned with the production and containment of subversion and disorder," one could propose that theatre in South Africa divides into the three aspects of Greenblatt's (1994) notion. First, certain local dramatic works simply contain "subversion and disorder." This is not to argue that such plays are politically innocuous, but that they ostend the entrenched values of groups within society, for example, Paul Slabolepszy's Saturday *Night at the Palace* (1982). Second, some plays both produce and then contain "subversion and disorder;" for example, Athol Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* (1989). Third, some works produce "subversion and disorder," such as *Shanti* (1976) and *Egoli* (YMCA, SOWETO; then the Space Theatre, 1979). Nevertheless, political, social, economic, religious, and cultural strictures apply, since "[t]heatrical forms ... can be properly evaluated or even seen as theatrical only through the investigation of the ownership, contestation, and appropriation of institutions, understood as organizations located in social and economic structures (and sometimes in actual buildings) as the prevailing conventions that determine the identification and legitimation of certain practices as 'theatre,' certain people as audiences, and certain combinations as 'national'" (Kruger, 1999: 12).

> [b]eginnings have a programmatic authority in drawing the audience's attention to the tragedy's characters, choice of story, approach, and relationship to the genre; endings have or appear to have, interpretive authority, since the point of closure may also be seen as the point at which the audience can finally look back at a completed action and read it fully, in retrospective patterning.

Thus, in the Gospel of Mark, the opening presents a theme, a spectacle, characters, a choice of trajectory and an approach, but "[h]ow does an ending complete the action of the play, and how does it deal with ... closure, scenes of finality, conclusiveness ...?" (Roberts, 2005: 137). The template of dramas informing Aristotle is not without its own subversive, even deconstructive, beginnings and endings – spectacular, quiescent, latently explosive, beguiling, indecisive, and potentially disturbing. But the funereal obsequies, which are undertaken at the conclusion of the Gospel of Mark, appear to predominate amongst the classical tragedies, where "mourning presents the most common concluding rituals; of twenty-three plays that end in one way or another with death, nineteen end with some form of or reference to burial or mourning ritual," and yet it is also the case that "division and uncertainty undercut or qualify closure at the end of a number of tragedies" (Roberts, 2005: 143), and, although this tends to occur most often in the individual works that contribute to a cycle of plays, it too occurs in plays without sequels.

In fact, the brevity and sense of dislocation, disaster, and ruin with which the Gospel of Mark ends finds an unequal parallel in the *Heracles* by Euripides, where "the gestures of closing are unusually unsettled" (Dunn, 1996: 116). Heracles admits to

his murderous act – the uxoricide and infanticide under Lyssa's spell – and is now required to re-learn the lesson of what is sure and worthy in, and ought to be maintained of, the human experience. From being a ναῦς, towing his small children (ἐφολκίδας, ll. 631 – 632), it is he who becomes the boat-in-tow (ἐφολκίδες, l. 1424) by the end of the play. Now friendship, which replaces his primary allegiance to the family that has been slain, is recognized and accepted as superior to πλοῦτον ἢ σθένος (l. 1425), even to valour, and to his heroic Labours. And yet, with his departure for Athens, the venerable Thebans, who compose the Chorus, state:

> στείχομεν οἰκτροὶ καὶ πολύκλαυτοι
>
> τὰ μέγιστα φίλων ὀλέσαντες (ll. 1427 – 1428).

Thus, as Heracles is guided to Athens by Theseus, Thebes loses its "greatest of friends," and what endures is a sense of loss, a profound sense of absence.

With respect to the Gospel of Mark, Smith (1995: 161), preaching to his monks in the Cowley Monastery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has adequately summarized the disconcerting nature of an ending that contests closure and challenges *kathartic* equilibrium:

> The hard truth is that Mark deliberately ended the gospel on an agonizing note of suspense, fear – and we must not hesitate to say it aloud – disobedience. The young man in a white robe tells the women not to be amazed. They gave way to *tromos* and *ekstasis*; a colloquial translation would be "They completely lost it." The angel tells them to "Go, tell his disciples and Peter

that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you" (Mark 16: 7). But they do not do this because they are too frightened. The Greek says, "They told nothing to no one."

How then does drama read the confident and exhibitionist beginning of the Gospel of Mark, its forthright statement and theatrics, and the uncertain and adversative attenuation, which ends this gospel, with both its rites of lamentation and its bewildering perplexity? And, importantly, what message, what πρᾶξις, is being conveyed in this seemingly doctrinaire μῦθος, which unfolds through a series of variously confrontational ἐπεισόδια, and is centred upon an authoritative and assured πρωταγωνιστής, and yet ends in confused and fearful hope and terror, almost an obloquy of that confident, perhaps hubristic, beginning? How does the ἴχνος, the trace, and its dynamic track of doubt, in the presence of the inaugural promise, its programme and its portents, cohere with the terminal moments of ἀπορία? How can the experiences of perplexity and estrangement in the terminal scene of tragic Mark be foregrounded in the initial scenes?

Ebbott's (2005: 375) statement that "[t]ragedy has the power to defy the difference between the centre and the marginal or to reinforce it, and in fact, it does both" is not without, at least, some rewarding connotations; and feminist criticism and deconstructive readings of texts may be commandeered to propound that "[t]he marginal figures in tragedy, outsider roles performed by and for insiders, can also be paradoxically central in this dynamic theatrical experience" (Ebbott, 2005: 375). With respect to beginnings and endings, how central are Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία (Mark 16: 1) and the νεανίσκον (Mark 16: 5) to the Gospel of Mark as an

Aristotelian tragedy; and, concomitantly, how central are their statements and reactions to a dramatic performance and the informing πρᾶξις of the Gospel of Mark?

Perhaps, appositely, it is a known and unknown theorist who purloins these questions, and permits the retention of the earnest of a perplexing promise. Whether the work of V.N.Vološinov, P.N.Medvedev, or M.M.Bakhtin – or, perhaps, Baxtin, or Bahtin (see Thiselton, 1992: 389 – 390; Lechte, 1994: 8) – it is the variously attributed proposition that the "controlled divergence of intended from apparent meaning" generates an attractive ἀπορία about "authentic over ostensible significance" that is pertinent. The proponent of such a notion is more usually known as Bakhtin, who "invites the reader to consider the possibility that the contending meanings of a potentially ironic text might stand in dialogic relationship with one another" (Busch, 2006: 477). Bakhtin (1981) contrasts the poet and the novelist with respect to their relationships to, and employment of, language. The poet, for Bakhtin (1981), forecloses upon the distance between the speaker and the lyric subject, and thus he assigns to the artist, and his or her expression, a propinquity without remainder (Bakhtin, 1981: 285). But Bakhtin (1981: 291) asserts that language resides in social worlds and public spaces, and exists variously as conflictual and compatible interrelational "heteroglossia," which, in its complex partnerships and agonistic dynamism, the novelist is able to represent:

> The novel can be defined as a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal stratification of any single national language into

> social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour ... this internal stratification present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre. The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types [*raznorecie*] and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions (Bakhtin, 1981: 262 – 263).

Therefore, in contrast to the poet, the novelist may empower her characters with discordant and opposing consciences, which the appropriate contrary and competing sociolinguistic sites empower with the capacity for an adversative literary strategy, and one that is to be distinguished from the reflexive self-presence of the poet's voice. Bakhtin (1981), it appears, conceives of poetry as 'lyric poetry' and understands it in comparatively "modern" terms – that 'personal song of the heart.' But one suggests that poetry as drama, to defer to the classical authors, is closer to the multifarious figural consciences which the novelist is able to engender, and that constitutive of the dramatic Gospel of Mark is a heteroglossic world of contest and crisis, of defiance, challenge, and encounter, in which multiple cultural and social language worlds meet. This discourse is fugal in nature, but once the subject has taken 'flight,' its dispersing voices become less countervailing than counter-productive, even counter-revolutionary, in their resistance to return to any concordant *stasis* or rest, so that

> even statements that seem relatively straightforward or single-voiced may actually be dialogic, making distinct, even competing claims ... [and] ... Mark wants to raise sincere and difficult questions about Jesus, including questions about his integrity as a representative of God and about the spiritual legitimacy of his ministry (Busch, 2006: 497 & 504).

A degree of conflict, which, it has been noted, is pivotal to tragedy, requires dissenting polemical trajectories, and if ἔστιν οὖν τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης (*Poetics*, 1449b 24 – 25), then a candid, sceptical, and demanding scrutiny of the oppositional expressions is required, whether these divergent views are textually explicit or implicit. This implicitation of contrariety generates a climate of suspicion, and, indeed, one of innovative performative opportunities, in order to undertake, or, perhaps, generate, a hermeneutics of the marginally central or the centrally marginal. In addition, the diverse intentionalities permit an ἀγών between the authorial and the figural, between the πρᾶξις and the actions and utterances of the characters within the μῦθος.

The *Oedipus Tyrannos* by Sophocles was lauded by Aristotle in the *Poetics*. It demonstrated καλλίστη δὲ ἀναγνώρισις, ὅταν ἅμα περιπετείᾳ γένηται, οἷον ἔχει ἡ ἐν τῷ Οἰδίποδι (1452a 32 – 33; cf. 1452a 22 – 26),[101] and the structure of its plot was considered dramatically effective both for the reader and the spectator alike, and engendered τὸ φοβερὸν καὶ ἐλεεινὸν … ἅπερ ἂν πάθοι τις ἀκούων τὸν τοῦ Οἰδίπου μῦθον (1453b 1 & 6 – 7). Again, later, Aristotle asserts that πασῶν δὲ

[101] The ἅμα suggests a broader view than a strict and immediate understanding might denote.

βελτίστη ἀναγνώρισις ἡ ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων, τῆς ἐκπλήξεως γιγνομένης δι᾽ εἰκότων, οἷον ἐν τῷ Σοφοκλέους Οἰδίποδι … (1455a 16 – 18). Likewise, the play is cited with respect to the external deed that introduces the fault-line (1453b 29 – 31; 1460a 29 – 30), the nescience of Oedipus concerning the murder of King Laius (1454b 6 – 8), and, finally, as an example of the economy of tragedy (1462a 18 – 1462b 3).

The presence of the *Oedipus Tyrannos* in the *Poetics* leans upon the Gospel of Mark, when the protocols of the former are sought in the latter. Associative meanings transgress the limen between the play by Sophocles and the Gospel of Mark, and suggest that the opening speech of Oedipus in the *Oedipus Tyrannos* and the πρόλογος of the Gospel of Mark share certain features: identification of each πρωταγωνιστής (*OT*, l. 8; Mark 1:1); statements about the populace and the location (᾽Ω τέκνα Κάδμου … πόλις, *OT*, ll. 1 & 4;[102] ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ … ἡ ᾽Ιουδαία χώρα καὶ οἱ ῾Ιεροσολυμῖται πάντες, Mark 1: 4 - 5); the activity of the participants, whether Θοάζετε ἱκτηρίοις κλάδοισιν ἐξεστεμμένοι (*OT*, ll. 2 – 3) or that ἐβαπτίζοντο … ἐξομολογούμενοι τὰς ἁμαρτίας αὐτῶν (Mark 1: 5); the contrast of second-hand reports and immediate participants, ἀγγέλων … ἄλλων ἀκούειν αὐτὸς ὧδ᾽ ἐλήλυθα (*OT*, ll. 6 – 7) and οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς … ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου ὀπίσω … ἦλθεν ᾽Ιησοῦς (Mark 1: 7 & 9), and the direct question by Oedipus, which focuses the audience, ᾽Ω τέκνα Κάδμου … τίνας (*OT*, ll. 1 – 2), and the suppressed question about what may be occurring when people are flocking to John, being baptized, confessing their sins and then, following the baptism of Jesus, ἀναβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος εἶδεν σχιζομένους τοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ὡς

[102] Dawe (1982: 85) notes that "in Greek poetry 'Cadmus' can mean either the legendary founder of Thebes, or in certain contexts, the city itself."

περιστερὰν καταβαῖνον εἰς αὐτόν· καὶ φωνὴ ἐγένετο ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν (Mark 1: 10 – 11).

But, as has been noted earlier, the retelling of traditional stories and informative, classical narratives are known futures, because they form part of the communal, societal, or national corpus of morphologically instructive stories. In addition, informative occurrences may be essential prerequisites to a dramatic work before its scenic ostension begins. In the *Oedipus Tyrannos* "[w]e are in Thebes, and Oedipus is king; the riddle of the sphinx, the killing of Oedipus' father, and the marriage with his mother are all in the past, but not yet discovered; fame has not yet turned to infamy" (Roberts, 2005: 139). In the Gospel of Mark we are in Palestine, the proclamation of Jesus as a son of God, the challenge of Jesus to the riddling casuistry of the Jewish teachers and the challenge to the disciples of the riddling parables themselves, the shafts of knowledge and the clouds of ignorance descending upon the characters and the auditors, the arrest, trial, and subsequent crucifixion of Jesus, and the fearful outcome for his followers are in the future perfect tense of a known yet undiscovered future tense. How to 'unknow' the known, or, at least, to acquire the deflected, metaphoric possibility of a mediated yet searching vision – the exhortative yet subversive stained-glass view – in order to simulate a participant and to collapse the future into an unfolding present, to be *in medias res*? How, indeed more exactly, to inquire of the Markan "heteroglossia" their deflective authorial intentions, and to analyse and demarcate "the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author [... since ... i]n such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions" (Bakhtin, 1981: 324), if not more? In addition, the authority that the opening and closing of a dramatic work confers, in order to

permit a comprehensive and coherent appropriation of the πρᾶξις is not uniformly employed, and "[t]he ancient tragedians both enlist these modes of authority and undercut or complicate them, offering us at times obscure or misleading beginnings and open or disconcerting endings" (Roberts, 2005: 137).

Here, again, the endings of the *Oedipus Tyrannos* and the Gospel of Mark are not without some comparative parallels. The notions of blindness and insight dominate the *Oedipus Tyrannos* no less than the Gospel of Mark. The ἐξάγγελος tells of Oedipus, sword in hand, storming the Jocasta's chamber, οὗ δὴ κρεμαστὴν τὴν γυναῖκ' ἐσείδομεν, πλεκταῖς ἐώραις ἐμπεπλεγμένην· ὁ δέ, ὅπως ὁρᾶι νιν, δεινὰ βρυχηθεὶς τάλας (*OT*, ll. 1263 – 1265). It is then that Oedipus ἀποσπάσας γὰρ εἱμάτων χρυσηλάτους περόνας ἀπ' αὐτῆς, αἷσιν ἐξεστέλλετο, ἄρας ἔπαισεν ἄρθρα τῶν αὑτοῦ κύκλων (*OT*, ll. 1268 – 1270). Thus ἐν σκότωι τὸ λοιπὸν οὓς μὲν οὐκ ἔδει ὀψοίαθ', οὓς δ' ἔχρηιζεν οὐ γνωσοίατο (*OT*, ll. 1273 – 1274): a σκότος, a darkness, which sees what ought not to be seen, and no longer knows what one wanted to know, on this day of groaning, ruin, death and shame (τῆιδε θἠμέραι στεναγμός, ἄτη, θάνατος, αἰσχύνη, *OT*, ll. 1283 – 1284). Finally, Oedipus greets his daughters, Antigone and Ismene, with a repeatedly vocative and physically pleading gesture: δεῦρ' ἴτ', ἔλθετε ὡς τὰς ἀδελφὰς τάσδε τὰς ἐμὰς χέρας (*OT*, ll. 1480 – 1481) – the hands with which he has recovered his sight by blinding himself, receiving, like Teiresias, who informed him of his deed – φονέας σέ φημι κἄνδρας οὓς ζητεῖς κυρεῖν (*OT*, l. 362) – the internal sight of full knowledge. But this character awareness does not undermine an indeterminate μῦθος, since

> At the end of Oedipus the King ... we do not have any clear sense of the outcome that is to follow the play's dreadful discoveries. Will Oedipus be exiled, as he requests? Will Creon force him to linger on in Thebes? The presence of this uncertainty is particularly striking in a play that in other senses exhibits such strong closure, revealing the fulfilment of all the story's oracles and with them fulfilling the audience's expectations (Roberts, 2005: 143).

Not without its similarities, the sense of authoritative, official certainty is undermined by the tergiversation at the end of the Gospel of Mark. The protest and challenge which the message of Jesus raised, the ἀγών between him and the Jewish leaders, the ensuing conflict, has ensured a tragic conclusion, and here one of death, rather than one of exile or banishment.[103] When᾽Ιωσὴφ ἀπὸ ῾Αριμαθαίας … τολμήσας εἰσῆλθεν πρὸς τὸν Πιλᾶτον καὶ ᾐτήσατο τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ιησοῦ … Πιλᾶτος … προσκαλεσάμενος τὸν κεντυρίωνα ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτὸν εἰ πάλαι ἀπέθανεν· καὶ γνοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ κεντυρίωνος ἐδωρήσατο τὸ πτῶμα τῷ ᾽Ιωσήφ (Mark 15: 43 – 45). Thus, the death is confirmed, but so too is the burial. The description of the dismounting of the body of Jesus, its subsequent swathing and interment (Mark 15: 46), if brief, is graphic, and some witnesses were watching:

> ἡ δὲ Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ ᾽Ιωσῆτος ἐθεώρουν ποῦ τέθειται (Mark 15: 47). Therefore, διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ ᾽Ιακωβου καὶ Σαλώνη ἠγόρασαν ἀρώματα ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν (Mark 16: 1).

[103] Coetzee's (2007: 21), possibly, thinly disguised 'character,' "JC," records the following 'strong opinion' in his journal: "*No other way than death* is a marker and perhaps even a definition of the tragic."

But the visit of the women to the tomb is deeply perplexing, witnessing, perhaps, to the insanities of being human, a grace-filled liminality, which is indicative of the humanly experiential tension between present reality and future hope, of the human ability to appropriate the indicative mood of the present tense, but also of being gifted the use of the subjunctive and optative moods in their various tenses, of *being* human, and yet that very beingness a perennial question, a *stasis* as a *stasis* within the self, that beingness always *in* question, a constant solicitation, a soliciting shadow companion, of any concept of self. Upon entering εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον εἶδον νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκήν, "and they were astounded." (Mark 16: 5). The repetition of this word – ἐκθαμβέομαι – in the following verse, and the assertion that Ἰησοῦν ζητεῖτε … ἠγέρθη … ὅτι προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε (Mark 16: 6 – 7), unsurprisingly produces in the women τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις (Mark 16: 8), which, in Smith's (1995: 161) rendering cited above, demonstrates the pathological insanity of the human experiment: "they completely lost it" (Mark 16: 5). But that loss was inexpressible, and, stripped of the human act of apprehension, of metaphoric appropriation, they were speechless and fearful, in a surd-like state, in that mixture of irrationality and aphonia. And the author ends with ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ (Mark 16: 8), a fractured text for a fractured mood, perhaps a truthful dramatic fiction that may be appropriated when approaching the Gospel of Mark as a tragic play, if "[t]ruth is not what is uttered in full consciousness ... [but] ... always what 'just slips out' – the typing error which gives the whole show away" (Durrell, 1958: 146).[104]

[104] France (2002: 673) contends that "the choice must be made" about the nature of the conclusion to the Gospel of Mark, and asserts that "my own inclination is to side with the increasingly unfashionable minority who find an intentional ending at 16:8 an unacceptably 'modern' option." However, as suggested here, a dramatic recasting of the Gospel of Mark may be able to employ this textual fracturing productively.

How then to begin with that end in view, with those erroneously misplaced typographical inscriptions, those slippages, of the truth of a fiction? How to ostend dramatically both the tragic reality of being human, of living in impending extinction, and also of capturing the aspirant vision of human promise, which, no less, is etched upon bodies and demonstrated in the enactive human experiment, to take that performance into the performative actions of life? Furthermore, this Aristotelian inquiry also asks of a dramatic presentation of the Gospel of Mark: How are the loss and expectation, the unspoken bafflement of reality as well as the voiced optimism of an imaginative future, to be portrayed in Mark as drama? Or, to clothe the question in dramatic costume: How to retain the symbolism both of the astounded, amazed, and shattered women, and also of the glowing optimism of the young man; the two images themselves graphically portraying the "trumpet call" at the beginning and the "faint whisper of timid women" at the ending (Kermode, 1972: 67)?

The πρᾶξις of a dramatic work, that central action, which was identified as distinct from the unfolding μῦθος of a dramatic work in the previous chapter, *toujours déjà* resides in the inaugural mind of the Real Author, and is evident as an informing intentionality, or, indeed, intentionalities, in the hermeneutic conjectures of textural or ostensive participant interpreters, and is a textural-ostensive construct of the design or designs of the Implied Author. But the perception of that design, or of that initial and final intentionality, more usually is both proleptic and analeptic for the reader or viewer – both variously presented with forthright obviousness or by veiled signals and cues *in via*, and also as a reflective act following the termination of the drama.

With respect to sacred scriptures, the attempt to reach that 'truthful' purpose, in spite of the dogmatism of the committed apologists, is, one suggests, less direct than initially may appear to be the case, and, rather, engenders multiple stained-glass visions of seeing and perceiving. In fact, the perennial combing of the small patch of graphic plantings made close to two-thousand years ago is witness to the undecidability of *the* definitive purpose of these holy writings, where the text and its performance, or the texts and their performances, constantly transgress bounded interpretations, and even ironize, perhaps mock, those walled gardens and fenced vineyards. This jesting possibility argues for the delay of proposing a possible πρᾶξις, and rather of travelling via the above discussion of beginnings and endings towards a πρᾶξις. The reference to Durrell (1958) earlier is not without import, since the reception by the narrator of the novel *Balthazar* of an "Interlinear" from the eponymous character generates the

> idea of a series of novels with 'sliding panels' ... Or else, perhaps, like some mediaeval palimpsest where different sorts of truth are thrown down one upon the other, the one obliterating or perhaps supplementing another (Durrell, 1958: 183).

The opening statement of this work, and a notion returned to throughout it, highlights this erasural, replacing, and supplementing arena of the concurrent and changing fictional truths of being human, and locates human activity, as much as dramatic fictions, in *medias res*, and portrays the possibility of grappling with tragic import in a contemporary location.

This dynamic location and its act of worldview creation, which is subject to slippage and contestation, may be no less stable than any other historical site and its own perception of meaning; but, in spite of attempts to reify erstwhile conceptions of human purpose and well-being, it is the dominant stories of the past that become the inherited *traditio*. Part of the challenge to a multivalent, classic, and thus revered, text is the endeavour to retain that openness of interpretive possibilities, and, here, to generate the route to a contemporary tragedy which appropriates a theological practice that inclines

> to subvert quotidian patterns of discourse to display better the supplementarity of the text that is its own achievement. It is a choice to define a space where language can be drawn into a free performance displaying its own material presence and witness to the otherness that is absent ... Theology is thought in the margins of scholarship because it can no longer be itself and simply pretend to describe the world as it is or articulate religious doctrines that purport to describe the world as it is (Winquist, 1986: 93 & 96).

An ostension of the language of the Gospel of Mark in a performative freedom that evinces a contemporary tragedy, one avers, begins in that marginal, confused, and timid ending, since it is this appropriation that will elicit a πρᾶξις of current, if liminal, import. Such a delay in raising a conjectural πρᾶξις is also faithful to the acts of reading or viewing the 'possible worlds' of texts and their ostension, because, as noted above, the central action emerges in the progressive act of reading, seeing, and hearing, and in subsequent, post-viewing, reflective practices.

Adverting to Bakhtin (1981), the "dialogic," and, by extension, and perhaps more apposite, the multi-logic, nature of angled and glancing, direct and palpable discursive exchanges and viewpoints, engenders an uncertainty of singular purpose and permits the marginal solicitation of a fetching dramatic ostension, which is evident both in the τρόμος and ἔκστασις of φόβος of the women as they fled from the tomb of Jesus (Mark 16: 8), and also in the image of clothing, the στολὴν λευκήν … περιβεβλημένον (thrown around) the νεανίσκον (Mark 16: 5), as one possible textural tissuing amongst others. To present the liminal tremor, as well as the tissued possibility, of an unstable text challenges dramatic creators; and, in addition, when the text not only is the subject of confessional raids but also, quite probably, is pivotal to the classic corpus of an ἐπιστήμη, and, therefore, is widely known, even if in a general way, the ostension requires a degree of faithfulness to the lineaments of this traditional deposit, as well as to its layered and woven undecidability.

Here, again, one may advert to the *Oedipus Tyrannos*, but, more specifically, to the particular performance of the play by the Västanå Theatre of Värmland, at the Odense municipal theatre in Denmark, in February, 1999. Two years of preparations and discussions preceded the *première*, and the company embarked upon a dramaturgical analysis of the work, one that "brings together theoretical issues of hermeneutics, textual analysis and performance theory with practical, creative work in the theatre" (Rokem, 2006: 260). The extensive and prolix traditions of interpretive, editorial, compositional, and literary examinations of the Gospel of Mark expand unceasingly, but one suggests that the proposals by Bilezikian (1977),[105] Hooker (1991), Botha

[105] Bilezikian's (1977) work, which is unavailable in South Africa, was, it is understood, obtained with some difficulty by an anonymous scholar, and kindly dispatched to the present author, who received it immediately before the submission of this thesis. Bilezikian (1977: 20 & 29) is the most forthright of the proponents, who observe dramatic features in the Gospel of Mark. Although he presents his case

(1993), Shiner (2003), Dewey (2004), Fast (2005), Byrskog (2006), and Holland (2007)[106] of partial or more comprehensive dramatic features in this gospel lack precisely those additional aspects of dramaturgical analysis, namely, of a performance theory, for which we have turned to Aristotle and his tragic protocols, and of theatre practice. How is a performance to work, to be ostended, given the nature of the text and the informing theory of drama?

The point of ingress to the *Oedipus Tyrannos* for the Västanå Theatre Company was the notion of riddling, of a text of "sliding panels," to advert to Durrell (1958), of ambiguity, of engendering answers that fail. Thebes, now afflicted by pestilence, receives news from the Oracle of Delphi that the visitation of these ills is the result of housing the slayers of the former king, Laius. Whilst the play hails the λύσις τοῦ αἰνίγματος τῆς Σφιγγός, who had afflicted the people of Thebes by killing those who were unable to solve her puzzles, by the πρωταγωνιστής, that riddle was about the identification "of the animal that had one voice, but two, three, or four feet, being slowest on three" (Dawe, 1982: 103), and the answer to this riddle is the same answer to the 'riddle' of the current plague, namely, a human being, and, in this instance, that person is Oedipus Tyrannos. In fact, Oedipus, who had slain the Sphinx, becomes

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confidently (Bilezikian, 1977: esp. 51 – 106), Bilezikian (1977) also aptly displays a certain reticence (Bilezikian, 1977: 30; 109; 137), even though he seems more forthright on some occasions (Bilezikian, 1977: 141) – even to the extent of attributing the choice of Greek tragedy to the author/s kerygmatic purpose (Bilezikian, 1977: 142 & 145) – than on others (Bilezikian, 1977: 137). In contrast, this adjunctive document seeks not to view the Gospel of Mark as a Greek tragedy or to conjecture as to the author/s familiarity with the genre (Bilezikian, 1977: 48 – 50), nor to examine it as a classical tragedy, but rather to highlight its dramatic power as a *classic* and suggest *how* that dynamic may be 'enacted.'

[106] Although France (2002: 11 – 15) views the Gospel of Mark as a "Drama in Three Acts," he states that "[t]his is not meant to suggest either that Mark designed it for 'performance' in three sections, or that it is possible to discern clear breaks between the 'acts.'" France (2002: 12) uses the dramatic idiom as a means of suggesting "how I discern the development of the plot, not about any indication Mark may have given of how he planned the *structure* of his text" (emphasis added). However, almost immediately, he states that "suspense is woven into Mark's *dramatic structure* as a whole" (France, 2002: 20) (emphasis added). It is precisely such denials and subsequent affirmations of the presence of the dramatic art in the Gospel of Mark that the current work attempts to avoid, by asking rather, *why* and *how* the Gospel of Mark may be read dramatically, and, quite specifically, as an Aristotelian tragedy.

another Sphinx for the people of Thebes, and who needs, in one way or another, to be 'slain' if the dying is to cease.

In order to retain the riddling quality of the play, but also to generate solutions through the performative act, the Västanå players presented their production as the memories of Oedipus's daughter, Antigone. The play begins with the entrance of a girl, whom the leader of the χορός then approaches, and straightens and neatens her apparel. Informing this particular *mise en scène* are the commensurate aspects of the text, its interpretation, and its practical dramatic ostension – the dramaturgical-analytical approach – and for this company,

> it was important not to create any additional semiotic cues regarding the identity of the young girl until the very end of the performance, when she became directly involved in the performance calling out "Father." We wanted this performance, telling this well-known narrative, to contain an enigmatic, riddle-like quality regarding its inner structure. For those spectators who were interested to decipher this aspect of the performance, it should remain an enigma that could only gradually be solved. At the same time, though, it was important not to draw too much attention to this scheme in order not to disturb the progression of the play's central narrative of how Oedipus reveals his identity (Rokem, 2006: 265).

This recasting of the *Oedipus Tyrannos* is suggestive when approaching the Gospel of Mark as drama. First, by appropriating the final figures in the Gospel of Mark, namely, Mary Magdalene (as the only constant figure amongst the women, cf. Mark

16: 1; 15: 40 & 47) and the young man (Mark 16: 5), then seizing upon any clues of these figures in the text, and, finally, placing them at the beginning of the production, dramatic Mark assumes a riddling quality, which, as a Gospel that both overtly contains riddling exchanges – bad answers to good questions, false responses to honest interrogation, the persistent contrast between impercipience and discernment – it is also one that closes with a suspenseful, indecisive riddle. Such a siting of these characters would inform the μῦθος. Second, this unfolding plot is generative of a πρᾶξις, and, for viewers, the central actions of dramas are retrospective meditations, undertaken when the sun sets (Gutierrez, 1973: 11), even if they are present in the inaugural authorial process. Viewers of the Västanå presentation, reflecting upon the presence of Antigone at the beginning of the production and her subsequent appearance later, and to whom no dialogue is allocated in the text by Sophocles – a marginal absent-present image that becomes central owing to its silent 'otherness' in the context of a possible dramatic world generated so purposefully by words (as are the classical dramatic works) – would not be constrained from returning to her subsequent appearance in Sophocles's earlier play, the *Antigone*.

But, before doing so, since, subsequently, it has implications for the concept of the central tragic character, the dialogic, multi-logic, heteroglossic, and agonistic nature of the Gospel of Mark has 'handed over' – παραδίδωμι – in a Judas act, ἰδοὺ ὁ παραδιδούς με ἤγγικεν (Mark 14: 42), a *traditio* of contested interpretive possibilities, or has teased the tradition of commentary with riddles, with cryptograms to decipher, and to which various solutions and responses are proffered. The Gospel of Mark admits, even embraces, riddles and bequeaths a riddle, and, whilst resistance to definitive answers remains *vital* (the provenance of this word is significant),

> [t]he inherent ambiguity of the riddle text transforms the riddling situation into a kind of game, because the seemingly obvious solution, which as a rule is sexually provocative, has to be rejected in favour of a solution which is more difficult to find but which generally is more ordinary or everyday (Rokem, 2006: 261).

A "solution" suggested here, and one, indeed, "more ordinary or everyday," defers, in our case, to a contemporary tragic significance, and to an answer which is a possible πρᾶξις of a tragic and dramatic Mark. In order to provide an overarching sense of structural coherence to this riddle text, and also to present the drama of the Gospel of Mark with a sense of current import, it is suggested that, following the example in the Västanå production, ὁ νεανίσκος and Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή are retrojected to the opening of the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy. This proposition contains fertile dramatic opportunities, which are not without theological import.

Perhaps forming a narrative and choral function, or perhaps merely announcing the opening lines, or, alternatively, as silent presences – 'Antigones' – it is suggested that these characters accompany the action in the tragic drama of Mark from the very opening scene. A dramaturgical analysis, since it widens the scope for dramatic enactment by including an occasion for the selection from the interpretive corpus that accrues to a discursive formation, those augmentative "*grilles de spécification*" of Foucault (1969: 58), could appropriate four instances in the Gospel of Mark, two of which are conjectural, although one with less ground than the other, for the participation and identification of these two characters prior to their exposure as marginally central to the *dénouement* of tragic Mark.

The character of Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή, extends a dramatically inviting, if exegetically questionable, retrospective projection, but her presence elsewhere in the text must be sought. Aware of, but contrary to, historical criticism, *le premier pas* commences in its textual shadow within a rejected part of the tradition. In Mark 14: 3 – 9, where ἦλθεν γυνὴ ἔχουσα ἀλάβαστρον μύρου νάρδου πιστικῆς πολυτελοῦς, συντρίψασα τὴν ἀλάβαστρον κατέχεεν αὐτοῦ τῆς κεφαλῆς (Mark 14: 3), this γυνή has been identified with Mary of Magdalene from as early as the fourth century (Hooker, 1991: 327; Taylor, 1966: 532).[107] Because the 'possible world' of a dramatic tragedy is being created, rather than an exegetical commentary, this identification, even without firm historical foundation, nevertheless contains the response from Jesus that προέλαβεν μυρίσαι τὸ σῶμά μου εἰς τὸν ἐνταφιασμόν (Mark 14: 8), and one that even the more historically vigilant exegetes may admit anticipates Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ ᾽Ιακώβου καὶ Σαλώνη ἠγόρασαν ἀρώματα ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν (Mark 16: 1). The identification of this Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή with the woman who poured the expensive balsam of nard, therefore, is not surprising, but itself raises a riddle: Why would Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή anoint the body of Jesus twice? Here, in fairly stark form, the obvious answer – that the same woman did not undertake, or endeavour to undertake, both acts – is undercut by the answer submitted by this riddle text: She did not anoint the body of Jesus following his entombment, because she had already done so. The role of Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή as an accompanying dramatic character, both as a participant, and yet, more importantly for ostensive purposes, also as an observer, of the unfolding μῦθος, may be heightened towards the conclusion, where she was amongst some γυναῖκες ἀπὸ μακρόθεν θεωροῦσαι the crucifixion and death of Jesus (Mark 15:

[107] France (2002: 550): "It was Ephraem in the fourth century who first suggested that she was Mary of Magdala."

40), and, subsequently, was one of those who ἐθεώρουν ποῦ τέθειται (Mark 15: 47). The reason for including the later three textual denotations of Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή with the earlier gesture of 'anointing' by a γυνή in Mark 14: 3 – 9 in the dramatized ostension of this gospel, is encouraged by the statement of Jesus: ὅπου ἐὰν κηρυχθῇ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον εἰς ὅλον τὸν κόσμον, καὶ ὃ ἐποίησεν αὕτη λαληθήσεται εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς (Mark 14: 9). And it is this latter textual legacy that has conferred the dramatic and interpretive concession of some invigorating fertility, and one that coheres with an encompassing dramaturgical approach.

First, the account of a woman undertaking the act of anointing – whether of the head or the feet of Jesus, whether in the home of Simon the leper or in the home of Lazarus – appears with a variety of differences in all four gospels. Whilst Kermode (1979: 130) is referring to another passage in the Gospel of Mark, namely, the seemingly awkward insertion of the account of the death of John the Baptist in Mark 6: 14 – 29, his assertion is no less apt with respect to the attempts to resolve and/or conflate the disparate renderings of some core story about a woman and her anointing of Jesus:

> A favourite explanation of commentators not content to let the whole thing pass as clumsiness or a fortuity is that the episode was put in to fill [a] gap ... This, I'm afraid, gives me an insight into the remarkable naiveté of professional exegesis when confronted with problems of narrative; behind it, perhaps, is a lingering obsession with historicity, a wish to go on thinking of the gospel narrative as a map of truth.

Kermode (1979: 130 – 131) asks some uncomfortable questions of these exegetes, and states that "[i]t is hard to avoid the conclusion that the commentators are swayed, perhaps unconsciously, by a desire to save their text from its own complexity ..." (Kermode, 1979: 131). In fact, reminiscent of the dramaturgical approach to texts and their ostension, which "is a *complex*, heterogeneous activity connecting research and practice designed to reflect on, as well as to develop and enhance, the creative work of the theatre" (Rokem, 2006: 260 – 261; emphasis added), Kermode (1979: 137) concludes that "I have been proposing that the device of *intercalation* in Mark's narrative is an emblem of many *conjunctions* and *oppositions*, which are found at many levels of the discourse" (emphasis added). This "intertwining of forms," which entails "l'entrelacement tissant le système des differences" is the process through which "'le discours nous est né'" (Derrida, 1972: 191), and it generates the text both in terms of its structure and its message, but also fissures the text in its very inaugural act for subsequent multiple readings, whether proximate or distal. Thus, the familiarity of the words and actions of Jesus in the gospel accounts, whether to contemporary or modern and postmodern audiences, advances to a dramatist, and/or to a producer, and to a theatre company, the latitude to exploit that inaugural technique of textual weaving and braiding, and, thereby, of engendering a product, or a production, that employs the techniques of both familiarity and estrangement, and the estrangement of the familiar, in order to return the familiar in an altered guise and in an angled perspective. Whilst, therefore, such consequent intercalating devices cast new light, and, indeed, new shadows, on the canonical accounts, they also allow for episodic disjunctions to be ameliorated and for repetitious units to be harmonized and, quite feasibly, made implicit in a single rendition, in order to ensure a less halting μῦθος, and one that places a specific πρᾶξις proposed by the particular *mise en scène*

in higher relief. Perhaps, even to a text held as sacred, these recastings are less hubristic than humbling, a recognition of human limitation, since

> it is far beyond us to reproduce the tacit understandings that existed between this dead writer and his audience. Those accords are lost. We cannot know the original generic set of Mark; and to read it against our own is to read it differently ... [and even if] ... We glimpse the secrecy [of the Gospel of Mark] through the meshes of a text; this is divination, but what is divined is visible from our angle (Kermode, 1979: 138 & 144).

The complex, intercalated, and fissured nature of texts and textual readings liberates the gospels, and an individual gospel, from being forced upon a Procrustean bed of narratological or dramatic protocols as the texts or text stand/s, and permits the events to be modulated into an alternative key, with the necessary recension and restructuring that, in this instance, writes the body-text of an Aristotelian tragedy, and one in which may inhere current resonances. When Malbon (1992: 24) proposes that the Gospel of Mark is a work of narrative, she employs a surfeit of dramatic denotations, and states that

> [t]he writer of Mark is no longer a cut-and-paste editor but an author with control over the story he narrates. The Jesus of Mark is no longer a shadowy historical personage but a lively character. Galilee and Jerusalem are no longer simply geographical references but settings for dramatic action. The account of Jesus' passion (suffering and death) is no longer the source of theological doctrine but the culmination of a dramatic and engaging plot.

And although a narrative approach, as, indeed, a dramatic approach, to the Gospel of Mark advances obscured and neglected aspects of the work, editorial emendations would not be unrewarding, and, from a dramaturgical approach, engenders a proposition like that of employing the various instances of the appearance of Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή and, by appropriating a strand of the tradition, reading her into the account in Mark 14: 3 – 9, and then situating her as the narrator, a commentator, or as a silent witness – one who 'watches' (Mark 15: 40), and 'sees' (Mark 15: 47), and 'acts' (Mark 14: 3) – at the opening of dramatic Mark, and allows her to accompany the events, again, feasibly, as narrator, commentator, or as silent witness, in a proposal that bears upon the πρᾶξις and its contemporary import.

Second, the statement of Jesus that ὅπου ἐὰν κηρυχθῇ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον εἰς ὅλον τὸν κόσμον, καὶ ὃ ἐποίησεν αὕτη λαληθήσεται εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς (Mark 14: 9), implies that the action of the woman in Mark 14: 3 – 9 is *integral* to the message of Jesus, and it is an action that, in the interpretation of Jesus, anticipates his death: προέλαβεν μυρίσαι τὸ σῶμά μου εἰς τὸν ἐνταφιασμόν (Mark 14: 8b). This dramatic *microséquence* emphasizes a πρᾶξις, and one which we may appropriate, because the certainty of 'discipline and punishment,' to allude to Foucault's *Surveiller et Punir* (1975), and here, of death, is consequent upon the protest, the challenge, and the conflict pivotal to the tragic genre; and it is inevitable for a character of such unyielding resistance, who refuses to be "enlanguaged" (Vorster, 1997: 397), or written upon, in 'that ordering of things,' to adapt the English title to Foucault's *Les Mots et les choses* (1966), by the extant rules, codes, and ordinances of the community, society, or nation. When Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή is identified in the final scenes of tragic Mark, and is perceived to have been present throughout the drama,

and is also the same woman who anointed the body of Jesus prior to his burial, then the desire to anoint the body after its burial cannot simply be answered by the fact that she did not do so, as proffered above, but, concomitantly, may be perceived as a confirmation of her identity and of her conviction that Jesus was dead. Through her quiet acts and observations, the presence of this woman denotes the tragedy of human protest of a radical and revolutionary kind, and suggests that her τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις and astounded silence is engendered rather by the assertion of ὁ νεανίσκος that ἠγέρθη and ὅτι προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε (Mark 16: 6 & 7). In contrast to this claim of resurrection, the human person, for Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή, is a 'being unto death,' and the gaze, in its classical sense of the view of the spectator, and, in addition, of an act of mental consideration, looks on and looks into the tragic figure of protest – a beholding no less of admiration for the actions of that person than one of resigned acceptance of the consequences of those actions. "The viewpoint of tragedy," Aylen (1964: 164) succinctly states, "is the viewpoint of death."

But there is another fellow traveller, who, likewise, may be written into a role of narrator, commentator, or silent witness. In spite of the conjectural identification of the woman who anoints Jesus in Mark 14: 3 – 9 with Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή, inherent in the texture of the text, in its iterative telling, is the story of this woman who, as Kilgallen (1998: 111) notes when reflecting on the Lukan account (Luke 7: 36 – 50), "works only in gesture," since the proclamation of the gospel story necessarily entails relating these anticipatory obsequies of unction, and engenders Crossan's (1991: 416) proleptically contributory comment to the above proposal, namely that "[o]ne could surely ... make a better case for Mark-as-woman obliquely signing her manuscript by

that sentence at 14:9 than one ever did for Mark-as-man obliquely signing his by that flapping nightshirt in the garden at 14: 51 – 52."

Adapting an authorial function to the dramatic arena, and adopting the oft-conjectured propinquity between the Implied Author and the first-person narrator focalizer in the diegetic world; here, in order to maintain a coherent theme that may be suggestive of a πρᾶξις, the recounting of the story may be better served by handing over that implied authorial role to a homo-mimetic narrator-observer, because internal to the mimetic world of the dramatic work is the unfolding μῦθος, which requires that telling or witnessing, whilst outside it is the reflective πρᾶξις, which is gleaned from the mimetic production, and is the province of the Implied Author.

But Crossan's (1991: 416) dismissal of the νεανίσκος as the autographic author is not without the possibility of the "naked young man" occupying a similar role to that suggested for Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή. The dramaturgical-analytical approach would furnish the productive inquiry with the hermeneutical material that, *inter alia*, denotes the two verses relating to the appearance of the νεανίσκος, namely, Mark 14: 51 – 52, as "a total enigma" (Hooker, 1991: 352), and his role in the gospel as "utterly baffling" (Miller, 1992: 410). But these riddling aspects merely emphasize the riddling nature of the story and, as a text in search of a solution to its puzzles, the νεανίσκος may be an absent-presence who informs and presents the adversative, yet complementary, tragic solution to the drama of that of the women, and of Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή in particular.

However, before turning to that aspect of kathartic *dénouement* and its import for the πρᾶξις, when the interpolated interlinear erasures are presented to a theatrical production as it attempts both to blend and braid the text and its interpretive tradition and possibilities, and then, subsequently, engender a viable ostension, various fertile connections could be forged. First, the link between Mark 14: 51 – 52 and the final eight verses of gospel contain the same kind of allusive relationship which the references to Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνή in Mark 15: 40; 47; & 16: 1 traced upon the woman in Mark 14: 3 – 9. In Mark 14: 51 – 52, νεανίσκος τις συνηκολούθει αὐτῷ περιβεβλημένος σινδόνα ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ καὶ κρατοῦσιν αὐτόν· ὁ δὲ καταλιπὼν τὴν σινδόνα γυμνὸς ἔφυγεν, whilst, in Mark 16: 5, the women who entered the tomb εἶδον νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκήν. The association between the two instances has been noted, if dismissed, by Hooker (1991: 352 – 353), who, when commenting on Mark 14: 51 – 52, states: "Another [perspective] links the story with the young man (here too a νεανίσκος) dressed in a white robe who announces Jesus' resurrection in 16:5, interpreting both references in the light of later baptismal practice, where a convert took off his/her garment before immersion and put on a white one afterwards." But, even if the rejection of the associative conjunction between the two accounts is based on the information that the young man ἔφυγεν, in Mark 14: 52, and that the garment, in Mark 14: 51 – 52, is a σινδών, whilst that in Mark 16: 5 is a στολὴν λευκήν, an interesting interpretive conduit is opened by the statement that Joseph of Arimathea καθελὼν αὐτὸν ἐνείλησεν τῇ σινδόνι καὶ ἔθηκεν αὐτὸν ἐν μνημείῳ (Mark 15: 46), or, as Hooker (1991: 353) declares, but, in fact, also concedes in her accentuation: "Jesus dies alone, and it is *he* who is wrapped in a linen cloth (σινδών)" (original emphasis). Thus, both the νεανίσκος and Ἰησοῦς "share" a σινδών, but, perhaps more *sign*ificantly –

that is, signifying, communicating, generating citational relations – the young man who fled *acts out* both the emotions of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, who ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν (Mark 14: 33), the expression of those emotions, περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχή μου ἕως θανάτου (Mark 14: 34), and the plea: παρένεγκε τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο ἀπ' ἐμοῦ (Mark 14: 36). An additional marginal link shelters in the use of ἐκθαμβέομαι in Mark 14: 33 and in Mark 16: 5 & 6, with Taylor (1966: 552) remarking that "[t]he difficulty of translation is manifest" in the former verse, where he cites Rawlinson's "shuddering awe" and Swete's "terrified surprise," and notes later that it is a word which Mark "alone among NT writers uses" (Taylor, 1966: 606). In the former, Jesus is "amazed;" whilst, in the latter, the women are "amazed" and are told not to be "amazed." The translation in the Authorized King James Version of ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι in Mark 14: 33 as "sore amazed" attempts to retain the sense of distress and trepidation, and, perhaps, of a revelatory shock that Jesus experienced, which, one suggests, would approximate to a personal realization of the consequences of the ἀναγνώρισις that, we will propose, resides in Mark 8: 27 – 30. Furthermore, the sense of grief and surprise, of fear and of experiencing a startling blow, is similar to the response of the women in Mark 16: 5, ameliorated little by the statement of the young man that they ought not to be surprised (Mark 16: 6), and which evokes a confused, yet kathartic, realization of the inevitable consequences to the life they had known, a response that, once again, foregrounds a πρᾶξις, with its sense of 'hopeful fear.'

But, additional promise for the dramaturgical approach may be present in the episode of the νεανίσκος than Crossan (1991: 416) dared to allow. This 'daring' is not

without import when recasting known stories, even the classics of the tradition,[108] and the discarded and embalming σινδών may engender a suggestive conflation of character, which may be a feature of the jostling riddles woven into the text and, as will be noted, into its palimpsestical tissues, and which may enable a tragic πρᾶξις to emerge from, and with the contribution of, the dissembling surface of the text.

Resident in the arena of information available to the dramaturgical-analytical exploration of a *mise en scène* of tragic Mark would be two excerpts from the Secret Gospel of Mark, which, probably, are prior to canonical Mark (Crossan, 1991: 328 – 329; Miller, 1992: 5; but cf., Hooker, 1991: 353, n. 1). But, whilst the matter of linear historicity is of less significance here than the performative capacity that they contain, the preserved accounts, more particularly the former, that appear in a fragment of a letter of Clement to Theodore at the end of the second century CE,[109] may unseal the hermeticism in which the mystery of the canonical ending is enclosed. The first of these excerpts, which may be inserted at Mark 10: 34, tells of the raising of a νεανίσκος, who had died in Bethany, by Jesus after having been approached by the sister of the deceased youth. Both Jesus and the woman proceed

> into the garden where the tomb was. Just then a loud voice was heard from inside the tomb. Then Jesus went up and rolled the stone away from the entrance to the tomb. He went right in where the young man was, stuck out

[108] Recalling the account in the *Odyssey* of Oedipus and the marriage to his mother, and impact on Aristotle of *Oedipus Tyrannos* by Sophocles in the *Poetics*, Dawe (1982: 3) states that, at an emotional level, Sophocles had enacted a transformation by "play[ing] on certain latent terrors that are part of man's nature in all kinds of societies and at all epochs; terrors whose influence may pervade our lives in ways we scarcely guess; and if we are aware of them at all, it is because our eyes have been opened by Sigmund Freud, upon whom this play made such a profound impression."
[109] "It was discovered in 1958 by Morton Smith of Columbia University in the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Mar Saba between Bethlehem and the Dead Sea" (Crossan, 1991: 411).

> his hand, grabbed him by the hand, and raised him up. The young man looked at Jesus, loved him, and began to beg him to be with him. Then they left the tomb and went into the young man's house. (Incidentally, he was rich). Six days later Jesus gave him an order; and when evening had come, the young man went to him, dressed only in a linen cloth. He spent that night with him, because Jesus taught him the mystery of God's domain. From there (Jesus) got up and returned to the other side of the Jordan (Secret Mark 1: 4 – 13, in Miller, 1992: 411, which contains both excerpts in full; cf., Crossan, 1991: 329 & 412 for both excerpts).

Whilst it may be fashionable in some ecclesial communities, or in some provinces of those churches,[110] to incorporate this passage in dramatic, or, indeed, canonical, Mark, owing to its homo-erotic character, it must also be borne in mind that, if this pericope from Secret Mark provides evidence of baptismal practice, women would also partake of this ritual of initiation.

For the purposes of furnishing supplementary material for the dramaturgical analysis of a production of the Gospel of Mark, and based on the priority of Secret Mark and the homosexual or, simply, erotic, allusions in it which were objectionable, Crossan's (1991: 414 – 416) proposes that the above account is edited, reformulated, and disseminated in the later canonical Mark. The 'raising' of the young man, who, it

[110] It may be suggested that the account in the Secret Gospel of Mark would have particular relevance to the Episcopal (Anglican) Church of the United States following the consecration of an openly gay bishop, but a regional acceptance precisely is what threatens the unity of the Anglican Communion. As Treloar (2008: 62) states: "For good, possibly, a broad church with soft edges has flourished seasonally and regionally, creating a healthy dialectical environment for theological discourse. For ill, certainly, implicitness has for too long governed its hermeneutical theories and argumentative practice. Under such conditions it is too easy for ecclesial identity-formation to become culturally fraternal, and thus biblically fratricidal and idolatrous."

may be recalled, spoke before being brought out of the tomb, is projected on to the life of Jesus, as, indeed, is the presence of three women in the second of the two fragments of Secret Mark (see Miller, 1992: 411; cf. Crossan, 1991: 412).

Whilst Crossan's (1991) bold venture that 'original Mark' ended with the proclamation of ὁ κεντυρίων ... ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν in Mark 15: 39 is not without importance to tragic Mark, it would be problematic to employ such a recension of the Gospel of Mark, if only for the import already yielded to the women and their reaction in Mark 16: 1 – 8, which would, therefore, deter the perspective of a tragic πρᾶξις emerging from beginnings and endings.

But what Secret Mark does cast (again, a suitably dramatic term) upon the ending of canonical Mark, and, more widely, upon a dramatically tragic reading of the Gospel of Mark, is solicitous in the tremor it effects, and also is solicitously enticing. Kermode (1979: 64), in his examination of the problematics of Mark 14: 51 – 52 and its obscured ancestor, states that "it seems not unlikely that in the two verses we have been considering [that is, Mark 14: 51 – 52] the secret gospel is showing through, a radiance of some kind, merely glimpsed by the outsider." This Brechtian sense of estrangement engenders some proposals for a dramaturgical-analytical tragic Mark.

First, the account of the empty tomb in canonical Mark 16: 1 – 8 is stripped of any *literal* claim that it may make about the resurrection of Jesus, and is reconceived as a *literary* and *dramatic* device by means of which the relevance of a life and message may be retained, even propounded. An additional, although, admittedly, somewhat strained, reason for the rejection of Secret Mark – and even if it is unnoticed by

Crossan 1991); nevertheless, it may lend tangential imaginative support to his hypothesis both with respect to the exclusion of the contentious passage and with respect to the ending at 15: 39 of 'original' Secret Mark – may have as much to do with the erotic connotations in the passage as with the connotation that the extract is an account which is less about resurrection, than with a story about a young man who is buried alive, for whatever prankish – perhaps the young man closed the tomb himself and then discovered that neither he nor his sister were able to remove the stone at the entrance of the tomb – or more serious reason. In this 'writerly' sense, the anger of Jesus, in verse 4 of Secret Mark, may be directed less at "the disciples [who] rebuked her [the woman]" (Secret Mark 1: 3), than at the woman and her brother for their foolishness. Therefore, appropriating this dramatically creative possibility, it was when Jesus observed the expression on the face of the νεανίσκος, and realized that his fear was genuine, that Jesus and his disciples went off to his home (Secret Mark 1: 9), possibly in order to comfort and reassure both him and his sister, and, in addition, for refreshment. In the light of these conjectures and, more profoundly, in the arena of tragedy, this account of the 'raising of a young man' foregrounds the fear of dying (cf. Mark 14: 33 – 36), and the hopeless hope of resurrection (cf. Mark 16: 7 – 8) – that is, that the future tense of human possibility resides less as a result of entombment upon death, than in the celebration of life. And where the additional information about the 'wealth' of the young man, in Secret Mark 1: 9, evokes feasting and celebration, with its Eucharistic significance of the productive sacrificial promise of death, and, perhaps more particularly, of the continuing dynamic of the adversative tragic cause of the deceased, the self is rather like

> [a]n old pair of shoes ... [which] ... when they are finally past serving will pass on something of the spirit of service as they are consigned with some parting sorrow to the rubbish dump. The very rubbish dump will be transformed, for everything that ever served should be given a decent burial (Mackey 1987: 188).

Second, the 'shared' σινδών asserts an identification of the νεανίσκος with Jesus at the critical points of desertion and death and, concealed behind the act of desertion in Secret Mark, is the point of embarking upon the path of discipleship through the rite of baptism. By initially appropriating the latter and embedded reference as dramaturgically significant, the *mise en scène* is able to invoke the opening baptismal scene of the Gospel of Mark and, in particular, the baptism of Jesus. Baptism signifies the act of commitment to a cause, a commitment that involves pursuing a path that, in this case, leads to death. The dual identity of the young man/Jesus or Jesus/young man engenders the meta-fictional possibility where this dual identification morphs into an accompanying commentator or witness, with the associative evocation of the πρωταγωνιστής observing his own life. Whilst not examining "Mark's Naked Disciple" in the extra-canonical account, Hatton (2001: 35 – 36) states that

> the historical focus of past and recent studies [of Mark 14: 51 – 52] has assumed the historicity of the story, and with few facts to work with, the struggle to reach a consensus on the real behind the story is interminable. Facts are hypothesized, sometimes tortuously, to advance possible historical explanations. Of course, leading commentators have stated that there is no

> good reason for Mark to have included this story unless it was based on a real event (Taylor 1963 [1966]: 561). I disagree with that conclusion, as I believe that there are good reasons to have included it other than reflecting real memories ... [and] ... this article will not take a stand on the historicity of the event. Instead, it will bracket its historicity, and take a literary tack ... to discover [what] significance may derive from the young man text's strangeness and difficulty.

Of the five verbs that appear in Mark 14: 51 – 52, Hatton (2001: 36 – 37) foregrounds the first of these, namely, συνηκολούθει, and he is attentive to the past continuous time of its Imperfect Tense. He then refers to its one other occurrence, in Mark 5: 37, in the account of the raising of the daughter of εἷς τῶν ἀρχισυναγώγων (Mark 5: 22), probably the child of Jairus – an account that, one may propose, may be one of Crossan's (1991) dispersed fragments of Secret Mark, since the one who is raised οὐκ ἀπέθανεν ἀλλὰ καθεύδει (Mark 5: 39) – and notes that the intensification of ἀκολουθέω – the συν – closes the space between the follower and the followed, suggesting the proximity of accompaniment, rather than the distance of pursuance. In Mark 5: 37, συνακολουθέω refers to "the closest and most privileged disciples [and thus] seems to point to the young man as particularly close to Jesus" (Hatton, 2001: 37), whilst the first use of ἀκολουθέω occurs in Mark 1: 18, where the first disciples ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ, and the use of the dative denotes "attachment to the person" (Taylor, 1966: 169). Hatton (2001: 38) employs the notion of "'following'/discipleship" as a sub-text, an intra-textual device of disturbance, and of self-referential commentary. This narrative use resists the wider thematic manner in which discipleship ruptures the diegetic world as an informing theme. From a

dramatic perspective, the act of discipleship, of response to the call of the πρωταγωνιστής, operates both within the mimetic world and outside it. Here, we draw close to the πρᾶξις, but first a final reference ought to be made to the νεανίσκος in Mark 16: 5. It may be less profitable to view this young man as an angel (Gould, 1896: 300; Nineham, 1963: 444; Taylor, 1966: 606 – 607; Hooker, 1991: 384) than as both the same young man of Mark 14: 51 – 52 as well as the self-referential πρωταγωνιστής, who, in his own act of following himself – that is, following in the ἴχνος of his own words and actions – is changed by those who see him. Indeed, tragedy is transformatively equilibrating.

Thus, the beginning of tragic Mark is viewed through the ending. It is an ending which resides both prior to dramatic Mark and is its instaurative marker. At the opening of a dramaturgical-analytical performance of an Aristotelian tragic Mark, stand a woman and a man. The man is wrapped in a σινδών; the woman stands behind him, as the one who sees. She is both spectator and actor. She is watching and being watched, and the audience who sees her accompanying the drama, now stepping forward in the dramatic ostension of Mark 14: 3 – 9, now observing the events of crucifixion and burial in Mark 15: 40 & 47, finally witnesses her reaction in Mark 16: 1 – 8, and perceives in her the one side of the tragic action. Closer to the dramatic enactment of the gospel events, the young man, sometimes indistinguishable from the primary character, deserts the cause in Mark 14: 51 – 52. But his nudity may signify more rather than less of his commitment, since he appears transformed, transformed in that manner in which tragedy both changes everything and yet changes nothing, tells the same story, and yet tells it differently. The woman and young man, devoted followers, observing the construction of meaning and its meaninglessness, are

the ironizing influences in a gospel of dissemblance, disclosing the answer to the riddle of being human.

ACTION

Jones (1962: 24) states that "in the *Poetics* ... an action is a form which the tragedian contemplates, and it stands logically and chronologically before the business of composition," and whilst we have noted Halliwell's (1986) hesitation in agreeing with Jones (1962) entirely in his earlier work, later Halliwell (2005: 404) appears to draw closer to a more definite distinction between an authorial purpose – the πρᾶξις – and the plot – the μῦθος – in which the intent unfolds.

Before turning directly to the Gospel of Mark, some examples are cited with respect to Aristotelian notion of the πρᾶξις in the *Poetics* as interpreted in Chapter Three above. First, together with the *Septem* and the *Persae*, Kitto (1939: 22) identifies the *Prometheus Bound*[111] as an "Old Tragedy," where "the essence ... was not one character joined in conflict with another, but the solitary hero facing his own destiny or playing out an inner drama of his own soul." That "essence" is not the πρᾶξις of the unfolding μῦθος according to our exploration above, rather it is, for Kitto (1939) at least, the core concept of the plot-structure, behind which resides the πρᾶξις of the play, which, one avers, centres on the conflict between two gods: the one, Prometheus, takes on the human cause against the other, Zeus, who is the supreme god. The latter, the recently inaugurated ruler, has "from time to time entertained the

[111] On issues of authorship, of proposals concerning a 'Promethean Trilogy,' which would include *Prometheus Unbound* and *Prometheus the Fire Bearer*, and of where the *Prometheus Bound* may to be located in a sequence, see Griffith (1977: 17 – 18, 252, 254; 1983: 32), Herrington (1970: 119), Taplin (1977: 240), Bers (1977: 44).

idea of destroying man altogether" (Murray, 1940: 88), whilst the former, now being chained to the rock face by the lame god of fire and the crafts, the metal-smith Hephaestus, under the supervision of the servants of Zeus, Κράτος and Βία, has ensured the survival of humanity by giving them fire. Implicit in the antagonistic relations between Zeus and Prometheus, is the empowerment of human beings, where fire signifies survival of both the material and physical kind. Therefore, the play reaches beyond the issue of personal conflict – of the disobedience of one god leading to his condemnation and punishment by the other god, which Kitto (1939) seems to concentrate upon – to the power given to, and accepted by, human beings. The power relations – ἡ δύναμις – the dynamics between the gods and the mortals are redefined by the acquisition of fire. Thus, human beings become 'enlightened' close to their distant inauguration, rather than in Kant's *Aufklärung*. But a πρᾶξις is always *sous rature*, and, recently, Bollack (2006: 79) has engendered the possibility of reading the *Prometheus Bound* as a "seminar" in dialectic over "the meaning of the conflict that has erupted between himself [Prometheus] and Zeus ... [and which] amounts to something like an initiation, an apprenticeship in research – and a very human one in its way." This notion supports reading the play as more than that immediate conflict between the two gods.[112]

Second, the πρᾶξις of a play of some importance to this study, and one that also reflects the recent history of South Africa, but, perhaps, may be of more significance to its present and possible future, is *The Island*, which was devised by Athol Fugard

[112] The Trappist monk, Thomas Merton (1996: 369 – 370), records a highly personal response to this play in a journal entry: "*January 17, 1960, II Sun Post Epiphany* ... After dinner – read the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus. Shattered by it. I do not know when I have read anything so stupendous and so completely contemporary ... A great religious experience. Prometheus, archetypal representation of the suffering Christ. Prometheus startles us by being more fully Christ than the Lord of our own clichés – I mean, he is free from all the falsifications and limitations of our hackneyed vision which has slowly emptied itself of reality."

(1995), John Kani, and Winston Ntshona. It appropriates the historical account of a performance of the *Antigone* on Robben Island (see Mandela, 1994: 540 – 541; Sampson, 1999: 234 – 235), a prison in Table Bay, where Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, and other political prisoners were incarcerated in 1963, during National Party rule in South Africa. *The Island* was first performed in 1973, and relates to the production of the *Antigone*, of which Norman Ntshona, one of the Serpent Players, is the source (Fugard, 1995: 232). The play deftly illustrates the dual nature of the trajectory of the tragic μῦθος, as it endeavours to engender the emotional sympathy of the audience for the dilemma of its πρωταγωνιστής, and then to turn the identity into difference in the kathartic experience. Here, in terms of the πρᾶξις, Winston, who refuses to play a girl and who dismisses the drama of the *Antigone*, for which they are rehearsing, as "child's play," is contrasted with the more idealistic John. However, when John receives information that his sentence of ten years has been reduced to three years, which leaves him with three months to serve, Winston now relates in some detail what John will do when released. And central to John's relative 'freedom' will be his forgetfulness: "You will laugh, you will drink, you will fuck and forget" (Scene 3). Concomitantly, even inside the prison, the political causes which have led to their incarceration are receding, and Winston, reflecting on "old Harry, Cell Twenty-three, seventy years, serving Life! ... He's forgotten himself. He's forgotten everything ... why he's here, where he comes from," realizes that the same is "happening to me, John. I've forgotten why I'm here" (Scene 3). The πρᾶξις of the *Antigone* by Sophocles, which coheres around the notions of the necessity of political power, about its influence and allure, and, more importantly, about its potential to isolate the ruler and pervert the responsibility of the ruler to the

ruled and impair the relationship between the two, is a πρᾶξις that Mandela (1994: 540 – 541) aptly summarizes:

> At the outset [of the play], Creon is sincere and patriotic, and there is wisdom in his early speeches when he suggests that experience is the foundation of leadership and that obligations to the people take precedence over loyalty to an individual ... But ... Creon will not listen to Antigone, neither does he listen to anyone but his own inner demons.

But that may be a πρᾶξις that may rest too heavily upon *The Island*. Thus, in the opening scene of Fugard's *The Island*, with its endless digging and accumulating piles of sand, "lasting about ten painful minutes" (Wertheim, 2000: 89), Steiner (1984: 144) sees "[b]eyond the blank desolation of the close of Sophocles' play" and perceives the "pure waste" of power, which ravages those in authority, but, one suggests, it is a "waste" that is implicit at the close of the Sophoclean drama. More definitively, perhaps, the authors of *The Island* extend the reaches of the *Antigone*. The retention of the first names of the actors, John Kani and Winston Ntshona, as the names of the characters in the play, compels a transgression of the boundaries of 'art' and 'life;' and thus the πρᾶξις of *The Island* reaches beyond that of the *Antigone* by Sophocles in portraying both the oppressive serrations of the physical inscriptions of the apartheid regime (Wertheim, 2000: 98), and also the devastating ability of power to erase adversative inscriptions and cause the amnesia of subjection.

Third, it is suggested that the πρᾶξις of *Equus* by Peter Shaffer (1973) employs amongst its "surfaces of emergence" a less enchanted world, or, perhaps more

strongly, an "enlightened" and "modern" worldview, which rejects seeing beyond the present (Act II, 35), as well as the sophisticated and restricted "*grilles de spécification*" (Foucault, 1969: 58) of the discipline of child psychiatry, child welfare, and, more precisely, the psychiatric diagnoses of mental illness (Act I, 1). The πρᾶξις questions the judgements of normality and abnormality in mental health, and, more profoundly, the purpose and limitations of psychiatry itself. As Dr Dysart begins to treat the deranged boy, Alan Strang, who has "blinded six horses with a metal spike" (Act I, 2) with hypnosis, he states:

> The Normal is the good smile in a child's eyes – all right. It is also the dead stare in a million adults. It both sustains and kills – like a God. It is the ordinary made beautiful; it is also the Average made lethal. The Normal is the indispensable, murderous God of Health, and I am his Priest (Act I, 19).

Normalization, Dr Dysart avers, is to remove passion (Act II, 35) and a depth dimension to human personality that inspires beyond the modern, restricted, ordered and known secular world. Dr Dysart sees himself as a

> finicky, critical husband looking through his art books on mythical Greece. What worship has *he* [Dr Dysart himself] ever known? Real worship! Without worship you shrink, it's as brutal as that ... I shrank my *own* life (Act II, 25).

Stated succinctly, the play reveals

> the ultimate inadequacy of intellectual schemes in accounting for human experience, an inadequacy we recognize, if only secretly, an inadequacy symbolized in the mysterious unfathomable image of Alan's man-horse-god, Equus (Chaudhuri, 1984: 295).

Fourth, and more briefly, it may be suggested that the central action of Shakespeare's *King Lear* concerns "suffering represented as a condition of the world as we inherit it or make it for ourselves" (Kermode, 2000: 184).

These πράξεις reside outside the mimetic world of the drama, and whilst their discovery often requires analytical and reflective skill, within a dramatic work, and not infrequently close to the ἀναγνώρισις in a tragic drama, the viewer or reader of a play may reach

> the *moment* of interpretation, the discovery or choice of what, after Dilthey, might be called an "impression point." One may perceive in a life some moment that gives sense and structure to the whole ... it is part with a relation of particular privilege to the whole. A work of art, he believed would have this same impression-point, around which the whole gestalt must be articulated (Kermode, 1979: 16).[113]

[113] An example from literature: in Dante's *Commedia*, Reynolds (2006: 168) locates the "impression point" in Canto 19 of the *Inferno*, in the third ditch of the eighth circle of Hell. There Virgil and Dante see Pope Nicholas, who reigned from 1277 – 1280, and who was accused of nepotism and simony, and it is "[a]t this point, Dante reaches not only the climax of his inspired oration but the very core of the purpose of the *Commedia*: to proclaim the principles of justice by which the world should be governed." Temporal power had accrued to the Church in the West owing to the mediaeval document known as the Donation of Constantine, which was then thought to be a genuine fourth-century document, of which Dante, the pilgrim, states:
Ah, Constantine, that was indeed a curse,
not thy conversion, but thy dower which
first filled with wealth the Holy Father's purse! (*Inf.* XIX, 115 – 117)

Drawing on the body-power of the classical, and the classically sacred, texts, which inscribe their various traditions of being human upon their body politic; appropriating the interpretive reading of the *Poetics*, which prioritizes the πρᾶξις of a tragedy, and viewing the beginning of dramatic Mark through its ending, this work, as a prolegomenon to reading, or viewing, the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy, and one that endeavours to highlight a contemporary significance to such a dramatic recasting of this briefest of gospels, reaches its own "impression point," beyond which that recasting can be undertaken. Thus, the pivotal questions enter and attend: What is the πρᾶξις of tragic Mark; and, by extension, what is the πρᾶξις of a contemporary-ancient Aristotelian tragically dramatic Mark? Chapter Three has established a reading of the *Poetics* which foregrounds the principles of an ancient tragedy – its serious and important subject, its mode of enactment, its appropriate tonal variety, its turn of events, its character fault-line and change of fortune, and its emotional identification – but what are the constituent features of a contemporary tragedy?

The issue, the definition, even the possibility, of a modern, or, indeed, post-modern, tragedy generates *aporiai* – difficulties, perplexities, and interpretive lacunae. Dramatic works in the English-speaking world always have refused to employ the Aristotelian protocols,[114] and European playwrights modified Aristotle's principles and restricted them. Although in his *Defense of Poesy* (1595), Sir Philip Sidney, as noted, appealed to the locative and temporal neo-classical unities, where "[t]he stage ... should always represent but one place, and the uttermost time presupposed in it should be, both by Aristotle's precept and common reason, but one day" (cited by

[114] Thus, for example, an essay question for students of English at Downing College, Cambridge: "Greek tragedy is very different from anything we mean by drama" (MacKillop, 1995: 162).

Steiner, 1961: 19; also 18 – 20; and see Carlson, 1984: 82 – 83), the eclectic and braided "origins of the English imagination," in which "the beauties 'of roughness and of sudden variation, joined to that of irregularity'" are evident "were also the qualities originally associated with English drama ... [where] ... [t]he emphasis is upon fluidity rather than formality, upon the manifestations of organic process rather than of any fixed design" (Ackroyd, 2002: 70). If, on the one hand, the principles of tragic drama were over-formalized in the European corpus – a lapidary economy of action in one site at one moment; and, on the other hand, definition was evaded by the English corpus, many twentieth-century theorists have resisted the very possibility of tragedy and

> [p]erhaps this is one reason why the world of Beckett, along with history after Auschwitz, have been seen as post-tragic. There can be no more tragedy ... because a monstrous excess of the stuff has finally obliterated our sense of the value by which it might be measured. We have supped too full of horrors, and even 'tragedy' is a shallow signifier for events which beggar representation. There can be no icons of such catastrophes, to which the only appropriate response would be screaming or silence" (Eagleton, 2003: 64).

Such an anguished cry or stilled mutism imposes itself, because

> the case for a recognition of our age as most probably the blackest is strong. Statistics are vital, but they mock the imagination. We cannot take in the figures. Conservative estimates put at circa *75 million* the total of men, women and children gunned, bombed, gassed, starved to death, slaughtered

> during deportations, slave-labour and famines between 1914 and the close of the gulags ... Five British infantrymen died every fifty seconds during the first days on the Somme ... It is a matter of macabre semantics, offensive to reason, to try and determine, whether or not, and in what ways, the Shoah, the Holocaust is unique; whether or not it defines a singularity in the history of mankind" (Steiner, 1997: 105 – 106).

The reaction persists when confronted by Rwanda, the Sudan, acts of terror and imposed 'democracies' – the word transgresses semantic fields – and where "100 000 men, women, children were *buried alive* – should one write, let alone try to attach meaning to such a sentence? – in the killing-fields of Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge" (Steiner, 1997: 106 – 107). Although Steiner has not moved from his 1961 thesis of 'the death of tragedy' (see Walsh, 2008: 6), *homo quaerens quaerens* continues the search for a definition of the tragic, even if only in the stammer and stutter, in the gesture, of protest. Indeed, various modes of articulating human creativity, and that primary mode, that of communicable speech, are themselves the purveyors of Paul Celan's "Black milk of daybreak" ("Deathfugue") to the victims in the Nazi Concentration Camps (see Felstiner, 1995: 31 – 32; also Steiner, 1958: 117 – 132). Thus such markers of humanity and conduits of being human choke, crack, contract, and are condemned. But, Adorno did relent from his prohibition on the possibility of 'poetry after Auschwitz,' stating that "[p]erennial suffering has as much right to expression as the tortured have to scream" (cited in Felstiner, 1995: 232). In this muzzled and tremulous stillness, central to the search for, at minimum, the adumbrations of the demarcating lineaments of a contemporary tragic genre is a vocalization of that impeded and muffled 'tortured scream,' both by attaching value to

existence itself and to its human guest, and also by commissioning an ethics of virtuous responses to perceived contextual conflicts and crises. Unsurprisingly, the reply of the virtuous receives attention, but this may lead to an exaltation of the πρωταγωνιστής and the transfer of the tragic into the realm of wish-fulfilment, where

> [t]ragedy, as classically conceived, belongs with an ethics of crisis and confrontation – of revelations, momentous turning-points, dramatic disclosures and existential moments of truth, all of which turn their face aloofly from anything as drearily prosaic as everyday virtue. Yet if Aristotle is the theorist of tragedy, he is also the founder of so-called virtue ethics, for which moral values are embedded in habitual ways of life (Eagleton, 2003: 74 – 75; see also, Frye, 1957: 210).

Indeed, the tragic is political in that it concerns a πόλις, a community bounded to some degree by their habits of life, and, within that milieu, tragedy emerges as a resistance to a form of writing, the writing of the codes of behavioural restriction upon the body, in the attempt to create a specifically tamed and marked, branded 'political anatomy.' And if its protest is at all transformative; nevertheless, it confronts the imposed politically sanctioned and institutional violence with a practical morality – a morality about *mores* – the morals and modes of human well-being. The tragic individual is driven less by inner conviction than by social pressures and circumstances that supervene beyond his or her control. Nuttall (2007: 254) notes that

> Søren Kierkegaard thought that the difference between ancient and modern tragedy lay in the fatal hypertrophy of subjective consciousness in modern times ... The post-classical hero is responsible for his downfall with a sense of individual agency we never see in Greek tragedy; modern tragedy leaves behind a clarified despair, ancient an open sorrow: "Our age has lost the substantial categories of family, state and race."

Classical tragedy, as argued earlier, does not foreground the tragic protagonist at the expense of the action and its outworking in the plot, nor does it focus upon the individual subjective conscience of the primary character in the tragedy, whether that modern, alienated, self-ruminating mystic, or the self-styled revolutionary or activist driven by an inner conviction. When dissent arises, or more purposeful defiance, it is less through an inner vision than through a realization – sometimes more thoroughly understood by the characters than at other times – engendered by the material, political, and social reality. The plague on Thebes (*Oedipus Tyrannos*), the impending demise of humanity without the means of survival (*Prometheus Bound*), the ritual practices for the dead (*Antigone*), generate conflict and confrontation. And it is around the issue of this conflictual engagement that authorial intention resides.

In the *Antigone*, a play by Sophocles, and one of perceptible alliances that comport with the Gospel of Mark, since it relates the adherence by the eponymous heroine to the sacred over the secular,

> [t]he fundamental question is not whether Thebes can contain both Creon and Antigone or whether it would be a just and stable city if it housed only

> Antigone or only Creon ... The final, inescapable question is whether it can, whether it should, contain either. But if the answer is No, how, then, is man to test the bounds ... of his condition? And how, then, is he to be host to the gods? (Steiner, 1984: 262 – 263)

The answer, rather, is "Yes." The πόλις is to contain both a Creon and an Antigone, both the imposition of law and the act of civil disobedience. The tragic, one asserts, resides in this challenging confrontation – in the inscriptions that the city writes upon the individual and in the resistance to a prescribed enlanguaged anatomy within a fateful arena. When the codes are broken, when the boundaries are transgressed, even the 'blind-sided' Oedipus must submit to exile, because the residual content in any and every challenge by the tragic 'hero,' or the conflict in which he or she is ensnared, is propriate ὕβρις. Thus, informing classical tragedies, and, arguably, even their modern or post-modern counterparts – with their interminable waiting, silences, and sealed rooms – are forms of resistance which resistance cannot overcome. These fail because, finally, they are challenges against a universe of imposed rule. Leaning upon the extremity of tragedy, where an inexorably enshrouding darkness does not subvert the ἀπόφασις of the gods,

> [a]bsolute tragedy is so exceedingly rare a form precisely because it negates the up-beat, the pendulum-swing towards hope which seems to be ingrained in human sensibility. Absolute tragedy, which comprises a handful of Greek tragedies, Marlowe's *Faustus*, Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* (there are ambiguities of compensation at the close of *Lear*), Racine's theatre of Jansenist retribution, tests the reflex of Capaneus, the blasphemer among the

> *Seven Against Thebes*, who, even in Dante's *Inferno*, scorns salvation.[115] Tragedy perceives the world as does Ivan Karamazov when he sends back to God his 'ticket of admission.' It extends to Act V the logic of damnation. In very rare instances – and it is these which human imagining finds close to unbearable – tragedy confronts the possibility of nothingness ... (Steiner, 1984: 280 – 281).

It is this 'nothingness that the women told to nobody' at the end of the Gospel of Mark that invites this gospel to be included amongst those "absolute tragedies;" that impending and evident muteness that is perceptible in its own fragmentation, its disintegrating stammer: γάρ ... (Mark 16: 8). But the presence of the young man whom the women find in the tomb draws dramatic Mark away from the *terminus ad quem* of the tragic genre, from the edge of the utter ἀπορία of being human. The kataphatic language of so much of this Gospel – the kerygmatic proclamations, the healing of the ill, the feeding of the hungry, even the forthright challenges to the Jewish leaders – is accompanied by the apophatic denials, hesitations, misunderstandings, and attempts to change an inexorable fate. In the ἀπόφασις of the women and the κατάφασις of the νεανίσκος, in Mark 16: 1 – 8, is the suggested "impression point" that discloses the πρᾶξις of this gospel, or, in this instance, of tragic and dramatic Mark.[116] In this gospel, the human condition is revealed as an ἴχνος that traces the "devenir-espace du temps ou devenir-temps de l'espace"

[115] Dante divides the seventh circle of the *Inferno* into three, the third includes those who blaspheme against God: "The only blasphemer named in Capaneus, one of the seven kings who took part in the siege of Thebes and who while scaling the city wall boasted that not even Jove could stop him and who in his damnation still defied God" (Reynolds, 2006: 146).

[116] It has been repeatedly stated that readings of classic texts always are partial, and others will adopt "impression points" or central actions through which to view the Gospel of Mark. For Wright (1992; 1993: 393), the 'little apocalypse' in the Gospel of Mark performs this function: "Mark 13 is not simply about something *other than* the life trial and death of Jesus; it is the lens through which those earth-shattering events (let the reader understand) must be viewed."

(Derrida, 1972a: 14) – a spacing temporalization of perennial movement between the realization of human limitation and of hope, which, quite probably, is embedded in our enlanguaged selves, in our capacity to employ counter-factual worlds and futures unknown, and which are portrayed in the speech possibilities of the subjunctive and optative moods and the future tense. And these language and imaginative capacities of being human are as evident in music, in liturgy, and in art, as they are in socio-political and economic ideologies, and, quite possibly, underpin the more immediate rationales of frontier scientific and medical research. In the tension between human power, which is constrained by an imposed divine or cosmic restriction, and the human faculty of imaginative transcendence, which invokes futurity, lodges the advent and the departure of being human. Thus it was suggested that to read the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy with a πρᾶξις true to its genre engenders a *mise en scène* that places its ending in analepsis at the beginning.

Tragic Mark is kataphatic and apophatic, both affirming and qualifying human agency. But in its modern, or, perhaps more appositely, post-modern form, it appropriates an 'ichnotic' existence (not unlike, and yet surpassing, a kenotic one, cf. Phil. 2: 6 – 11), where the ἴχνος, the trace "est l'effacement de soi, de sa propre presénce, elle est constituée par la menace ou l'angoisse de sa disparition irrémédiable, de la disparition de sa disparition" (Derrida, 1967a: 339). Where this self is in an anguished state, threatened by its own incurable erasure,

On a huge hill,
Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and he that will
Reach her, about must, and about must go;

And what the hill's suddenness resists, win so;
Yet strive so, that before age, death's twilight,
Thy soul rest, for none can work in that night,
To will, implies delay, therefore now do.
(John Donne, *Satire 3*: "Kind pity chokes my spleen," ll. 79 – 85).

In the 'now doing,' aware that, unlike Donne, one may no longer 'win so,' but, rather perpetually 'about must, and about must go,' another 'inaugural' thinker, the mystic, Denys the Areopagite of the late fifth and early sixth centuries, also 'goes about,' and in his inner journeying, reaches beyond the kataphatic affirmation and its apophatic denial. To know the unknowingness of God, who, in a variety of formulae, approximates to 'dark light' and 'light darkness,' and 'silent music' and 'musical silence,' is to employ, what Turner (1995: 21 – 22) has called, the "'self-subverting' utterance," which is

> the natural medium of a theological language which is subjected to the *twin* pressures of affirmation and negation, of the cataphatic and the apophatic. We must both affirm and deny all things of God; and then we must negate the contradiction between the affirmed and the denied. That is why we must say affirmatively that God is 'light,' and then say, denying this, that God is 'darkness;' and finally, we must 'negate the negation' between darkness and light, which we do by saying: 'God is a brilliant darkness.' For the negation of the negation is not a *third* utterance, additional to the affirmative and the negative, in good linguistic order; it is not some intelligible *synthesis* of affirmation and negation; it is rather the collapse of our affirmation and

> denials into disorder, which we can only express, *a fortiori*, in bits of collapsed, disordered language ... (Turner, 1995: 22; original emphases).

It is such as these anarchic and confounding expressions that both agitate and disperse the characters in the final scene of tragic Mark. Located in a *réseau* of unknowingness, one of deranged despair and frantic hope, the text fractures. And it is at this moment, arguably, that contemporary κάθαρσις is experienced.

The message that is refracted through the classic text of the Gospel of Mark informs of a central character with the gods, or God, on his side. But none can claim the singular sanction of the divine will; and those who engender conflict and confrontation, those of a tragic vision and disposition, confront their own enslavement both to their own creatureliness as well as to the visions and dispositions of others in their human sphere. The eponymous Antigone draws close to the modern tragic hero or heroine, for whilst

> a civic order of religiosity ... [and] ... the encompassing of worship in the general politics of decency, are a positive element in the Sophoclean vision of rightness ... [in the *Antigone*] ... [w]e are worlds away from any Homeric or Aeschylean stress on the imminent substantiality of the preternatural. Antigone draws about herself an ethical solitude, a lucid dryness which seems to prefigure the stringencies of Kant. She is abstemious in respect of the transcendent. This, too, is part of her implacable discretion (Steiner, 1984: 270 – 271).

It is this isolation, this sense of self-determined or personally convicted verity, that portrays the modern tragic character as both challenger to, and victim of, the secular powers, following the final and irrevocable recusance of the gods. Fists may be shaken against a silent sky, but it avails nothing. Once again, it is possible that the *Antigone* breaks loose from its fated bondage and adumbrates the despairing moments in the gospels, and also predicts the later tragic forms of alienation,[117] because when, finally,

> [p]ossessing, possessed by so graphic a vision of her impending fate, Antigone is no longer in trusting touch with the springs of her action. Her closing speech, spiralling upon, darting against itself, has the wild truth of contradiction. At the same time, it belongs to the topos of a last flinching before a willed, accepted self-sacrifice. Similar movements occur in the Gospel narratives of the agony in the Garden ... (Steiner, 1984: 279).

Indeed, the isolation of Jesus, with respect to his family, disciples, wider community, and even his God evokes both the modern tragic character and that ancient Sophoclean forbear, because in

> [a]bandoning her sister, destroying the prospects of a future family, acting on behalf of Polyneices the individual, and estranged from her betrothed, Antigone is a solitary figure with little understanding of her connections with

[117] Steiner (1984: 210): "After Ismene's initial refusal to help bury Polyneices, Antigone will not again resort to any dual forms." The power of Antigone's challenge to Creon's male order has been appropriated by many feminist thinkers; however, Walsh (2008: 5 – 6) foregrounds the disturbing notion that Antigone, when rejecting Ismene, simultaneously rejects female solidarity and opts for a model of male heroism.

> the community of people that surrounds her ... although she gestures towards a communal understanding of the self ... (Walker, 2008: 212 – 213).

It is this self-will, this inner self-professed, declared, and enacted purpose – perhaps 'prejudice' better signifies its self-reflexive doctrinaire quality – that is the mark of the modern tragic figure, whose conviction remains unshakable, and who, like that divine forebear, Prometheus, resists to the end, but in an act of revolt that will invoke no divine assistance. The devastation left in the wake of political ambition – indeed, ὕβρις – during the twentieth century has been adverted to above, and the portrayal of its consequences, notably prior to the dysphoria with words which followed the Shoah, engendered a

> dramatic Expressionism ... [which] ... had its beginnings in Germany in the turbulent and traumatic years during and after World War I. Germany had more than two million War dead and over four million injured. The country was defeated and its economy devastated … The German expressionist play is typically written from the internal perspective of the protagonist (the *Ich*, the I, the soul). The central figure often appears in an agony or ecstasy of protest or alienation or rebellion and his or her most characteristic expression is the famous *schrei* or cry (often compared to Edvard Munch's painting "The Scream" of 1893). The protagonist's cry is the ultimate expression within the play of the *schrei* to which the whole *mise-en-scène* is directed (Cotsell, 2005: 84).

And, redolent both of Antigone and of the Jesus in the Gospel of Mark,

> What separates the central characters (or the central idealism) from those around them (external or inner), other than their agony, is that they search for meaning and change. They may do this as alienated individuals, as poets, as lovers, as visionaries or as political rebels. For them the world is in a crisis. They are the questers and the Cassandras, the scapegoats and the martyrs, the visionaries and the idealists crying for the light (Cotsell, 2005: 85).[118]

But, the πρᾶξις of the dramatic tragedy of Mark exceeds the cry of the modern πρωταγωνιστής, who, rejected and despised, vilified by those in positions of power and influence, retreats into a world of isolated self-righteousness and sullen muteness; and neither does it evince a blighted Oedipus shuffling off into exile, a victim of his own ὕβρις, but *a fortiori* cornered by, and trapped in, a fate that *toujours déjà* had indicted him, nor does it ostend the resigned but intransigent Antigone,[119] who, when led away to her death, states:

ὦ γῆς θήβης ἄστυ πατρῶιον
καὶ θεοὶ προγενεῖς,
ἄγομαι δὴ ᾽γὼ κοὐκέτι μέλλω.
λεύσσετε, θήβης οἱ κοιρανίδαι,
τὴν βασιλειδῶν μούνην λοιπήν,
οἷα πρὸς οἵων ἀνδρῶν πάσχω,
τὴν εὐσεβίαν σεβίσασα (ll. 937 – 943).

[118] Steiner (1984: 19), concerned with the continuing fascination with the *Antigone* by Sophocles, asks: "What intention attaches to the repeated hints (in de Quincey, in Kierkegaard, they are more than hints) that Antigone is to be understood as a counterpart to Christ, as God's child and messenger before Revelation?"

[119] Griffith (1999: 282) comments on the lines cited (ll. 937 – 943): "Ant[tigone]'s indignation continues unabated to the end, and her words recall those of Prometheus (A. *Prom*. 93 ἴδεσθέ μ' οἷα πρὸς θεῶν πάσχω θεός, and esp. 1093 ἐσορᾷς μ' ὡς ἔκδικα πάσχω), as she calls on witnesses (940. λεύσσετε) to her undeserved sufferings."

But, in fact, over the shoulder of the indignant and monadic agitator of later tragedy, stands not Antigone but the *Antigone*. The πρᾶξις of this play appears to *lie* – again, the *double entendre* – close to the dual-sided πρᾶξις of tragic Mark. In the same manner in which this prolegomenon to an Aristotelian reading of the Gospel of Mark suggests revisiting, analysing, recasting, and creatively reinterpreting this classic and sacred story as a dramatic tragedy with contemporary import, so the *Antigone* is a play that has undergone similar editorial recensions. Perhaps its cause resides with both Antigone and Creon, who, when conflated, almost exemplify both the ὕβρις and the inexorable defeat in death of being human as a single character, because one submits that its politics is not without contention:

> Jean Anouilh wrote his version of *Antigone* during the Second World War in Paris, and it was produced under Nazi occupation. The Nazi censors found Creon's arguments convincing and were happy to give permission for its performance – while the French audience revelled in Antigone's resistance. So the story goes: in fact, the politics were far more complicated. Not only was Antigone also seen as a dangerously suicidal self-interested martyr, but in a production shortly after the war the French audience even cheered Creon's words about social order (Goldhill, 2007: 135).

The complexities abound, for not only did Nelson Mandela played Creon in a performance of the *Antigone* on Robben Island (Brink, 1997: 166; Goldhill, 2007: 135), but Fugard's *The Island* (1995), as noted above, recalls that *mise en scène*, and tells of two inmates, John [Kani] and Winston [Ntshona], preparing for a production of this play (Brink, 1997: 166; Steiner, 1984: 143 – 144). On the one hand, the

boldly foregrounded πρᾶξις of the resistant struggle against state power is evident in Antigone's action; on the other hand, after Winston has taken on the role of Creon, that πρᾶξις receives a more subtle aspect, when John has his prison term commuted into a life sentence. Now he is baited and vexed by Winston, and the idealistic notion of principles and resistance begins to crumble, in a more textured and "complex portrayal of the *attractions* and corruptions of power, and the *inevitability of domination in human social relations*" (Goldhill, 2007: 139; emphasis added). That inscriptive dominance returns as a society's prevailing "regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth – that is, the types of discourse it accepts and makes function as true" (Foucault, 2000b: 131).

Framing this chapter are two paintings. The first is *The Crucifixion*, painted by Graham Sutherland for St Matthew's Church in Northampton, and completed in 1946. The date is not insignificant, since one of the two primary informing authorities for this work was a series of photographs of the emaciated victims and ravaged corpses of the Nazi Concentration Camps. Unsurprisingly, the second primary influence was the central panel of the Isenheim Altarpiece of Matthias Grünewald[120] (c. 1515), of a crucified Christ covered by blistering sores, which symbolized his identification with the victims of the plague, who were housed in the Monastery of St Anthony for which the work was painted. The Jesus in the Gospel of Mark stands both prior to, and consonant with, the starving, the dying, the dead. The endeavour to change the course of history in a radical way, to challenge the authorities, to refuse to submit to the prevailing brand of society and rather to rewrite it, is evidence of a lacerating ἁμαρτία, which hopes where hope will be mangled and crushed, and which also

[120] The identity of the artist is somewhat disputed, see Gombrich (1972; 1989: 268ff.).

demonstrates ὕβρις, even if now no longer πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις but only πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου (Eph: 6: 12). But that is only one side of the πρᾶξις of dramatic Mark. In the second painting, that by Caspar David Friedrich, entitled, *Easter Morning* (1833), which hangs in the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid, the hopeless hope of being human engenders both the perplexity of the women, who visit the tomb of Jesus (Mark 16: 1 – 2), and the confidence of the νεανίσκος (Mark 16: 6 – 7), to blend and mingle in a faint and barely conspicuous anticipation. Here, it is λίαν πρωΐ (Mark 16: 2), the moon remains visible, although now the light appears from the impending dawn beyond it. If the vegetation adumbrates a dimly perceptible spring emerging out of the bare winter, the figures stand in the pose of a resigned silence.[121] In their στάσις resides the knowledge of what they will find at the cemetery;[122] in the contrast between the fading moonlight and the encroaching sunlight resides the στάσις that witnesses to the δύναμις of life. Tragedy is about the power and the cost of being human, whether in relation to God, the gods, nature, and/or to men and women, or, in Hodgson's (1992: 219) wider purview of the dramatic works "from Ibsen to Fugard": "The dramatic form from Aeschylus to Brecht has also provided a model of the way events relate and people interact, in processes of chance, fate and choice."

Tragic protagonists threaten and fracture worldviews, whether unknowingly, like Oedipus, or, more often, knowingly, like Antigone and Jesus. Their accosting challenges and conflicts entreat *eschata*, endings for the sake of new beginnings.

[121] Thomas (1979: 146): "There is a sublimated religiosity in Caspar David Friedrich, whose melancholy landscapes epitomize the German romantic spirit."
[122] Bilezikian (1977: 96) observes in the women "their complete lack of anticipation of anything unusual."

But, in the tragic genre, those endings are thwarted both by the limitations of being human, and also by the socio-economic and political, religious, familial, and cultural scripts that dictate, define, and attempt to constrict the only speeches that subjects can utter. Thus, the Gospel of Mark is "dark" and "strenuous" (Barton, 1992: 63 & 65), and if "[w]ithin the New Testament as a whole Mark sounds a fairly solitary note" (Schillebeeckx, 1979: 422), here it is the singular sound of the tragic that is insinuated. F.R.Leavis, one of "the great academic critics of the earlier twentieth century" (Mullan, 2006: 3), and who dominated the English studies at Cambridge University during that period, in his ratiocination on the tragic reached for the notion of "impersonality," asserting that tragedy evokes

> impersonality in which experience matters, not because it is mine – because it is to me it belongs or happens, or because it subserves, or issues in, purpose or will, but because it is what it is, the 'mine' mattering only in so far as the individual sentience is the indispensable focus of experience (cited by MacKillop, 1995: 249; emphasis added).

Leavis would quote Yeats's gnomic utterance: "I saw plainly what should have been plain from the first line I had written, that tragedy must always be a drowning, a breaking of the dykes that separate man from man," and MacKillop (1995: 250) summarizes these notions with the aphorism: "Literature shows, as it were, where the self stops." Indeed, literature, or, perhaps more exactly, tragedy, reflects human limitation, and ostends in performance the conflictual nexus between the fetters and the desired freedom of being human. It is suggested that this paradox is evident in the Gospel of Mark, and thus is proposed as the πρᾶξις of tragic Mark, since, not

only is it faithful to the tragic genre, but it evinces the genre itself, proffering an answer to the Gospel of Mark of "the hiddenness of God, and, at the end, Jesus' mysterious absence" (Barton, 1992: 39). As a compendium of this tragic action, Schweitzer (1954: 368 – 369) compels adducement:

> The Baptist appears, and cries: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Soon after that comes Jesus, and in the knowledge that He is the coming Son of Man lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn; and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is His victory and His reign."

Purpose and cause; fate and history. Tragedy is enacted in this arena, where the purposes and causes of the protagonists are subjected to fate and to history. And whilst tragedy often exemplifies noble causes – τραγῳδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας μέγεθος ἐχούσης (*Poetics* 1449b 24 – 25) – and involves an action that coheres around charismatic central characters, the best tragedies show that the protagonists fall ἐξ εὐτυχίας εἰς δυστυχίαν μὴ διὰ μοχθηρίαν ἀλλὰ δι' ἁμαρτίαν μεγάλην (*Poetics* 1453a 15 – 16). It is the 'impersonality' of that ἁμαρτία for which Aristotle argues: it is not an act of μοχθηρία, whether it is the fated deeds of Oedipus or the civil disobedience of Antigone. With apposite

dramatic heightening, Anouilh (1951: 34 – 35) places a suitably proximate understanding of tragedy, and its vital kathartic dimension, in the words spoken by the Chorus of his *Antigone*: "Tragedy is clean, it is restful ... It has nothing to do with melodrama ... Death, in a melodrama, is really horrible because it is never inevitable ... In a tragedy, nothing is in doubt and everyone's destiny is known. That makes for tranquillity."

ΚΆΘΑΡΣΙΣ ΚΑῚ ʽΑΜΑΡΤΊΑ

Whilst the differences between classical and neo-classical tragedies and those of Shakespeare have been emphasized above, for Leavis "*Macbeth* was his prototype of a Shakespearean tragedy, a play 'comparatively simple' but in which the cosmic and the day-to-day knitted 'wonderfully' together" (MacKillop, 1995: 175). The Neo-classical dramatic principles of the three unities: <u>unity of action</u> – that is, a consistent and coherent outworking of a single theme, message, or purpose, without irrelevancies; <u>unity of place</u> – that is, a limitation of where the events within the unfolding μῦθος occur; and, <u>unity of time</u> – that is, a severe restriction on the period over which the events take place, and where the latter two serve the former, enhance an economic concision that exclude the extraneous and focus upon the essential, rendering a "'comparatively simple'" structure and ordering, and, at its best, result in a tragedy that exhibits an Attic elegance. The conflictual nature of tragedy has been emphasized, in which the

> [d]rama embodies the struggle against material and impersonal forces, which can destroy both from without and within. In tragedy and comedy, in

> different ways, the kinship which develops between an audience and the character who struggles asserts the existence of a common humanity (Hodgson, 1992: 220).

Here those universal and the quotidian dimensions are related – the "cosmic and the day-to-day" – and, in tragedy, it results in a κάθαρσις, which is the product of differential identification. Writing of Patrick White's *Voss*, Larsen (2007: 369) draws on this notion and, helpfully, links the ἁμαρτία to the κάθαρσις:

> The genre of tragedy, by its form, was supposed to release a shared cathartic effect in spite of the individual and extraordinary fate of the characters, because the conditions that caused the tragic event to happen, *hamartia*, is the fate of everyone.

Tragedy delivers *katharsis* when the spectator identifies with the events on the stage, with the plight of the characters, with the cause of the protagonists, in a mixture of fearful pity and identification, and the resultant differential restoration of equilibrium. The dramatic beginning of the Gospel of Mark with "an exultant announcement of the subject, then the splendidly wrought narrative of John the Baptist ... [and the] ... irruption of a hero full grown and ready for action" (Kermode, 1979: 69) calls forth, at least, an interest in what subsequently may occur, but

> Mark, it appears, could not maintain this decisiveness, this directness. He grows awkward and reticent ... The story moves erratically ... the whole thing ends with the greatest awkwardness of all, or the greatest reticence: the empty

> tomb and the terrified women going away. The climactic miracle is greeted not with rejoicing, but with a silence ... (Kermode, 1979: 69).

But this is the "silence" of the ordinary (cf. Rokem, 2006: 261; Leavis in MacKillop, 1995: 175), the return of equilibrium, the κάθαρσις that results from the tragic. The identification called for is too high a price for the audience to pay and the portrayal of that cost too graphic, too painfully inscriptive.

Tragedy, one has argued, is 'played out' in the space between identification and difference – identification with the causes and the characters with a concomitant evocation of the passions, but difference from them in the κάθαρσις which is embedded in the central action: 'Yes' to Antigone, but 'No' to her fate; 'Yes' to Prometheus, but 'No' to his torture; even 'Yes' to Oedipus, who symbolizes the fateful lot of humanity, but 'No' to his act of self-punishment; 'Yes' to Jesus, but 'No' to his wounds. Κάθαρσις resides in the sympathy for the cause, pity for the protagonist, fear for the self, and the subsequent transition from spectator in the theatre to actor in the world. Κάθαρσις, engendered by a "possible world," is suffered (πάσχω), is undergone, in the "real world," where the experience of being human, that ἀνθρώπεια ποίησις, that act of 'making human,' is undertaken. Like the tragic action, it finds meaning outside "such stuff/ As dreams are made on" (Shakespeare, *Tempest*, IV. 1).

It is the πρᾶξις and the κάθαρσις that, in a particular sense, frame the drama – on the one hand, the intent, the purpose, the message of the dramatic work; on the other hand, the experience of sameness and difference, of the resigned pose of Casper

David Friedrich's women, who know what they will find and yet who are shocked and disturbed by what they find.

The κάθαρσις is related to the ἁμαρτία as the identification with the faultless fault of Oedipus, or, equally, with the faultless fault of the human endeavour to strive beyond the imposed limitations of being human and being a subject. Recognition that human existence is both a bounded apportionment and a transgression of boundaries fuses and secures the auditor to the fateful lot and the endemic protest of those subjected to the dramatic world.

Embedded in that protest is hubristic over-reaching, and the Gospel of Mark is not without a protagonist who arrives to a claim of superiority over the Baptist, to whom the people were flocking (Mark 1: 7), and then he immediately receives a *deus ex machina*-like sanction (Mark 1: 10 – 11). The call of "follow me" (Mark 1: 17 & 20), whatever the intent, sets Jesus at the centre of a cause, and his authoritative teaching is set over against that of the scribes (Mark 1: 22). Its divisive nature is recognized εὐθύς by an ἄνθρωπος … ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ who ἀνέκραξεν (Mark 1: 23) – the 'lifting of the voice' and 'crying out,' which comes "immediately" at the beginning of the events – asking the question that foregrounds the adversative, conflictual nature of the tragic cause of the protagonist: ἦλθες ἀπολέσαι ἡμᾶς; (Mark 1: 24). Indeed, 'destruction' will ensue, but, germane to the tragic genre, it is the fall of the central character and the cause to which he or she is bound (Prometheus, Antigone, Jesus), or the fate to which they are subjected (Oedipus), since they are the actors in their own dramas. From operative engagement in healing, teaching, in dispute and debate, an ἀναγνώρισις and περιπέτεια follow, and the

μετάβασις from resolute ferment to quiescent passivity occurs in the παράδοσις, that transition from attempting to introduce neologistic inscriptions to the Foucauldian submission and subjection to the preterite lore:

> From being so active, the Jesus of Mark becomes passive, acted upon. The verb [παραδίδωμι] is central to the second and third of the three passion predictions (9: 31; 10: 33); it comes three times in the passion prediction for the community (13: 9, 11, 12); and then ten times in the passion narrative proper (14: 10, 11, 18, 21, 41, 42, 44; 15: 1, 10, 15). So we may fairly say that the Passion involves Jesus being at the receiving end of the actions of others, being 'handed over,' powerless, even forsaken (15: 34) (Barton, 1992: 62 – 63).

Here, Foucault (1975: 9) returns in that dramatic opening to *Surveiller et Punir* with the account of the brutal retribution metered out to the regicidal "Damiens [qui] avait été condamné, le 2 mars 1757, à 'faire amende honorable ...'" He was branded, flayed, and, where the integument was removed, burned with scalding oil, liquefied resin and lead, after which the vestige of his human body was drawn and quartered, and, ultimately, consigned to a pyre. Foucault's (1975) work observes the changes in regimes of discipline and punishment, from the external, public, theatrical display of victimization and punition – the pitiless implementation *coram populo* of the sentence pronounced upon Damiens – to the retention of its purpose in the seclusion of its victims and the masking of its methods, by focusing on "une technologie politique du corps où pourrait se lire une histoire commune des rapports de pouvoir et des relations

d'objet" (Foucault, 1975: 28). This shared history of the effects of power relations occur in

> une certain 'économie politique' du corps ... dans un champ politique; les rapports de pouvoir opèrent sur lui une prise immédiate; ils l'investissent, le marquent, le dressent, le supplicient, l'astreignent à des travaux, l'obligent à des cérémonies, exigent de lui des signes ... [et] ... ces relations descendent loin dans l'épaisseur de la société ... [mais] ... elles ne sont pas univoques; elles definissent des points innombrables d'affrontement, des foyers d'instabilité dont chacun comporte ses risques de conflit, de luttes, et d'inversion au moins transitoire des rapports de forces (Foucault, 1975: 30 – 32).

In this conflict, even if it is only momentary, partial, and marginal, the resistant, ordered, controlled, inscribed, and, in consequence, prescribed "political anatomy," which endeavours to rewrite those inscriptions to some degree or another, effects its performance in "les effets qu'il induit sur tout le réseau où il est pris" (Foucault, 1975: 32). Here, the discipline and punishment available to the prevailing powers resist that resistance, which attempts to alter that network of control in which it is located, and the degree of the latter determines the former.

The clash of discord, the antagonism, the counteraction of the upstart, of the neoteric thinker or the revolutionary activist, "this timelessness of *necessary* and *insoluble* conflict, as Greek tragedy enacts it ... invites us to assimilate the condition of man [sic] on this earth to that of tragic" (Steiner, 1984: 276 – 277). In the extremity of

Sutherland's graphic 'Crucifixion,' the protesting body is tamed into a portrait of defeated docility and the fractured brokenness of the Markan ending. For the opponents of Jesus, his discursive actions were the equivalent of the regicide of Damiens, because it entailed the redrafting of the παράδοσις of divine teaching and its inscriptive power, sequestered domestic care, and public expression.

How to portray this act of 'discipline and punishment,' given Aristotle's reticence about spectacle (*Poetics* 1450b 16 – 18), will form part of the dramaturgical-analytical debate about performance – arguably, a minimalist presentation of the classical deposit of known events may be more compelling – but the emotional power of the ὄψις, which Aristotle also recognizes (*Poetics* 1450b 16 – 17; 1453b 1 – 2), evokes the pity and fear that is central to the κάθαρσις that tragedy offers its audience.

Foucault (1975), as he traces the development of techniques of punishment from the *supplice public* to the "ingéniosité architecturale ... du principe panoptique" (Foucault, 1975: 218), adverts to the festive aspects of the days of public execution, which were holidays, when the cities filled and the taverns traded, since the people must witness the punishment, must see the spectacle – it was a vicarious act of disciplining them, of reinforcing the codes which made them docile and encoded bodies. But

> [l]e condamné se trouvait héroïsé par l'ampleur de ses crimes largement étalés ... Contre la loi, contre les riches, les puissants, les magistrats, la maréchaussée ou le guet, contre la ferme et ses agents, il apparaissait avoir mené un combat dans lequel on se reconnaissait facilement. Les crimes proclamés amplifiaient

> jusqu'à l'épopée des luttes minuscules que l'ombre protégeait tous les jours (Foucault, 1975: 70; emphasis added).

In the majuscule eristic stance of the condemned, the populace perceived their 'daily, minuscule struggles.' Somewhere on this spectrum of woes, their pity was roused – an emotion that Gregory of Nazianzus (1987: 34, l. 269) calls "the tenderest of all emotions" – but that exposed sympathy, in turn, was made fearful in the face of "[l']éxcès même des violences exercées ... c'est le cérémonial même de la justice se manifestant dans sa force" (Foucault, 1975: 38). The victim submits and is written upon, and "in and through touching that power becomes reality, not only as something to be seen but as ultimate signifier ... feeding itself off its own routines, creating commonplaces, bringing about a world of signification" (Mbembe, 2001: 167) always attempting to form a ubiquitous network of control, so that its "justice poursuit le corps au-delà de toute souffrance possible" (Foucault, 1975: 39). But that 'outside,' that sphere of exclusion defines the 'inside,' the inclusive zone. It is a 'beyond' that repeatedly returns to the midst; a φαρμακός, who is reared within and, whatever the degree of adversative striving and resistant *stasis*, bears the ἁμαρτία of all – since it is the adversative resistance of being human – to the place of the skull beyond the city walls, but is the one who is reared and nurtured within (Derrida, 1972b: 152 – 153) and, thus, identified with, pitied for its efforts, feared for its consequences, and yet, in this synaptic function, trails κάθαρσις in its transgressing of the borders both of human will, purpose, and cause, and also of human submission, constraint, and subjectivity.

PRODUCTIVE RECASTING

In Chapter Three, the economic dictates of Aristotle concerning the χορός have been stated – καὶ τὸν χορὸν δὲ ἕνα δεῖ ὑπολαμβάνειν τῶν ὑποκριτῶν, καὶ μόριον εἶναι τοῦ ὅλου καὶ συναγωνίζεσθαι μὴ ὥσπερ Εὐριπίδῃ ἀλλ' ὥσπερ Σοφοκλεῖ (*Poetics*, 1456a 25 – 27) – and the scholarly conjecture for such brevity has been noted. Is there a role for a chorus in a recasting of the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy?

Locating two of the characters who appear at the conclusion of the Gospel of Mark at the beginning of tragic Mark, and opening the drama with characters that witness to, and embody, the πρᾶξις, as it has been suggested above, engenders, one proposes, the possibility of electing a choral function for them in a performative recasting of this Gospel. Quite probably, as noted earlier, sections of the Gospel of Mark were enacted in various locations with few additional resources of costume or stage props, and the stories of teaching and healing may have included improvisation, even some editing and embroidering. Perhaps something of a minimalist or pared-down ostension ought to be entertained, with the curtailment of the χορός to these two characters, who point, narrate, discuss, and show the significance of the events on the stage – a significance now not simply of negotiating and mapping the path of the μαθητής, but also of demonstrating the responses of those characters in conflictual and agonistic relation to the πρωταγωνιστής and his cause. Whilst such a choral recasting does not follow early tragedy with its twelve member chorus, or, from Sophocles onwards, an increase to fifteen dancers, many modern productions of the Greek tragedies reduce the chorus, and a number do so without being subjected to

financial constraints, but rather because they "take their starting point from the extreme passions of Greek tragedy and seek to follow the bitter familial and political arguments as human stories within a Western realistic tradition" (Goldhill, 2007: 63).[123] Battezzato (2005) has been cited above as noting that the choral voice was neither uniform nor singular in its view, and the two-figure choral presence in tragic Mark could perform the opposing roles of those in conflict with the primary character, and ensure that "[o]ne of the structuring principles of tragedy ... the tension between the collective chorus and the individual hero" (Goldhill, 2007: 47) is upheld. The cause of the πρωταγωνιστής is contrasted to the other voices, and those voices may be noted either by choral gesture or, perhaps, by appropriating character roles in a radically restricted performance; and, if the latter, it will not be unnoticed that such concision will reduce the cast to 'three actors.'

GODS AND GOD

Staging the presence of a god, gods, or the divine, presents severe challenges to a *mise en scène* that endeavours to invoke a contemporary relevance. Goldhill (2007: 207) argues that central to the popularity of the *Antigone* since the nineteenth century is the absence of gods in the play:

> This absence is integral to the effect of the drama: it is a play about humans in conflict, each of whom can appeal to the (silent) gods in different and selectively polemical ways. The lack of a god's authoritative voice is central

[123] The first English production of Jean Anouilh's rewriting of *Antigone* (1951) was performed in February 1949 with one actor playing the Chorus, notably, Sir Laurence Olivier.

to this play's refusal to allow its audience a simple route through its moral conflicts.

Whilst one is attempting to forge a tragedy of contemporary import, one needs to ask whether there is a similarity, in this respect, between the *Antigone* and the Gospel of Mark. The answer, possibly, is both 'Yes' and 'No.' 'No,' because the reception of the latter text is already located within the reaches of divine activity, and there are moments of divine interpolation (Mark 1: 11; 9: 7). But 'Yes' in the sense that at crucial moments of diverting the tragic course of events (Mark 14: 36), or in overturning death for life at the end, divine action is absent. However, needless to say, the *Antigone*, like the Gospel of Mark, does not refuse divine contact, nor repel the influence of the gods. Teiresias, the divine seer, is present, and Antigone bases her own 'treacherous' action upon the law of the gods with regard to burial. For when, in the light of her civil disobedience, Creon asks:

καὶ δῆτ' ἐτόλμας τούσδ' ὑπερβαίνειν νόμους; (l. 449)

Antigone replies:

οὐδὲ σθένειν τοσοῦτον ὠιόμην τὰ σὰ
κηρύγμαθ' ὥστ' ἄγραπτα κἀσφαλῆ θεῶν
νόμιμα δύνασθαι θνητὸν ὄνθ' ὑπερδραμεῖν (ll. 453 – 455).

Both present and palpable is the divine, and the cause of the conflict between Creon and Antigone is undertaken in the name of a god. But, tragic Mark, owing both to its

ending, and the part that ὕβρις plays in it, can, in a contemporary sense, restrict the presence of the divine to a psychological reading of divine approbation.

TRANSLATION

A dramaturgical approach to the Gospel of Mark, which attempts to remain faithful to the Aristotelian principles of tragedy, and yet be exploratory, innovative, and of current import, requires a translation that retains the directness and pungency of this shortest of the gospels, but also endeavours to render meaning into meaning both in a dramatic and, in fidelity to the lineaments of the classical tragedy, in a poetic manner. This is a matter of some import, and whilst it will demand a person or persons with knowledge of the Greek Text of the New Testament, it will not be insensitive to the input of the company and its players who will perform the roles. The act of translating, editing, and inserting *didascalies* must cohere with the decided approach to the work as a drama with its own emphases, and ensure that it foregrounds the πρᾶξις that has been appropriated, in order to enhance the necessary κάθαρσις.

There is a tradition of rendering the classical tragedies into modern translations – some for purposes of an accurate reading, with greater literal fidelity to the original text; others for purposes of performance, most often in vastly different venues than those for which the original texts were written – and even of translating and adapting Homeric epic for radio and stage (those of Simon Armitage for BBC Radio 4 and Derek Walcott for the stage, *Review Saturday Guardian*, 20th May, 2006).

Significantly, the translations by modern poets often have been amongst the chosen translations for the stage, influenced, quite possibly, by the voice of Aristotle, since foundational to their τέχνη is metaphor, πολὺ δὲ μέγιστον attribute, which μόνον γὰρ τοῦτο οὔτε παρ᾽ ἄλλου ἔστι λαβεῖν εὐφυΐας τε σημεῖόν ἐστι (*Poetics*, 1459a 5 – 7). These later versions have not shied away from including a contemporary relevance and viewpoint, similar to that *aggiornamento* which one is attempting to lend here to a dramatic recension of the Gospel of Mark: Seamus Heaney's *Antigone* (2004), unsurprisingly, invokes Irish idioms and images, since the contemporaneity of the πρᾶξις and the events of that play are not without certain contextual affiliations with the recent history of Ireland, and Ted Hughes's *Oresteia* (1999) incorporates a pacifist aspect, and also retains a 'readerly,' or here, a performative openness (see Goldhill, 2007: 153 – 187). Recasting the images employed in the teaching of Jesus towards more contemporary evocations may be entertained, although classic texts often demand the retention of their known metaphors, which have become part of the tradition.

Palpable in modern performative recensions is a sensitivity to the classical metrical forms and rhyme, and, when rendering the Gospel of Mark into an Aristotelian tragic Mark, attention to rhythm and rhyming possibilities ought, at least, to be entertained. Indeed, adhering to the dialogic and monologic structure of the Greek tragic genre and its rhythmic patterning may enrich tragic Mark, so that the conflict is emphasised by the adversative and concise *stichomythia*, the declamation of teaching in undertaken in the *rhesis*, and the collective responses – often two opposing views employing the regular antiphonal structure of *strophe* and *antistrophe* – rendered in metrical and

rhyming choral odes, and, perhaps, although this would invite additional skills, undertaken with musical accompaniment.

ΜΥ̓ΘΟΣ, ᾽ΑΝΑΓΝΏΡΙΣΙΣ, ΠΕΡΙΠΈΤΕΙΑ

States (1985: 49 – 50), acknowledging Aristotle's κά́θαρσις, appropriates it as purgation for his own purposes, and asserts that

> catharsis is our best word for what takes place at large in the theatre. It is precisely a purging: what is purged, at least on the level that concerns me here, is time – the menace of successiveness, of all life falling haphazardly through time into accident and repetition ... a play plucks human experience from time and offers an aesthetic completion to a process we know to be endless. The play imitates the timely in order to remove it from time, to give time shape.

A succession of events – whether historical, quasi-historical, or purely imaginative – requires a re-casting, an ordering (even when that order seems to be random or absent), so as to present them as drama, and that causal chain, that organization of plot, that shifting and aligning of characters and events, that recension, and embellishment of a foundational story or occurrence, must be unfolded in a μῦθος, which is subservient to a πρᾶξις. In the tragic genre, as noted, the best tragedy will incorporate an ἁμαρτία, which is palpable in a series of events that leads to a necessary ἀναγρώρισις and περιπέτεια, and which, in turn, will produce a fearful and pitiful identification; and the κά́θαρσις both inherent in the theatrical experience, when time is 'purged' of its successiveness in "the two hours' traffic of our stage"

(Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*: Prologue), also extends beyond the theatrically coded 'world.'

The approach to recasting the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy, and with an impact that may not be without a contemporary message, has caused the foregrounding of a particular action, and, via a dramaturgical analysis, has engendered a proleptic trajectory to the drama, one that is perceived through the eyes and experiences of the final characters. Embarking upon such a project with this intent established, permits the company to generate a plot that is faithful to this purpose, and ensures that this particular πρᾶξις is appropriated and ostended.

It has been noted that

> [t]ragedy is a genre of conflict: not only conflict between people or between ideas, but also conflict about what words mean. Characters repeatedly use the same words in different senses. They argue over what words to use, and they use them as weapons against each other (Goldhill, 2007: 96 – 97).

Thus, conflict, as it is palpable in the Gospel of Mark, is central to tragic Mark, and as the πρωταγωνιστής reinterprets his own tradition and forges his own cause, so a series of agonistic encounters follow, leading to one final confrontation, when the degree of refusal to submit to be an inscriptive subject extends beyond the boundaries proscribed by the 'authorities of delimitation' (Foucault, 1969).

A dramaturgical-analytical approach to the Gospel of Mark, which adheres to the above πρᾶξις, would foreground the ἀγών, even when it is suppressed, and, rather, repress the miraculous events of healing and feeding, or only employ them as (possibly, silent choral or balletic) illustrations of the disjunction between the cause of Jesus and the opposition of his adversaries. Therefore, the healing of the paralysed man (Mark 2: 1 – 12) is a claim of authority; the meal with the outcasts (Mark 2: 13 – 17) is a challenge to prevailing customs; and the lack of fasting by the followers of Jesus (Mark 2: 18 – 22) and that ποιοῦσιν τοῖς σάββασιν ὃ οὐκ ἔξεστιν (Mark 2: 24), are all contrary practices to those of other teachers and their disciples.

But, both in these moments of conflict, as well as in the proclamation by Jesus of ὁ καιρός (Mark 1: 15) and the summary call to others to follow him (Mark 1: 16 – 20), evidence of an ἁμαρτία, in which there is a perceptible ὕβρις, emerges: that 'reaching beyond' the levels of resistance tolerated by society, and that 'over-reaching' of the limitation of being human. Thus, in this singular generation of a *mise en scène*, the ἀναγνώρισις in Mark 8: 27 – 30 and its 'confirmation' in Mark 9: 2 – 9, includes the injunction that μηδενὶ λέγωσιν περὶ αὐτοῦ (Mark 8: 30) and μηδενὶ ἃ εἶδον διηγήσωνται (Mark 9: 9), and, at least theatrically, associated with these statements is the reaction of the women at the end of the Gospel, who οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν (Mark 16: 8). In the tradition of commentary upon the Gospel of Mark,

> there is one point of practically unanimous agreement, which is that the Marcan narrative has a major climax right in the middle, at 8: 27. It is the recognition by Peter of Jesus' messiahship ... Here, then, right in the middle of

> the book, is the great moment of recognition (Kermode, 1979: 138 – 139; emphasis added),

which, for our purposes, is the Aristotelian ἀναγνώρισις. "But," and how aptly Kermode (1979: 139) states it,

> nobody subsequently behaves as if he had benefited by it; and indeed its pleasures and promises are instantly disappointed ... Later his [Mark's] Jesus will declare himself the Christ, for the one and only time, at the moment when Peter denies him.

Indeed, here is the ironizing realization that to exalt the status of Jesus and to serve his cause is news that is not necessarily 'good news,' but, rather, news that is all too human, and news that results in a theatrical κάθαρσις.[124] Following this moment of ἀναγνώρισις, to which is enjoined the muteness of proleptic knowledge, which, in this μετάβασις and *aggiornamento* of the Gospel of Mark into tragic dramatic Mark, is the very silence of the knowledge of Jesus, of his followers, and of his wider audience, both within the mimetic world and beyond it; an awareness that the threshold of being human has been transgressed and the claims bruited are too great. Inexorably, the περιπέτεια ensues, when the degree of conflict is heightened and the stakes are raised, and the consequent 'discipline and punishment' is inevitable – its degree and severity imposed, in order to restrain and restrict the ὕβρις which emerges out of the shared ἁμαρτία of humanness, that ubiquitous fault line endemic to the human condition.

[124] In this context, Bilezikian (1977: 146) extends the Aristotelian κάθαρσις and interprets it in terms of the Resurrection of Jesus and the imminent Parousia.

This universal story writ large engenders the Aristotelian κάθαρσις, which has been explored above, a *katharsis* evident in the pose of the resigned and yet resilient women in the illustration below, who do not relinquish their duty to go to the tomb, and who, through their following of Jesus – or, in the production envisaged, through the tracking of Jesus by the young man and Mary Magdalene – have been transformed, as, indeed, is the one who continues to be inscribed by, and to enact, this story in ritual, ethical, familial, and personal life, both trapped in the present tense and yet also liberated in speaking and imagining futures, one perennially "Knowing myself yet being someone other" (T.S.Eliot: *Little Gidding*).

Casper David Friedrich

EASTER MORNING

1833

(Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid: www.museothyssen.org [14th April, 2009])

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Appropriating both the deeply inscriptive embodiment of classic and, particularly, sacred texts, and also the Aristotelian features of a dramatic tragedy, this prolegomenon to the Gospel of Mark as drama confronted the τόπος of its beginning and ending, which is precisely the point at which the challenges of known inceptive moments and authorized *dénouements* assert themselves most pressingly on the creative dramatist. Highlighting issues of contest, within both the tragic genre and the wider hermeneutic arena, as much of this work has done, of unceasing corrigibility and ever-elusive closural openings, of dialogic, even multi-logic, instability in sacred texts, no less so than in other *upostatic* writings and their interpretations, a play, lauded by Aristotle, namely, the *Oedipus Tyrannos*,[125] was employed both as text and as performance, in order to suggest an approach to render the Gospel of Mark as a tragic dramatic work. This method of approaching an incipient dramatic Mark and of locating the Gospel of Mark in this arena, has informed the pursuit of the Aristotelian protocols of a successful tragedy, as they were identified in Chapter Three, but also, in this very undertaking, has suggested an informing πρᾶξις of dramatic Mark that is faithful to the genre of the tragic, both in its contestable ancient and modern forms.

[125] In this respect, of the *Oedipus Tyrannos* Bowra (1967:44) states: "Admired by Aristotle as the perfect tragedy, it keeps all its original power, and whether we consider its plot or its style or its characterization or its poetry, it remains unchallenged."

The option of rewriting the Gospel of Mark as a dramatic tragedy rather than as a comedy (Hatton, 2001), or, perhaps, more aptly, as a tragi-comedy, partly has been circumscribed by the 'anxiety of influence' (Bloom, 1973; 1994) of the 'founder' of dramatic theory whose lectures on tragedy are our only possession, and partly has been urged by the sense of estrangement that the genre brings. Unlike the classical comedy, tragedy

> is enacted elsewhere. Nearly all our [classical Greek] tragedies take place in cities other than Athens ... Nor are the characters of tragedy like the audience. Tragedy focuses on kings, heroes, monsters, women – all of which are conceived to be *other* to the male, enfranchised adults of the democratic citizen body. Tragedy, that is, unlike comedy, is set in other places, at other times, and involves other people. Tragedy is staged at the scene of the other (Goldhill, 2007: 124 – 125).

That otherness engenders the *Verfremdungseffekt*, which encourages the seriousness of reflection, that self-reflexive act of perceiving the glancing and angled view in a distant mirror, a perspective that gives rise to the realization that, at the level of the πρᾶξις, "[t]ragedy may be set at the scene of the other, but it turns out to be about us ... What look like stories about others, prove to go to the heart of the self. Indeed, it is *because* tragedy takes this strange detour that it can be so powerful" (Goldhill, 2007: 126). Such a seemingly circuitous, yet, paradoxically, precise and penetrating, route back home, back to the self, is presented by the classics in their various forms of ποιήματα, which, through their action of 'making,' relate the human story by inscribing it upon the lives of men and women, and, consequently, by informing

human behaviour in the practice, the ἄσκησις, of human living in the present, and by shaping those human futures. Not only are these classics *toujours déjà* the enacted drama – "such stuff" – of human living, but they also offer themselves to a more formal coding by the τέχνη of the literary, visual, and musical arts – in poems, fiction, and dramatic works; in art forms; in dance; in programmatic music; in opera, and in oratorio. But these codifications demand a recension, revision, and recasting, which will quarry the futurities that are embedded in the classics of the tradition, and, when doing so, will present them with current accentuations, whilst, simultaneously, altering the past for the future through these present inflexions.

As an informing classic, the Gospel of Mark, with "its reservoir of signs [that] is inexhaustible" (Spivak, 2007: 162), presents within itself the possibility of submission to such μετάστασις and modulation. But one suggests that the attempt to read the Gospel of Mark in its extant state as a tragedy or a comedy or an epic is to ossify it. It is to appropriate the classics and turn them "into frozen monuments of Greatness in which our 'cultural' heritage' is embodied" (Scholes, 1989: 125), an action which not only is questionable hermeneutically, but also one which silences the classics, and changes their contributing and informing inscriptions into their own circumscribed and hermetic epitaphs.

Classics write themselves upon the lives and bodies of human beings, who, then, as subjects of those classics, 'live' those classics into the future, which is evidence of the manner in which the classics are perennial dramatic performances. But, when the classic is entertained more formally as dramatic tragedy or comedy, it requires submission to the principles of that genre, which themselves need to be stated. Here,

the choice is tragedy, and the protocols are those of Aristotle, which themselves, as explored above, are not without their own contested interpretations and orderings, when the *Poetics* coheres as a discourse both as a contemporary and also as a future text. And that detailed Foucauldian exploration of the formation of the discourse of the *Poetics*, and its continuing annotative tradition, is not without its parallels in the formation of the discourse of the Gospel of Mark from its own agonistic environment, where its events are "not merely a set of happenings in the public world but the focal point of a variety of human intentionalities" (Wright, 1992; 1993: 94). Thus, likewise, the formation of the 'discursive regularity' of the Gospel of Mark constructs and reconstructs its own terms of delimitation and conditions of admission, during which conjectural marginalia and adversaria are revisited, and even some possible exploratory dramatic innovations are revived, and which, concomitantly in the tradition of commentary, open and re-open a variety of interpretive possibilities and yield to the extraction of their promise for the present and the future. Not only is this an exegetical task, which is subject to its own perpetually corrigible definitional principles, and during the course of which a vocation may respond to the call to follow an emancipating journey, through which certain paths will be taken and other rejected, certain options appropriated and others jettisoned; but it is also a poetical task – the τέχνη of 'making,' of 'creating' – a charge that may be liberating in its dramatic earnest.

Notwithstanding the vibrant forms of Christianity, not least upon the continent of Africa, with their serious and comedic celebration of joyful hope, the choice here has been that of tragedy, and for which this prolegomenon suggests the lineaments of the production of the Gospel of Mark as an Aristotelian tragedy with, at least, one hopes,

a measure of contemporary significance. The tragic is chosen, first, because it constitutes the genre subjected to the most exacting scrutiny in the Theory of Drama; second, because it haunts our savagely brutal and dusty twilight as a literary form worthy of continued examination; and, third, and more precisely, because

> [t]ragedy's repeated concentration on the violence that emerges from the pursuit of justice, on the corruption of power in the pursuit of war, on the humiliations and misplaced confidence of the aftermath of military victory, on the battleground of gender within social order, seems to speak directly to the most pressing and dismaying of contemporary concerns (Goldhill, 2007: 120).

And it is therein that resides the productive possibility of tragic imaginative worlds that enact various dominant strands of the human story, and for which these proposals are tabled: to appropriate a physically inscriptive story of restrained secrecy and fractured meaning, and to read it from an angled and glancing perspective, permitting the fear, pity, and hope of its ending to inform its enactment, engendering in the viewer an experience of mute kathartic identification and restoration in the realization of being human – the ἀναγνώρισις both of one gifted to speak of imaginable futures in hope, and yet also of one confined to becoming a handful of dust.

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